

Elementary Principles: Laying Hands

Date: Feb 5, 2023

Text: Hebrews 5:11-6:3

Welcome

I love you.

Open your bibles to: Hebrews 5:11

Text

11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, ***since you have become dull of hearing.*** 12 For though ***by this time you ought to be teachers,*** you need someone to teach you again ***the basic principles*** of the oracles of God. ***You need milk,*** not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is ***unskilled in the word of righteousness,*** since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment ***trained by constant practice*** to distinguish good from evil.

6 Therefore let us leave ***the elementary doctrine of [Messiah]*** and ***go on to maturity,*** not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, ***the laying on of hands,*** the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.

This is God's word.

Intro

We're in our 4th week of working through ***the basics of following Jesus,*** what the author of Hebrews calls "elementary" and "milk".

And to catch up our people who've been serving in the nursery and kids church last month, Jera, Megan, and Michelle, let's recap real quick.

So far we've covered

- Repentance from dead works

Stop doing the things that lead to death. Don't get drunk. Don't sleep around. Don't hate your brother.

- Faith toward God

Trust that God and His word are reliable concerning punishment and reward and live accordingly.

- Instructions before baptisms

And after someone is repenting and believing, give sufficient time to teach them the ways of Jesus and ***allow them to count the cost before they are immersed into His name.***

Which leaves us with 3 to go:

- The laying on of hands
- The resurrection of the dead
- And eternal judgment

Laying Hands in the Torah

So, similar to last week, I didn't have a good grasp on this elementary teaching, so to discover what's meant by ***the laying on of hands*** I had to go back to the Torah.

What is ***"the laying on of hands?"***

Blessing

And the first thing Moses tells us is that **hands are laid for passing on blessing.**

At the end of Jacob's (Israel's), Joseph brings his sons Ephraim and Mannaseh to him.

(Gen 48:8-10, 14-16, ESV)

And he said, "Bring them to me, please, ***that I may bless them.***" 10 ...and he kissed them and embraced them.

So how does he confer blessing on them?

14 And ***Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim...*** and his left ***hand on the head of Manasseh...*** 15 And ***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*** long to this day,
16 the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, ***bless the boys;***
and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Beautiful, sacred moment.

That’s one instance of laying on hands; it’s for conferring blessing.

Ownership/Identity

Next, the laying on of hands is used to ***announce ownership of/and give identity to.***

This shows up particularly in Leviticus in the ***“hand-leaning”*** rite.

- To approach God,
- they bring their animal
- and the priest checks it out to make sure it’s blameless,
- and if it passes inspection,
- the worshiper will then lay his hand on the animal's head,
- and press down on it heavily (*Hb. samak*), not lightly.

So if you’ve ever been in a pentecostal prayer meeting or altar call and you’re a little miffed that they’re pushing people down, don’t be mad, just know they’re practicing *samak*.

(Leviticus 1:4, ESV)

2 When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD.... He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. 4 ***He shall lay his hand on the head*** of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

And in doing so, the worshiper is saying, ***“This is mine”*** signifying ownership and identity, ***“This animal identifies with me and I with it, we are the same.”***

Make sense?

First, laying hands confers blessing.

Second, laying hands signifies ownership and gives identity.

Ordination/Conferring Spirit

Third, laying hands *“ordains”* and oftentimes confers the Spirit of God.

(Nu 8:5–13, ESV)

6 “Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them.... 9 And you shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting and assemble the whole congregation of the people of Israel. 10

When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel ***shall lay their hands on the***

Levites, 11 and Aaron shall ***offer the Levites before the LORD*** (just like they would offer the animal

before the Lord, so that identity and ownership thing) ***as a wave offering from the people of Israel,***

(why?) ***that they may do the service of the LORD.***

We’re laying hands on them to set them apart for their tabernacle service.

(Ex 30:30, ESV)

30 You shall ***anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them***, that they may serve me as priests.

This involved assumedly hands and oil.

(Ps 133:1–3)

1 Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

2 It is ***like the precious oil on the head,*** running down on the beard, on the beard ***of Aaron,***

running down on the collar of his robes! 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains

of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded ***the blessing,*** life forevermore.

Next, wild and wonderful stuff, Numbers 11:

(Nu 11:16–17, ESV)

16 “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. 17 And ***I will come down and talk with you there.***

And then what happens?

And ***I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them,*** and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

Now, the laying on of hands wasn't mentioned there, but we can infer that Moses did lay his hands on them because of another story later in Numbers.

(Nu 27:15–23, ESV)

15 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16 “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, ***appoint a man*** (ordain, set apart) ***over the congregation*** 17 who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, ***that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.***” 18 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.***

How is Moses to appoint a man? By laying his hand on him.

19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and ***you shall commission him*** (ordain him, set him apart) ***in their sight.***

Then what?

20 You shall ***invest him with some of your authority,*** that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.... 22 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, 23 and ***he laid his hands on him and commissioned him*** as the LORD directed through Moses.

And it doesn't say it here, but Deuteronomy tells us that Joshua not only received some of Moses' authority, but also more of the Spirit.

(Dt 34:9, ESV)

9 And Joshua the son of Nun was ***full of the spirit of wisdom,*** (why?) ***for Moses had laid his hands on him.***

So in the Torah, hands are laid to confer blessing, to show ownership and identity, and to ordain/confer the Spirit.

What about in the times of Jesus and the apostles?

Laying Hands in the NT

Blessing

Let's see if they blessed people by laying hands.

(Mk 10:13–16, CSB)

13 People were bringing little children to him ***in order that he might touch them,*** but the disciples rebuked them.

Jesus told them to stop being jerks and then:

16 After taking them in his arms, ***he laid his hands on them and blessed them.***

(Mk 5:21–23, CSB)

22 One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet

23 and begged him earnestly, "My little daughter is dying. ***Come and lay your hands on her*** so that she can get well, and live.

