

**FOUNDATION**  
**Instruction About Laying on of Hands**  
**Mark 16:16-18; Acts 5:12; Acts 13:1-3**

**Mark 16:16-18**~ <sup>16</sup>Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup>And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; <sup>18</sup>they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (ESV)

**Acts 5:12**~ <sup>12</sup>Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico.

**Acts 13:1-3**~ <sup>1</sup>Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup>Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

I. Introduction

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters. It is a privilege to be with you this morning. It is a privilege because we are created to be in a community. We need to be in a community of Christians. I need you and you need me and we all need each other. In fact, we are saved for God’s purpose,<sup>1</sup> that is true, but part of that purpose is once we are saved He places us in a Community of Christians ... a Spiritual Society of the Saints. That is the Father’s will for us ... to be joined together. Paul tells us that in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

**1 Corinthians 12:13**~ <sup>13</sup>For in one Spirit we were all baptized [that is, immersed] into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

He places us together. He baptizes us into one body ... into one community. And as we moved into the next Foundation, the Doctrine about Laying on of Hands, we are reminded of what we are to do within that Community of Christians.

The Laying on of Hands is something that we Southern Baptist do not often practice, much less talk about. When was the last time you lay your hands on someone (in a positive way, of course)? And yet, it is one of the fundamental foundations of the Christian faith. It is the basic practice of the Community of Christians. And I personally think that we are less better off because we fail to practice such basic teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 John 2:12 and Titus 2:14.

**1 John 2:12**~ <sup>12</sup>I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.

**Titus 2:14**~ <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

## II. Visible Sign of a Spiritual Reality

But what is the Laying on of Hands? Is it an ancient observance or is it a present practice? Is it something of the past or is it for the Church?

Allow me to give you some preliminary thoughts about the Instruction about Laying on of Hands.

### 1. First, Laying on of Hands is a Visible sign of an Invisible Reality

We as physical human beings many times need to see things physically as a sign and symbol of what is happening spiritually, things that we cannot see. We are just wired that way.

Like when we were saved, we have died with Christ in His death and raise to life in His resurrection. That is what happened in the spiritual realm. That is a reality. We just cannot see it. But Jesus wants us to do is be baptized with water so that we can physically see with our physical eyes that we are buried with Christ when we are immersed in water, and that we are raised with Christ when we come out of the water. It is a very beautiful and emotional ceremony that pictures what happened to us in the unseen spiritual realm.

### 2. Second, Laying on of Hands is an outward Sign.

There is nothing mystical about Laying on of Hands. It is a sign, not a substance. Some of our Charismatic brethren take the Laying on of Hands too far, in my humble opinion. They believe that when we lay hands on a person, something mystical occurs. The act of laying on of hands itself produces a certain result such as healing or gifting.

The Laying on of Hands is not mystical but a mean that God uses to impart blessings. In other words, it is not the Laying on of Hands in and of itself that produces blessings. It is God who blesses by the act of Laying on of Hands. We know this is a fact because sometimes God heals by the use of Laying on of Hands and sometimes God heals without the Laying on of Hands.

The Laying on of Hands is a sing, not a substance. It is a means, it is not mystical.

### 3. Third, Laying on of Hands is Sought After.

People in the Old Testament and the New want people to lay hands on them. We are resistant to having people lay hands on us, but the biblical characters desire and even implore by have hands laid on them.

Let me just give you a few examples:

In Matthew 9:18, Jesus was teaching in public when a ruler came and begged Jesus to lay his hand on the ruler's daughter so that she would be healed and live.

**Matthew 9:18~<sup>18</sup>** While he [Jesus] was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him [that is, he was begging], saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

Also in Mark 7:32, the people brought a deaf and mute man to Jesus for him to lay hands on this deaf and mute man.

**Mark 7:32~<sup>32</sup>** And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

The NASB said that they "implored" Jesus to lay hands on the deaf and mute man.

Let me give you one more. In Matthew 19:13, people even brought children for the purpose of Jesus laying his hands on them.

**Matthew 19:13~<sup>13</sup>** Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray.

### III. Reasons to Laying on of Hands

Why do we lay hands on people? Let us trace the progression of the Laying on of Hands from the Old Testament to the New. I think this will give us a better understanding of why we should practice the laying on of hands on people.

In the Old Testament, there are many reasons why people would lay hands on others.

1. First, Laying on of Hands is to Harm a person.

The first way the Old Testament people lay hands on others is used to inflict harm on others. Nehemiah threatened to do this when he and the Jews were trying to rebuild the city wall. There were some hooligans standing outside the wall during the Sabbath tempting the Jews to violate the Sabbath law, which was one of the reasons that the Jews were casted out the land. So the Sacred Text said that Nehemiah ...

**Nehemiah 13:21~<sup>21</sup>** But I warned them and said to them, "Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath.

It is also used of Haman who wanted to kill not only Mordecai but all the Jews in the book of Esther.

**Esther 3:5-6~<sup>5</sup>** And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. **6** But he disdained to lay hands on

Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

God also threat to lay hands on Pharaoh if he did not let His people go.

**Exodus 7:4~** <sup>4</sup> Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.

So one way the term “to lay hands” is used on people is to seek them harm.

This idea of laying on of hands to harm a person is also seen in the New Testament.

