

Study 0025

Scripture Text: *Hebrews 6:2b; Leviticus 16:21*

In this study, we shall proceed to consider the fourth foundational truth—the doctrine of (teaching on) the laying on of hands. Our second scripture text gives us inkling into the principle behind the laying on of hands. The verse talks about what is implied when the high priest lays his hands on the scapegoat. The bible records that this is an act of transferring the sins of the nation of Israel onto the animal, before it is sent into the wilderness.

Thus, the laying on of hands is the transference of a spiritual benefit onto a person on whom hands have been laid. In the laying on of hands, what happens is the invocation of spiritual benefits/blessings in the name of God as hands are laid on the beneficiary (more commonly the head of the individual or some other part of the body). The laying on of hands may involve one person or a group of people laying hands on an individual (**2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:14**). The person or persons laying hands on another person, would be expected to be a person or persons of spiritual authority over the person on whom hands are being laid, and should possess within them such spiritual benefit as is being transferred onto the person on whom hands are laid (**John 3:27-34**). Spiritual benefits include the pronouncement of blessings, healing, Holy Spirit baptism, etc.

Since the laying on of hands is the transference of what is within the person laying hands on another, it is very critical that we be aware of certain things before allowing others lay hands on us. Furthermore, before we lay hands on others we would need to be aware of some things about the person we are laying hands on. For instance, no where in scripture can we find hands being laid on a person requiring deliverance; hence we are told to cast out demons, not lay hands on a demon possessed person! There is also the wrong notion that people have about the laying on of hands in the sense that people think that they can receive anything just by the laying on of hands, regardless of the lifestyle of the individual on whom hands are laid. In order to correctly address the wrong or misrepresented notions about the laying on of hands, our study has become imperative, so that we can get a proper perspective on the subject.

In **Genesis 27:1-29**, the bible tells the story of the transference of the covenant blessings God had bestowed upon Abraham, which Abraham had transferred to his son, Isaac, who in turn, now sought to transfer it to his son Esau. We see from the scripture that it was not the meal presented to Isaac by Jacob, the imposter, that was the issue, but Jacob himself, who was trying to obtain the covenant blessing fraudulently. Isaac painstakingly asks Jacob to do certain things that would help him confirm that he was transferring the covenant blessing to the right person. In the same way, the person or persons who lay hands on others should ensure that those being prayed for or blessed are qualified, especially, when it is for consecration, ordination, and imparting spiritual gifts. Also, not only did Isaac want to be sure that he was giving the covenant blessing to the person he believed should receive it (albeit with God's intervention in favour of Jacob); he evidently had within him, what he was giving away. The same principle is essential for us in the laying on of hands: those laying hands on others should not only ensure that they are laying hands on the right persons; but should also have spiritual authority bestowed on them by God to lay hands. The bible counsels that we are not to lay hands suddenly on people, nor partake of their sins (**1 Timothy 5:22**). The bible gives qualifications of those that hands can be laid on for the purpose of ordination into the office of deacon and bishop (**1 Timothy 3:1-13**). Also, before you submit yourself to anyone to lay hands on you, there must be a relationship between you

and the person laying hands on you. For instance, a person laying hands on you should be one who has spiritual authority over you directly (your pastor, house fellowship leader, etc.) or indirectly (someone whom your pastor asks you to submit to, for the purpose of laying on of hands). Also, you must be willing to submit to the authority of the person laying hands on you for you to be able to receive the spiritual benefits thereof.

The laying on of hands is not something that we engage in frivolously, rather, it is something that occurs thoughtfully and for some definite spiritual purpose. The following are the reasons for the laying on of hands:

- (a) ***Imparting blessings.*** Parents and ministers of God alike lay hands on their children and congregants, respectively, to impart blessings on them. This is done by way of a pronouncement of such invocations that would bring divine favour upon the beneficiary (**Genesis 48:14; Matthew 19:15; Mark 10:16**).
- (b) ***Praying for healing.*** Usually, the minister of God would place his hands on the sick individual while praying for him or her to be healed (**Matthew 8:1-3; Mark 16:17-18; Acts 9:19; 28:8-9; Luke 4:40; 13:13; James 5:14-16**).
- (c) ***Imparting the baptism of the Holy Spirit.*** It may become necessary to pray over a believer in Christ so that he can receive the Holy Spirit upon him through the laying on of hands (**Acts 8:14-24; 9:10-17; 19:1-6**).
- (d) ***Imparting spiritual gifts.*** This is similar to imparting the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and may become necessary to help the faith of the believer in Christ (**1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 1:11**).
- (e) ***Consecration of believers unto divine service.*** This was the case in the commissioning of the Seven to 'serve tables', as well as Barnabas and Saul when they were sent forth on the First Missionary Journey (**Acts 6:1-4; 13:2-3**).
- (f) ***Ordination of Ministers of God.*** It has been the practice from ancient times to lay hands on a person who is being ordained as a minister of God. Indeed, God told Moses to lay hands on Joshua to impart on him some of his authority while he was still alive so that Joshua could function as a reagent (**Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9; Acts 6:5-6**).

A variant of the laying on of hands is the stretching forth of the hands of the minister over the congregation to pronounce a blessing over them (**Numbers 6:23-27**). Another variant is that of waving the hands over the children of God or over the people needing a healing (**2 Kings 5:10-11**). Finally, it is important to note that in some cases, receiving a blessing, a healing, or other spiritual benefits as a result of the laying on of hands, will depend to some extent on the faith of the recipient.

EXERCISE

Please answer true or false to the statements below.

- (1) The laying on of hands can be used to transfer evil spirits on to another person.
- (2) The laying on of hands can be done by the placing of the hands of a minister on another person for the purpose of receiving a spiritual benefit.
- (3) Only one person can lay hands on another before it can be said to be the laying on of hands. Where there is more than one person laying hands on another person, it becomes something else.
- (4) Any person who lays hands on another can impart a spiritual benefit.
- (5) The lifestyle of the person laying hands is as important, as the lifestyle of the person on whom hands are being laid in the laying on of hands.

- (6) A relationship must exist between the person laying hands and the person on whom hands are being laid in scriptural laying on of hands.
- (7) The laying on of hands can take the form of stretching hands over a congregation.
- (8) A wrong notion of the laying on of hands is that you can receive a spiritual blessing through the laying on of hands even if you are living contrary to God.
- (9) When a person needs money he should submit himself to a minister of God who has lots of money for the laying on of his hands.
- (10) A sick person needs to submit himself to a minister of God who is a medical doctor by profession.
- (11) Only an apostle can lay hands on a person who is to be consecrated for divine service or ordination.
- (12) Before hands can be laid on another person, those hands need to have been touched by the Holy Spirit.