

Foundations 3: Laying on of Hands

2.11.24

Hebrews 6:1–3 (CSB)

6 Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, faith in God, ²teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And we will do this if God permits.

Intro: Introducing a simple yet profound practice.

A. Laying on of hands was so fundamental and elementary that the writer of Hebrews was tired of teaching about it.

1. Apparently the church wasn't grasping this teaching.
2. But laying hands on people was considered an elementary and foundational teaching
3. Think about that:
 1. The laying on of hands is part of the doctrinal foundation that Christianity is built upon.
 2. The Pastor of Hebrews calls it an elementary teaching ABOUT CHRIST.
 - a. This teaching is not random or secondary.
 - b. Laying on of hands is a foundational teaching.

B. Let me hit you with two quotable statements.

1. Laying on of hands is not decorative; it's foundational.

- a. There are some practices within the church that are decorative.

b. For example, The type of music and instruments used, the style of preaching, and the architecture of the building.

c. Laying on of hands is not decorative.

1. This isn't like the selection of the kinds of windows for our house or what color to stain the deck.

2. A part of the foundation is missing by not practicing the laying on of hands.

2. Laying on of hands is not elective; it's elementary.

a. In school, we have core classes and elective classes.

b. There are some weird electives out there. FOR EXAMPLE:

1. UC-Berkely "The Joy of Garbage."

2. Michigan State University, "Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse."

3. Pennsylvania State, "Ice Cream Course."

4. Stanford, an in-depth, Ten Week course on Taylor Swift's song "All Too Well."

c. Too many in the Body of Christ treat laying on of hands as an elective when Hebrews says it is a CORE practice.

C. But this elementary teaching is too often on the margins or extremes.

1. Many churches practice laying on of hands without knowing why.

2. Other churches don't practice it at all.

3. For us, and I take responsibility, we have practiced laying on of hands without explaining its significance.

4. **The WHY provides the depth of understanding that leads to transformational moments.**

- a. Understanding WHY will not rob laying on of hands of its power.
- b. Instead, it will increase our faith in God AND lead us to practice this more often.

1. Laying on of Hands is An Ancient and Biblical Practice.

A. Woven throughout Scripture are seminal moments of the people of God laying hands upon others.

1. Why did Jesus, the Patriarchs, and the Apostles model for us a practice of physically touching people?

a. When Jesus and the Apostles had the opportunity, they preferred to touch those they were blessing or praying for.

b. But why?

2. Where did the ancients learn this from?

3. To go even further, Even modern-day science has recorded the physical benefits of “touching”:

a. This includes lowering cortisol, which affects blood pressure, and increasing oxytocin.

b. One study showed that sports teams that had more physical touch, like fist-bumps, hugs, and high-fives, experienced better team outcomes.¹

4. Even in church, when we pray for people, we may touch someone’s shoulders, lay our hands on their head, or point our hands toward the people if we can’t reach them. (Picture)

B. WHAT ARE THE Reasons and WHAT SHOULD WE BE PRACTICING and Believing when we do this?

1. Of course, I planned to cover all of this in one message but, on Groundhog Day, I came out of my study and saw my shadow so we are going to extend it a bit lol (**MEME PICTURE**)

¹ <https://www.the-well.com/editorial/the-healing-power-of-touch>

2. The problem I ran into is the more I searched, the more I saw.

a. And what I saw evoked feelings of excitement, nervousness, and shock.

b. **Laying on of hands is not elective; it's elementary.**

c. The importance of laying on of hands is too obvious to ignore when we read the Bible.

3. This morning, I want to focus upon one segment of laying on of hands: Blessing.

2. Laying on of Hands and the Transfer of Blessing.

A. From the Old Testament all the way through the New, we see many examples of laying on of hands.

1. Laying on of hands was used to commission and ordain people.

2. Laying on of hands had a role to play in healings and in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

B. But the first use I find in Scripture is the act of blessing.

1. As I do my best to understand Scripture, I believe that the significance of laying on of hands is to first and foremost represent blessing.

2. **Four Passages that demonstrate this:**

Genesis 48:8–20 (CSB)

⁸When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

⁹And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons God has given me here."

So Israel said, "Bring them to me and I will bless them." ¹⁰Now his eyesight was poor because of old age; he could hardly see. Joseph brought them to him, and he kissed and embraced them. ¹¹Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, but now God has even let me see your offspring." ¹²Then Joseph took them from his father's knees and bowed with his face to the ground.

¹³Then Joseph took them both—with his right hand Ephraim toward Israel's left, and with his left hand Manasseh toward Israel's right—and brought them to Israel. ¹⁴But Israel stretched out his right hand and put it on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and crossing his hands, put his left on Manasseh's head, although Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵Then he blessed Joseph and said:

The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,
¹⁶the angel who has redeemed me from all harm—
may he bless these boys.

And may they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
and may they grow to be numerous within the land.

¹⁷When Joseph saw that his father had placed (**ESV and KJV say Laid**) his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it was a mistake and took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's. ¹⁸Joseph said to his father, "Not that way, my father! This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head."

¹⁹But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know! He too will become a tribe, and he too will be great; nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his offspring will become a populous nation."
²⁰So he blessed them that day, putting Ephraim before Manasseh when he said, "The nation Israel will invoke blessings by you, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.' "

Leviticus 9:22–24 (CSB)

²²Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them. He came down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the fellowship offering. ²³Moses and Aaron then entered the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴Fire came from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and

the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell facedown.

