

Foundations 7b — Laying on of Hands— Appointing Deacons and Ordaining Elders

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits”. **Hebrews 6:1-3**

Laying on hands for appointing deacons

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” **Acts 6:1-7**

A deacon is not a governmental position within the church. A deacon is a servant. In this case, the criteria for this servant position (distributing daily food/necessities to the widows), was established by the apostles: They

must be men of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Following this criteria, the congregation chose seven men. The apostles prayed for them and laid hands on them. Thus there was an impartation from the apostles and a public recognition of their position as servants in the ministry to the widows.

There is a great need today for men and women who will faithfully serve as deacons. The apostles needed the deacons to serve so that they could be free to spend their time in prayer and the ministry of the Word. When the apostles were freed to do what they were called to do, the kingdom of God advanced. May God stir the

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hearts of faithful servants to step up and take their place!

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” **Acts 6:7**

Laying on of hands for ordaining elders

The apostle, Paul, writes to Timothy: “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” **1 Timothy 4:14**

In context, the Scripture suggests that Paul was exhorting Timothy regarding his ministry gifting, as an overseer of the local church, that was imparted through the laying on of hands of the eldership.

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in

love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

1 Timothy 4:12-16

This is parallel with Moses imparting authority and gifting to Joshua as God established Joshua as leader over the

congregation of Israel.

“And 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; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.” **Numbers 27:18-20**

“Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.” **Deuteronomy 34:9**

Recognizing and heeding elders in the church is vital

Just as Moses ordained Joshua, Paul and the elders, led by the Holy Spirit, ordained Timo-

thy. Because of the impartation received by Timothy through the laying on of hands, the congregations recognized and heeded Timothy’s leadership. So today, believers should be faithfully joined to a local congregation, recognizing and heeding the elder(s) who are over them in the Lord.

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

Hebrews 13:17

“Laying on of hands” is a foundational doctrine by which we can recognize and heed God-appointed leaders in the body of Christ.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Ephesians 4:11-16

These God-ordained leaders are given so that:

- a) the saints are equipped to do work of serving (ministry)
- b) the body of Christ is edified
- c) believers come into the unity of the faith
- d) saints grow in experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ
- e) believers come into full maturity; even the full stature of Christ
- f) believers know the truth so that they are not deceived by the trickery, cunning and deceitfulness of compromising preachers and teachers who promote false doctrines

The Word of God is clear that His will is that the whole body be “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies” so that “every part does its share” and the entire body is built up in love. How can a person be “joined and knit together” so that “every joint supplies” and “every part does its share” if they are not planted in a local assembly of the saints? As it is written:

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” **Hebrews 10:24-25**

“Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing” **Psalms 92:13-14**

In obedience to God, believers should be planted in the Body of Christ in a local congregation. There each person can be equipped to serve and grow in relationship with the Lord and with His people. In contradiction to the principles of Scripture, some professing Christians float around from one congregation to another without being committed. That is like taking a tree, digging it up and transplanting it constantly. It could never be healthy or reach its full potential. It is better to do what God says. Be planted in

the House of God and flourish!

Elders are to lead by example, serving as overseers and not “lording over” God’s people.

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” **1 Peter 5:1-7**

How can we all be submissive to one another?

Ephesians 5:15-21 “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

1 Cor. 11:3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.

Husbands submit to Christ

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. **Ephesians 5:25**

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is Savior of the body. **Ephesians 5:22-23**

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless, let each one of you (husbands) in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respect (Godly fear) her husband.

Ephesians 6:1-9 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Let’s give heed to our God-ordained leaders so that we may be rightly joined to a local congregation, we may be equipped for serving God, we may avoid false doctrines and grow to the full stature of Christ.