

Laying on of Hands

Who? Why? When?

by Phil Myers

Eleven key passages in Scripture

- Act 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them [*the new deacons*].
- Act 8:17 Then [*Peter, et al*] laid they their hands on them [*new believers*], and they received the Holy Ghost.
- Acts 9:17 Ananias [*church member*] went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”
- Act 13:3 When they [*elders*] had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them [*Barnabas and Saul, brand new missionaries*] away.
- Acts 14:23 When they [*Paul and Barnabas*] had ordained them elders in every Church [*on 1st missionary tour*] and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.
- Acts 19:6 When Paul had laid his hands upon them [*older believers*], the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.
- 1Tim 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.
- 1Tim 5:22 [*Tim*] Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.
- 2Tim 1:6 Wherefore I put thee [*Timothy*] in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.
- Heb 6.3 the doctrine of. . .laying on of hands [*mentioned as an elementary doctrine*]
- James 5.14 elders. . .anoint [*the sick*] him with oil [*elders called by the sick*]

Shortly after Saul had met Jesus on his way to Damascus

Acts 9.17,18

“laying his hands on him”

This is what the 21st century church calls “ordination.”

- Notice he is not identified as an apostle or church leader as he laid hands on Paul.
- Paul is called a “brother. . .[before he is]. . .baptized”, salvation before baptism.

“be filled”

Why was this [command?] necessary for Paul to hear? It wasn't needed in 2.4. Wouldn't it also be automatic here? We don't know when Ananias learned of the filling of the Spirit, nor whether he ever lived in Jerusalem. It seems he might have been a product of the “scattered Church.”

* The same word for filling, *πλετο* [pletho] is always used in the NT.

“laying on of the hands of the presbytery”

- one of the most significant ministries, of the elders
- Not the same as ordination, but close. Find jobs for people. Put them to work!

I Tim 5.22

“lay hands suddenly on no man” = setting him apart

- Official approval
 - Bestowing power or authority
 - Bestow spiritual gift
- Remember there was a caution to ordain the deacons [I Tim 3.10] until they had proved themselves as those who were already “deacon-ing” [serving].

Note: I have served on the ordination board of at least 20 men. Go ahead and ask me why I never sought an official ordination for myself from any church.

I was ordained as an elder in 4 different churches.

I was appointed [ordained?] and sent by 6 churches as a missionary.

I refuse to assume the title of “Reverend” since Scripture indicates that appellation belongs to God alone. Ps 111.9

I never use the word reverend to refer to any man.

I have treated myself as an elder for over 40 years whether I was on an official “board” or not. I removed myself from the “eldership” during several years while one of my sons was not willing to submit to my authority at home.

Ordination = a church's approval of life, doctrine, experience in ministry, passion, and abilities

- * flipside of elder discipline is affirmation w/o scrutiny
- * RC church non-biblical practice is to clearly separate the clergy from the laity. The church has 7 sacraments [RC calls them “graces”]. Marriage is one and Holy Orders is another [which includes celibacy for the clergy]. Orders are culminated by laying hands on priests & monks.
- * Some Protestant churches semi-ordain men in the church with a “preaching license” or a “lay minister's license.”
- * No church I have attended requires all elders to teach. The church I attend now does have all elders teaching regularly. I haven't asked whether this is actual policy.

The term “ordination” is most generally referring to pastors, but also applies to elders, deacons, missionaries, and other “approved” preachers of the Gospel.

Common twentieth century ordination procedure, among churches & pastors I've known.

- a. recommendation by church or request by candidate
- b. requirements
- c. examination by a board

Personal observations, 21st century

My observation is that there is usually no examination for elders in the USA except that his general reputation stands for him. In baptistic churches I have attended the practice has been generally to:

- (1) elder board receives nominations for elders from the congregation,
- (2) elders interview and approve,
- (3) congregation votes.

In some churches only the elders are involved apart from the congregation's input; examining, appointing, and presenting the men to the congregation for "amens."

All were carefully examine according to I Tim 3 mandates.

pjm—I highly endorse self-perpetuating elder boards

An example of a large church

A church of 10,000, had a simple system for adding men to a huge board of 80 deacons.

1. names were submitted to the board
2. pastor read the names aloud to the board
3. board members closed their eyes and bowed their heads
4. if any man knew of something that would biblically disqualify a man from serving as a deacon, he raised his hand and that name was removed from the list
5. all other candidates were automatically approved

pjm—I strongly approve

It seems that laying on hands started with Moses anointing of Joshua. *Deut 34.9*