

Transmitting God's Power to Others - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Laying on of hands is a vital transaction that transmits God's power and authority, recognizes God's appointment, sets apart for a certain task or ministry, endorses or gives authority, and equips.

Duration: 28:09

Scripture: Numbers 27:18

Topics: "Laying On Hands", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the significance of laying on of hands in transmitting God's power and authority for continuity in the body of Christ. It explores the spiritual purposes of laying on of hands, such as transmitting blessings, authority, wisdom, the Holy Spirit, and commissioning individuals for ministry. The sermon delves into Old Testament examples like Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses appointing Joshua, and Elisha imparting power. It also discusses New Testament instances of laying on of hands for healing, imparting the Holy Spirit, and commissioning believers.

Transcript

Many of us would probably be a little surprised to find that laying on of hands is amongst the foundation doctrines because very little is said about it currently in most congregations. But if you pause and consider, it's extremely logical. It has to be there because laying on of hands or transmitting God's power and authority is the thing that brings continuity to the body of Christ.

It brings continuity between a senior minister and a junior minister and it brings continuity between one generation and the next. So the essential function of this ministry of laying on of hands is to provide continuity in the body of Christ. And in some traditions this continuity they claim to have preserved from the days of the Apostle Peter until now.

I'm not considering that claim but I'm just pointing out that the reasoning behind it is logical. We need a way to continue from generation to generation, from ministry to ministry. And this way has been provided in the scripture by this ordinance, I would call it, of laying on of hands.

And it's interesting, we find it in the first book of the Bible and really it extends from then on through the whole history of God's people. It is an essential element in the history of God's people. I would say there are certain spiritual purposes which it embraces.

First of all let's notice the fact that to put your hand on somebody is a natural human reaction. A mother has a sick baby who has a fever, almost without reasoning she'll put her hand on the forehead of the child. Or two men meet who haven't seen one another for a long time and in one way or another they'll lay their hands on their shoulders or they'll shake hands but they'll make contact with their hands.

The hand is one of the main ways that human beings make contact with one another. Now in the spiritual context I suggest that there are certain purposes which are accomplished. First of all to transmit.

In the Bible we find the laying on of hands used to transmit blessings, authority, wisdom, the Holy Spirit, a spiritual gift or a ministry. Let me just give you that list once more. It's used to transmit blessing, authority, wisdom, the Holy Spirit, a spiritual gift or a ministry.

And secondly it's used to commission. It is the biblical way of commissioning a person for a place of service in the body of Christ. And as such it recognizes God's appointment.

We need to understand that things in the church are not settled by votes. God is not subject to votes. A lot of churches vote for deacons or vote for pastors or vote for somebody.

That really is not scriptural, because it's God who makes the appointments. Jesus said to his apostles you have not chosen me, I have chosen you. And I believe that's true of every valid function in ministry and appointment in the church.

It's not man who made the choice, but God. Because Jesus Christ is head over all things to the church which is his body. And I don't believe that appointments that are not made on the authority of Jesus really have any validity.

But I believe the appointment is not to to make a person a certain thing, but to recognize what God has decided that person should be. I believe if you have a meeting in a church to discuss deacons, your purpose should not be to decide who you would like to have as a deacon. Your purpose should be to decide whom God has chosen as a deacon.

It's a very different attitude. We are somewhat corrupted by democracy. Which has very little place in the Bible or in the church.

I won't go any further into that because it's rather controversial and I don't have time to get involved in controversy. Secondly, apart from recognizing, laying on of hands is used to set apart for a certain task or ministry. Thirdly, it's used to endorse or to give authority.

And fourthly, it's used to equip. That is to transmit the spiritual gift or the spiritual authority or whatever else is needed by the person to carry out his God-appointed task. So let me just give that list again because it's important.

This function of laying on of hands in commissioning a people, is used to recognize but not appoint the persons of God's choice. It's used to set apart a person to a certain task or ministry. It's used to endorse a person with authority.