**Luke 20:19~** <sup>19</sup> The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

**Luke 21:12~** <sup>12</sup> “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.

**Luke 22:53~** <sup>53</sup> While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.”

This is not the Laying on of Hands that is the Foundation of the Christian faith. We are called to not harm anyone but love our enemies. We are called to leave the judgment to God and to own no one anything but to love.

2. Second, Laying on of Hands is used for as a Witness.

When we lay hands on people (in the Old Testament), we are declaring that we are an eye witness to something. We identify that which we lay hands on is cursed by God.

For example, in Leviticus 24, a man was caught using the name of the Lord in vain. He blasphemed the Name of God by calling a curse. So God cursed him and sentenced him to death. In verse 14, the LORD says ...

**Leviticus 24:14~** <sup>14</sup> “Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

The same thing is done in the many sacrifices where the priest laid hands on an animal, witnessing that the sins of the nations was on this animal.

**Leviticus 1:4~** <sup>4</sup> He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.

**Leviticus 3:2,8,13**~<sup>2</sup> He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slay it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar ...<sup>8</sup> and he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slay it before the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar ...<sup>13</sup> and he shall lay his hand on its head and slay it before the tent of meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.

**Leviticus 4:4,15,24,29,33**~<sup>4</sup> He shall bring the bull to the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull and slay the bull before the LORD ...<sup>15</sup> Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slain before the LORD ...<sup>24</sup> He shall lay his hand on the head of the male goat and slay it in the place where they slay the burnt offering before the LORD; it is a sin offering ...<sup>29</sup> He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slay the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering ...<sup>33</sup> He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slay it for a sin offering in the place where they slay the burnt offering.

**Leviticus 16:21**~<sup>21</sup> Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send *it* away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who *stands* in readiness.

We do not see this kind of usage in the New Testament. For one thing, we do not sacrifice any animals for Jesus is the final sacrifice that cleanses us of our sins. But suffices to say, when we lay hand on a person or animal, we are testifying and witnessing something about that person.

The next few reasons why we lay hands on people is seen and practice in the New Testament.

### 3. Third, Laying on of Hands is used for Blessings.

Another reason why the Old Testament laid hands on people is to bless them.

**Genesis 48:14-15**~<sup>14</sup> And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn).<sup>15</sup> And he blessed Joseph and said ...

By the way, the laying on of hands is usually on the head.

**Matthew 19:13-15**~<sup>13</sup> Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,<sup>14</sup> but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."<sup>15</sup> And he laid his hands on them and went away.

I wonder why we do not lay hands on our children and bless them.

We should learn to bless each other. We should learn to lay our hands on our children and bless them.

4. Fourth, Laying on of Hands is used for Ordaining into office.

In the Old Testament, hands were laid on the heads on those who were consecrated to take care of the temple.

**Numbers 8:10~<sup>10</sup>** When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites,

Hands were also laid on those who would lead the nation of Israel.

**Numbers 27:18-20~<sup>18</sup>** So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. <sup>19</sup>Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. <sup>20</sup>You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.

In the New Testament, hands were laid on people who would be leaders and those who would serve the Church.

**Acts 6:3-4,6~<sup>3</sup>** Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” ... <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

There is nothing magical about the laying on of hands. There is no divine impartation of power on individuals who would lead the Church. These seven men already have good reputation among the Believers. They have already proved themselves to be wise in their dealings before anyone lays his hands on these men.

The reason why we lay hands when ordaining those who would lead the Church for a visible sign that these individuals have been tested and found to be faithful. Lay hands are a way to say, these men have been approved to be imitated because of the Christian character and faithfulness.

**Acts 13:1-3~<sup>1</sup>** Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup>Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Hands are also laid on Barnabas and Saul before they are sent off. So the laying on of hands can be used as a reminder that the Church has commissioned these leaders to serve. Like Timothy who needed a few reminders of his calling.

**1 Timothy 4:14~** <sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup>Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

5. Fifth, Jesus laid hands on people to Heal them.

**Mark 6:5~** <sup>5</sup>And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

When Jesus ascended to heaven, He left a standing order to the apostles to ...

**Mark 16:18~** <sup>18</sup>... lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

The Apostles are Jesus' hand on earth.

**Acts 5:12~** <sup>12</sup>Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

6. Sixth, the apostles laid hands on people to Baptize them in the Holy Spirit.

These first five reasons why hands are laid on people are seen and practiced both in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. However, there is one thing different that happens in the New Testament. One more reason why hands are laid on that did not occur in the Old Testament. That is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 8:17-19~** <sup>17</sup>Then they [Peter and John] laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

**Acts 9:17~** <sup>17</sup>So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

**Acts 19:6~** <sup>6</sup>And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying.

This is something new ... never happened in before Jesus came. As we talked about last week, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive power to serve. And one way in which Believers can receive the Holy Spirit is through the laying on of hands.

#### IV. Conclusion

So we can see that there are many reasons why we would lay hand on a person. It is used to show approval on the person having hands laid on him or her. When we lay hands on a person for ordination, we are saying that we approve of this person. We have tested this person. We have observed this person. This person is worthy to be imitated because he imitates Christ. That is why Paul cautions us to not be hasty in laying hands on people because we may share in their sins.

**1 Timothy 5:22~<sup>22</sup>** Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

But the new wonderful thing that the New Testament introduces through the laying on of hands is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. If you want to be baptized by the Holy Spirit, you can as some Believers who are above reproach to lay their hands on you and bless you so that you may receive the Holy Spirit.

#### V. The Blessing

**Presider:** May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

**Congregation:** And also to you.