Mark 10:13–16 (CSB)

BLESSING THE CHILDREN

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “**Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.** ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, **whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**” ¹⁶ After taking them in his arms, he laid his hands on them and blessed them.

Luke 24:50–51 (CSB)

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

⁵⁰ Then he led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ And while he was blessing them, he left them and was carried up into heaven.

3. Laying on of Hands as Blessing.

#1. Laying on of hands is a meaningful gesture.

- a. In other words, it DOES matter.
- b. Throughout both the OT and NT, the concept of blessing primarily is related to the situation people enjoy as a result of God’s gracious, kind, and generous action on their behalf² “
- c. To bless is a powerful thing.
 1. To lay hands on someone as an act of blessing is a powerful, significant thing.
 2. When Jacob defrauded his brother Esau out of his father’s blessing, Esau cried to his father in Gen. 27

² Joshua G. Mathews, “Blessing,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

“**Have you** but one blessing, my father? **Bless me**, even me **also**, O my father.”

3. We would do well to pause before we bless.

#2. Laying on of Hands is a sign of transfer.

a. When we bless someone, we are not blessing from our own power.

1. You don't want my blessing, because I have nothing to give you.

2. But when we bless someone in Jesus' name, now that is something to pass on.

3. Jesus is the source of all blessings.

4. **The hands are not the source because we are not the source.**

b. This isn't a matter of us passing on anything that we created, manifested, or conjured.

1. This is you and I, as followers of Jesus, passing on the blessing of Jesus.

2. We, like Israel to his grandsons, say “God has been good to me, and now I declare that God will be good to you.”

c. The world promises a blessing APART from Jesus.

1. But the world cannot bless you.

2. James 1:17 tells us: ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

3. Because of the name that is above all names, you and I can pass on the blessing of Christ, the only “blessing” that matters.

#3. Laying on of hands originates from a position of authority.

a. Examples:

1. Israel "blessed" his grandsons. (the greater to the lesser)
2. Jesus blessed the children, who had no status or rights.
3. Aaron, the Priest of Israel, blessed the congregation.
4. Jesus, the perfect Son of God, blessed the crowd.
5. The Apostles laid hands on the newly ordained deacons (Acts 13).
6. The Apostle Paul and the Presbytery laid hands on the young man, Timothy (1 Tim. 4)

b. I want to be careful with this:

1. But in these instances, each of them had something of value to give that came from God.
2. For Israel, it was a heritage and a Promise.
3. For Aaron, it was forgiveness given through the ordained, priestly ministry.
4. For Paul and the Apostles, it was a spiritual authority and empowerment.
5. For Jesus, it was all power, love, and authority.

c. As believers, we can bless not because of who we are but because of what Jesus has done.

1. When we bless someone in Jesus' name, I am not thinking of my resources, I'm thinking of Jesus'.
2. When I bless you in Jesus' name, I'm declaring that God has been good to me and I believe He will be good to you too.
3. And I can bless you because Ephesians 1:3 says God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

d. Blessings are not defined by things and finances but are, first and foremost, the reality that Jesus has chosen us.

1. On my worst days, I'm blessed because of Jesus.
2. On my best days, I'm blessed because of Jesus.
3. My circumstances do not dictate the reality of God's blessings upon my life.
4. Because of Jesus, you and I have a blessing worth passing on.

#4. We can't bless what God has cursed.

- a. We do not have the authority to bless what God has cursed.
- b. A terrible example is found in the recent announcement of Pope Francis allowing priests to bless homosexual relationships:

1. Sarah Kate Ellis, president of GLAAD writes, "By removing barriers to priests blessing LGBTQ couples, the Pope accurately recognizes that LGBTQ people and our relationships are worthy of the same affirmation and support in the Church, and this strengthens couples in their faith and to the community."³
2. The Pope cannot give priests permission to bless these couples.

- c. Are you calling blessed in your life actions and relationships that God has cursed?

Apply: Where do we start?

A. Start at home.

³ https://glaad.org/pope-francis-allows-priests-to-bless-same-sex-couples/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAlJKuBhAdEiwAnZb7lZ_wmw4-Ezy5CjY40D9l_o-qJI6Np8OPHyPOZSStLZ9X-einXFceqRoC6TEQAvD_BwE

1. Don't start laying hands upon people if you aren't blessing those in your family.

2. May our prayers sound more like Israel who said:

¹⁵Then he blessed Joseph and said:

*The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,*

*¹⁶the angel who has redeemed me from all harm—
may he bless these boys.*

And may they be called by my name

and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,

and may they grow to be numerous within the land.

B. Start with the young ones:

1. The disciples were angry with Jesus in Mark 10 because people were bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed.

2. But these were the exact people Jesus wanted to bless.

3. The laying on of hands was most often laid upon people who were not in a position to bless.

4. Dare I say, that it is time the adults stopped cursing our youth and started blessing them!

5. **Your greatest harvest happens in fields you bless, not the ones you curse.**

C. Be mindful of your blessing.

1. Don't allow your blessing to lose value.

2. Mean what you say.

3. The blessing needs to come from a place of integrity, depth, and relationship with Jesus.

D. Laying on of hands isn't a Pentecostal practice; it's a Christian practice.

1. Laying on of hands is not a fringe practice or belief.
2. It is a foundational doctrine.

I'm not advocating that you start touching people and start acting weird.

I am advocating that we start laying hands upon:

The sick and see them recover

The young and see them blessed

The called and see them anointed and appointed

The old and young so that All people may be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

3. Would you ask God this week to teach you concerning the laying on of hands and show you how to practice this foundational doctrine?