And it's used to equip him with all the spiritual authority or gifts that that person will need. Now let's look at some examples first of all from the Old Testament. We'll turn to Genesis chapter 48 and read from verse 8 through verse 19.

Which is a very, very interesting passage. In this passage Joseph brings his two sons to his father Jacob, who is also called Israel. For Jacob to bless his grandsons.

And let me say, second to the blessing of God himself. I think the most desired blessing is the blessing of a father or a grandfather. And I would say to all of you, especially you younger people.

If by any means possible, obtain your father's blessing on whatever you do. It is very, very important. It's second only to the blessing of God himself.

And you will see in the Bible, great importance was attached to a father's blessing. So here we are in verse 8. Then Israel, that is Jacob, saw Joseph's sons and said, who are these? And Joseph said to his father these are my sons whom God has given me in this place, that's Egypt. And he said, that's Jacob, please bring them to me and I will bless them.

Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel, that's Jacob, said to Joseph, I had not thought to see your face.

But in fact God has also shown me your offspring. If there's one thing that moves me to tears, it's the faithfulness of God. It's not grief, it's not sorrow.

But every time I contemplate the faithfulness of God, I'm overcome with tears. So Joseph brought them from beside his knees and he bowed down with his face to the earth. Notice the respect that the people in the Bible showed for parents and for the elderly.

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand towards Israel's left hand and Manasseh with his left hand towards Israel's right hand. And brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger.

And his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly. For Manasseh was the firstborn. Normally the firstborn would receive the greater blessing and that would be transmitted by the right hand.

And Joseph specially arranged that Manasseh was to come, who was the elder, was to come opposite Jacob's right hand. But Jacob, prompted by the Holy Spirit, crossed his hands and laid his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. And he blessed Joseph and said, God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil.

You know where that happened? When Jacob met the angel at Peniel, that was what he was referring to. The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lands. Let my name be named upon them.

And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. And you see also how important it is to transmit a name.

So many of these things are just going out of fashion today. But they've never gone out of fashion with God. Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him.

So he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, not so my father. For this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.

But his father refused and said, I know my son, I know. He also shall become a people. And he also shall be great.

But truly his younger brother shall be greater than he. And his descendants shall become a multitude of nations. So he blessed them that day, saying by you Israel will bless.

Saying may God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh. And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh. That's a very vivid scene isn't it.

You see it's very precise. It was understood that the greater blessing would come from the father's right hand. But it was so real that there was a real transmission of something.

It was not just a formality. It wasn't just a ceremony. It was a vital transaction in the lives of two young men.

Ephraim and Manasseh. It really determined their destiny from then onwards. So let us never underestimate the significance and the importance of laying on of hands when it's done by the Holy Spirit.

And then we look in Numbers chapter 27 where we find that Moses was telling the Lord it's time to appoint the leader who's to follow me. Moses knew that he would not go into the promised land. But he was very, very concerned about the people of God, Israel.

And so Moses said to the Lord in Numbers 27 verse 18. Well we look at verse 16, 15. Then Moses spoke to the Lord saying let the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh set a man over the congregation.

I think that's significant. He's the God of the spirits of all flesh. He's the God who knows the spirit of every person.

He sees into the innermost depths of human character. Let the God of the spirits of all flesh set a man over the congregation. Who may go out before them and go in before them.

Who may lead them out and bring them in. That the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd. And the whole Bible tells us from beginning to end.

That sheep without a shepherd will be scattered and will become a prey. It's a message that runs consistently throughout the Bible. And let me suggest to you that unless circumstances are very unusual.

Each of you should have a human shepherd. Who will watch over your soul and care for you. Very, very important.

We'll come back to that a little later as we study some other things. So how did the Lord respond? The Lord said to Moses take Joshua the son of Nun with you. A man in whom is the spirit.

And lay your hand on him and set him before Eliezer the priest. And before all the congregation. And commission him in their sight.