Would healing be considered blessing? Absolutely. And the assumption is this happens through the laying on of hands.

(Mk 16:15–18, CSB)

15 “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever ***believes and is baptized*** will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name...***they will lay hands on the sick***, and they will get well.”

These Jewish apostles will be a blessing to all the nations, in one sense, **by laying hands and blessing through healing.**

This is what happened and is happening.

After Paul is blinded, the Lord says to Ananias:

(Ac 9:11–12, 17-18)

11 “Get up and go to the street called Straight...to the house of Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, since he is praying there. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and ***placing his hands on him*** so that he may regain his sight.”

Ananias is not an apostle, not an elder or deacon, just a Jewish dude obedient to His Messiah.

17 Ananias went and entered the house. ***He placed his hands on him*** and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me ***so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.***”

And what happened when he laid hands?

18 At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and ***he regained his sight. Then*** he got up and was ***baptized.***

Laying hands conferred blessing through healing, but also was the conduit for Paul being filled with the Spirit.

And then Paul passes the blessing on:

(Ac 28:8–9)

8 Publius's father was in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went to him, and praying and ***laying his hands on him, he healed him.*** 9 After this, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. Assumedly through the laying on of hands.

And the post Acts churches followed the same pattern:

(James 5:14, CSB)

14 Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, ***anointing him with oil*** in the name of the Lord.

No hands mentioned there, but probably, right?

It's the same hand laying tradition from the Tanakh. We lay hands to bless.

Ordaining

Next, just like the Tanakh, hands are laid to ordain or set apart.

(Ac 6:3–6, CSB)

3 Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."...6 They had them stand before the apostles, ***who prayed and laid their hands on them.*** to set them apart for specific service in the body.

(Acts 13:1-3, CSB)

Now in the church at Antioch....2 As 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."***

How did they do this?

3 Then after they had fasted, prayed, and ***laid hands on them,*** they sent them off

Post Acts, same sort of pattern:

(Titus 1:5, CSB)

The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, **to appoint elders in every town.**

No mention of laying hands here, but it's assumed because of what Paul tells Timothy as he's appointing elders:

(1 Timothy 5:22, ESV)

Do not be hasty in **the laying on of hands...**

Don't ordain, don't set apart, a man for special service in the body too quickly.

Same as the Tanakh.

Conferring the Spirit/Identity/Ownership

And then the last one, which is weird and wonderful, a measure of the Spirit is imparted through the laying on of hands.

(Ac 8:14–19, CSB)

14 When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 After they went down there, they prayed for them so that the Samaritans **might receive the Holy Spirit** because he had not yet come down on any of them. 16 (They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then Peter and John **laid their hands on them,** (and what happened?) **and they received the Holy Spirit.**

Notice here, we're getting both the giving of the Spirit ***and conferring of identity/ownership.***

Samaritans and Jews were not on the best terms, but by the apostles laying hands on them, it signifies to the early movement, ***"We is them, they is us, neither Jew nor greek, all one in Messiah"***

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, **"Give me this power also so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit."**

It's like an assumed function.

(Ac 19:1–6, CSB)

They find some more disciples who hadn't heard about Acts 2 yet.

5 When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And ***when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them***, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy.

Look at how this functioned in Timothy's own life:

(1 Ti 4:11–14, CSB)

12 Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers....13....give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. 14 ***Don't neglect the gift that is in you;***

When did Timothy receive this gift?

it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders

(2 Tim 1:6, CSB)

I remind you to rekindle ***the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands...***

Timothy, Jewish mom, Gentile dad, hears the gospel, repents, trust in God, gets circumcised because for Paul an uncircumcised Jew is outrageous, and then followed some sequence of:

- baptism into Messiah
- and the laying on hands
- by which he was blessed,
- ordained and set apart,
- and received a measure of the Spirit.

Laying Hands in Hebrews 6: Logical Flow/Initiation

Do you see all of these basic elements kinda going together?

The pattern isn't the same every time, but there's a little consistency in repentance, faith, baptism, and then... **the laying on of hands.**

It seems to be a normal part of how things are supposed to go down.

Basic to following Jesus is

- repentance from dead works
- and of faith toward God,
- and of instruction about baptism,
- **the laying on of hands,**

A time where the newly baptized disciple is

- Blessed
- Prophesied over
- Invested with a new identity in Jesus and into the local church (*he is us, we is him*)
- And receives a measure of the Spirit

Go On To Maturity

If this was basic to them, I want it to be basic to us.

- **We want a regular ministry of calling people to repentance from works that lead to death.**

And they actually stop sinning.

- **We want a regular ministry of calling people to trust and allegiance towards God.**

And they actually trust Him and start down a path of living like God actually rewards and punishes.

- **We want a regular ministry of doing a thorough job of instructing new disciples in the ways of Jesus and making sure they count the cost before baptism.**

And they count it, see it's worth it, and go under the water.

- **And we want a regular ministry of laying hands, just in our normal church life where we pray over each other for blessing and healing, or for ordaining and commissioning specific ministers**
- **And always when a new disciple is baptized, the elders lay hands, the Spirit of God rushes on them, and they bless and prophesy over the soaking wet disciple and the Spirit of God is conferred.**

And it happens.

And these new disciples spend the rest of their days like Timothy, not neglecting the gift that is given to them, but kindling the gift of God that was given.

This kind of regular ministry will cause us to grow and go on to maturity.

Evangelism

- No repentance
- No faith
- No baptism
- No laying on of hands

Today is the day to believe the gospel and start with the basics.

Elders Lay Hands