

Laying on of hands part 3

2.25.24

HANDS OF COMMISSIONING

Hebrews 6:1–3 (CSB)

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.

Acts 6:1–7 (CSB)

6 In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. ²The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch. ⁶They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

1 Timothy 4:11–16 (CSB)

¹¹Command and teach these things. ¹²Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. ¹³Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. ¹⁴Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. ¹⁵Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Pay close attention to your life and your teaching;

persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 5:22 (ESV)

²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

1. Laying on of hands is used at least three ways.

A. To initiate blessing,

1. impart something like healing and Spirit Baptism,
2. To set apart and commission.

B. When we lay hands on people, we participate in a Christian doctrine and practice.

1. It's a moment of public need and faith.
2. I feel that we should prayerfully and intentionally practice this more often, not less.
3. Don't be weird.
4. But do be bold and empowered.

C. Today, I want to address the last usage of laying on of hands: commissioning and ordaining.

1. Christianity isn't a sitting religion; it's a going religion.
2. Wherever the Gospel has been, God's people have planted churches, built hospitals, started schools, and made disciples.
3. And while these things are taking root, God calls some from that group to go elsewhere and do the same.
4. **Where there is a bold calling, there must be a bold empowering.**

2. All are called, but not all callings are the same.

A. A helpful way to distinguish this is through the lens of offices.

1. We all teach, but not all are teachers.
2. We all practice pastoral care, but not all are pastors.
3. We all are invited to prophesy, but not all are prophets.
4. The skills are similar, but the weight is different.

B. For example, A substitute teacher does not have the same level of responsibility as a full-time teacher.

1. A pee-wee basketball coach may teach the same skills as a Division 1 coach, but their roles and responsibilities are different.
2. The expectations of an amateur sprinter versus an Olympic sprinter are different.

C. This is called **the doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers.**

1. This means that all are called to do the work of the ministry, but God and the congregation set some apart to devote more of their lives to the singular work.
2. This was true for the 7 Deacons, Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13, and the pastor Timothy.
3. Not better; different
 - a. Not special; set apart,
 - b. Not distracted but devoted, commissioned, and ordained for the work of the ministry.

3. Biblical examples.

A. The Apostles were called to devote themselves to prayer and teaching.

1. The church was growing, and the Apostles could not handle all of the responsibility of serving the people.
2. They needed additional help, so the congregation set apart 7 men, full of the Spirit, to serve the congregation and the widows.
3. Two men, Stephen and Philip, were also used as evangelists.

4. The Apostles, whom Jesus had set apart, laid hands of empowerment over them, blessed them, shared authority with them, and set them apart from the congregation.

5. Not better; different.

B. Another example is in Acts 13, where the Lord sets Paul and Barnabas apart for full-time missionary work.

1. Paul and Barnabas weren't better, they were set apart.

2. To set them apart, the congregation laid hands upon them.

C. For Timothy, there was a moment when the gifts and calling of God was recognized by the church community and leadership.

1. Because of this, they elders or presbyters, laid hands upon him and Paul says that a gift was imparted with the laying on of hands.

2. In other words, the calling needed the empowering that takes place when godly people pray and lay hands upon those God is calling.

3. For the last few years I've had the opportunity to participate in the ordination of ministers for the Assemblies of God.

a. It is a time when men and women who have demonstrated vocational calling and have shown themselves to be approved and capable stand before the presbytery.

b. We then lay hands upon them, pray over them, and commission them into ordained ministry.

c. By doing this, we are helping carry on this foundational teaching and practice of laying on of hands.

4. A few key ideas:

#1. Who teaches you matters.

¹⁶Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

a. In Acts and Paul's letter to Timothy, he stresses that ordained ministers must be people of integrity.

b. **Ministers who build without integrity leave behind broken churches, broken ministries, and broken people.**

c. This is why Paul told Timothy to not be hasty with the laying on of hands.

d. This is a serious and meaningful gesture, and the most important characteristics of a godly minister is their relationship with Jesus and their integrity.

#2. Ministers need to be knowledgeable. 1 Tim. 4:16.

¹⁶Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

a. Weekly and even daily, I am confronted with holy and private moments of people and families.

1. The most important work that I do in Licking has nothing to do with budgets or buildings but people.

2. Daily, I'm called upon to serve people through various means, and ministers must be knowledgeable.

c. Ministers need to know the Lord, His Word, and His people.

1. Beware of ministers who love the Word and don't love people.

2. Beware of ministers who love people but don't love the Word.

#3. Formal authority is biblical but prone to abuse.

- a. The calling into ministry comes from God, is confirmed by leadership, and is affirmed by the people.
- b. But all leaders are people, and people do peoply things.
- c. In my world of church ministry, spiritual abuse is a hot topic.
 1. Essentially, spiritual abuse is when people in authority use that authority to the detriment of the people they are called to serve.
 2. I never advocate for people to stay in abusive situations.
 3. I also want to caveat by saying there is a difference between abuse and discipline.
 4. When we invite someone to be our pastor, we should expect them to:
 - a. Love us and correct us.
 - b. To affirm what needs to be affirmed and correct what needs to be corrected.
 - c. To teach the whole counsel of God not just the fun parts.
- d. **Our expectations for pastors should not be lower than our expectations for coaches.**
 1. If a coach sees your kid having bad form shooting a basketball, setting a volleyball, or approaching a baseball, you expect them to correct and teach.
 2. If they allow bad habits without addressing them, we call them bad coaches.
 3. Can I ask you to be open to correction from your spiritual leaders just as you would a coach? (maybe pastors should be allowed to make congregants run laps.)
 - a. People pay all kinds of money for personal trainers and coaches.

b. But if a pastor, lovingly and rightly, corrects, we feel the Lord calling us to a different church.

c. This is to our detriment.

#4. Not all should teach, pastor, or lead a congregation, but maybe you should.

a. We all have callings.

1. All have gifts, but not the same gifts.

2. You must nurture the gift.

b. Paul told Timothy not to neglect the gift.

1. The opposite of neglect is nurture.

2. Some gifts require the blessing of the community and the leadership.

3. Public gifts, like teaching and preaching, need public affirmation and spiritual empowerment.

4. If God is calling you to minister publicly, then embrace the process of nurturing that gift.

c. But if your gift is to serve in government, raise your family, teach in the school, drive a truck, or anything else, don't neglect that gift or calling.

Apply: What does this have to do with you?

A. What is my prayer for you?

1. Let me be prayerfully specific for two of the larger, working, groups within the church: Teachers and Prison/Government employees.

2. I pray: *That every teacher and educator will be so encouraged and empowered in their calling that you no longer count down the days until school is out because of the life-changing impact that is happening.*

One elementary teacher said, "a good teacher must be content to be a sower rather than a reaper. Teachers must not expect immediate, specific, concrete results of their efforts. If they have any effect upon their students, it will show up later in life, long after their students have left them."¹

3. I pray *That every person employed in the prison will see, daily, the victorious light of Jesus flow through the cells and catwalks of the facility. That the culture of leadership will be so transformed and transfixed that, although it remains a hard place to work, it is a desirable place to work.*

4. Every person involved in the people business will be used by God to see their customers and clients flourish, grow, and mature.

5. I pray that every parent will see the Lord's goodness upon the many generations.

6. And I pray that in the process of life, in its fullness, busyness, craziness, and wildness, that the God of all comfort will bless you with every spiritual blessing, will affirm His calling upon your life, and you may experience for yourself and others the healing and life-transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

B. I can pray this because:

Laying on of hands is not elective: it's elementary

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

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

¹ Willimon. *Pastor*. 316.