And you shall give some of your authority to him. I like that, not all of your authority. Because Moses had unique authority.

But give him a good portion of your authority. Because he's going to need it. You shall give some of your authority to him.

That all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. He shall stand before Eliezer the priest. Who shall inquire before the Lord for him.

By the judgment of the Urim. At his word, that's Joshua's word, they shall go out. And at his word they shall come in.

Both he and all the children of Israel with him. All the congregation. So Moses did as the Lord commanded him.

He took Joshua and set him before Eliezer the priest. And before all the congregation. And he laid his hands on him and commissioned him.

Just as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses. You see the whole congregation had to see this transmission of authority. From Moses the one whom they'd followed for 40 years, to his successor.

It was a vital transaction for the well-being of all of God's people. Furthermore it was not just a ceremony. Something really happened to Joshua.

And in Deuteronomy chapter 34. We have this interesting comment. Deuteronomy 34 and verse 9. It says, Now Joshua the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom.

For Moses laid his hands on him. So you see what he received from the laying on of hands. He received the spirit of wisdom.

It was not just a formality. Not just a ceremony. It was a real transaction.

Now let's go to one other example in the Old Testament. Which is in 2nd Kings chapter 13. It's the closing scene really, in the ministry of Elisha.

And yet it really wasn't a closing scene. Because you remember Elisha died and was buried. And then a band of raiders came in to invade Israel.

And the men who were going to bury another man, just had to dump the man in Elisha's sepulcher and run off. And when the dead man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life. That's something isn't it.

How wonderful it is that God's power can be transferred in so many strange ways. All right let's read here Elisha in verse, in 2nd Kings 13 verse 14. And Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die.

This is so, what would I say, it's not what you expect. He died of a sickness and yet his bones were so charged with the power of God that when a dead man contacted his bones, he came alive. You can't explain that.

Anyhow, we go on with this story. Joash the king of Israel came down to Elisha and wept over his face and said, Oh my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen. That was the same thing that Elisha himself had said to Elijah when he was taken up in the chariot.

And that contains a message really for all of us. A man who really knows God can be the defense of a nation. He can be stronger than an army.

And Joash who was not a particularly godly king, recognized what Elisha meant to his people. And Elisha said to him, take a bow and some arrows. So he took himself a bow and some arrows.

Then he said to the king of Israel, put your hand on the bow. So he, that's the king, put his hand on the bow and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. And he said open the east window, which was the direction of Syria, the enemy of Israel.

And he opened it. Then Elisha said shoot and he shot. And he said the arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria.

For you must strike the Syrians at Aphek, till you have destroyed them. And we find out that he struck with the arrows three times. And three times Joash defeated the Syrians.

Elisha was angry with him because he should have struck him more times. But what I want to bring out is, it was the putting of Elisha's hands on the hands of the king. When he held the bow that made it effective.

Again it's in the supernatural realm. But it shows that something real can take place when one person lays hands on another. Now let's go to the New Testament.

And I want to consider the purposes indicated in the New Testament for the laying on of hands. First of all to impart healing to the sick. Jesus said when he commissioned his disciples to God in Mark 16, 16 and following.

These signs shall follow them that believe. And the fifth sign was, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. In other words laying hands on the sick was a way of ministering God's healing to the sick.

Now in James chapter 5 verses 14 and 15. There's another ordinance. It says is any sick among you believers, Christians.

Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. So that's similar. They're to pray over him, they're to lay hands on him.

But they're also to anoint him with oil. And oil as you know, I'm sure you know, is always a type of the Holy Spirit. So the oil didn't produce the healing.

But it symbolized the release of the Holy Spirit through that ceremony into the body of the sick person. Now I just have a suggestion to make. What's the difference between just laying hands on or laying hands on anointing with oil? I suggest to you, and this is just approximate, that the laying on of hands without the anointing of oil was for people who were not members of the church.

But for members of the church the ordinance concluded anointing with oil. And again I want to point out to you that the New Testament indicates that normally every believer should be part of a congregation. For he says is any sick among you Christians, let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing with oil.

Now if you go to one church on Sunday morning and another church on Sunday evening, which group of elders will you call for? And if you don't have elders to call for, what will you do when you're sick? See in other words the New Testament assumes, with various exceptions, that a believer shall be a member of a congregation, known to the leadership, recognizing his leadership and having available to him the ministry of the leadership. I feel God wants me to emphasize this. I feel some of you are like the mountain goats.

You're way out ahead of the herd and you don't have a shepherd. And that's a dangerous place to be. It's humbling to submit yourself to human authority.

But God blesses the humble and he resists the proud. So you have to choose. Now there are exceptions, there are situations in which this doesn't apply.

But don't be an exception if you should be part of the rule. Then the next purpose for which laying on of hands was appropriate, is for the imparting of the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in Acts chapter 8 we read first of all how Philip went to a city of Samaria and preached Christ, attested by miracles and signs.

And all the people in the city who believed were baptized. So they were saved because Jesus said he who believes and baptized shall be saved. But the apostles were not content, because they knew there was something missing.

So in Acts 18 verse 14 it says, now when the apostles who went at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God. They sent Peter and John to them, who when they had come down prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet he had fallen upon none of them.

They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So that is again, as I pointed out yesterday, a very clear indication that it's possible to be saved without having in this sense received the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit there is spoken of as falling upon them.

What I called immersion from above. And Niagara Falls immersion. Now verse 17 says, then they the apostles laid hands on them and they the believers received the Holy Spirit.

Now when Simon the magician saw that through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given. He offered them money saying give me this power. But you see it says there, through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given.

And in the next chapter, after Saul had had his encounter with the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road. While he was there in a house in Damascus, unable to see, fasting for three days. Ananias a mere disciple, not an apostle, not a prophet, just a disciple.

Received directions from the Lord to go to the house where Saul was, lay hands on him, pray for him. And it says he laid hands on him and his sight came. He received the Holy Spirit and he was baptized.

So understand laying on of hands is not limited merely to people with a special ministry. In the context of God's will, any person can be directed to lay hands on someone else. Ruth reminded me while we were sitting in the office.

This is really rather an unusual story. We were in Kona in Hawaii. And I'd been very sick.

I was still far from recovered. We were walking down the main street and a man ran up to us, came up to us and said will you pray for me? I'm, I'm sick. I said what's the matter with you? He said I was electrocuted.

If you know what that means. I mean he received a full charge. He was an electrician and his shoulders were paralyzed.

He couldn't raise his hands higher than that. So I was rather reluctant to do it in a way. But he was persistent.

So we stopped in the middle of the street, right outside a restaurant. And we prayed and Ruth laid her hands on his shoulders. The next day in the devotions at Youth with a Mission, he put his hands right up above his head.

He had experienced a miracle through the laying on of hands. Later on he came to see us when we were ministering in Arizona. And he told us that he'd been to a doctor for a checkup.

And the doctor said I've examined your shoulders. There's no way possible that you could ever get your arms above your head. Well that's just a little example of what laying on of hands will do.

Again in Ephesus, we've looked at this before in another context. Paul arrived there and found certain disciples. But they were only disciples of John the Baptist.

Paul explained the gospel to them. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

So laying on of hands is a very scriptural way to transmit the power of the Holy Spirit. Actually there are five main examples in the New Testament and it's interesting. In two cases, on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius, it just came sovereignly from God.

In the other three cases, that's in Samaria with Saul of Tarsus and in Ephesus, it was transmitted through the laying on of hands. So it's a question of how God leads. I've had the privilege of leading literally thousands of people into the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

My particular strength is to get people to believe that if they seek the Lord, they'll receive. I do lay hands on people, but not usually. And I can say by the thousands of people received direct from the Lord.

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