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Laying on of Hands

Well brethren, what are the foundational doctrines of the Church of God? What are the elementary doctrines that form the basis of teaching upon which you and I stand as Christians? Do you know what they are? You know, your Bible contains a list of teachings that are called foundational. Some refer to them as elementary. Do you know what they are? What their significance actually might be? Do you know where to find those teachings? Might we know how to explain these foundations to those whom God might be calling and bringing to fellowship with Him and with His people.

Turn with me if you would, to Hebrews 6. Today I would like to take a look at with you one of the foundations, one of the elementary teachings we might say, of the Church of God as defined by the Bible. It might be one that you wouldn't expect to be focused on or frankly you might not expect it to be in this list of foundational teachings. But the apostle Paul, in writing, at least we assume he is the author of the book of Hebrews, most evidence seems to point in that direction. As he wrote to these people coming out of Judaism, he wanted them to understand that there were certain elementary things followed by foundational things upon which everything else is built. And my judgement, the one that we will cover today, has been one that has been sorely misunderstood or neglected in the Church of God for some time. And so I felt it important that we take some time to look at this.

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ,* Paul begins this section, he just corrected the individuals, the Hebrews, where ever this particular group might have been, he had just gotten finished correcting them in chapter 5 for being spiritually immature. And he said you have to learn how to wisely and rightly use the word of God.

And he said in verse one of chapter six, first we begin, or we leave, or we proceed forward from the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Other translations for the phrase, the principles of the doctrines of Christ, are quite instructive. Some translations render it, the first principle of the teaching of Christ. Not referring to Christ's teachings, but the elementary, the first principle of the gospel was, we have a Savior. We need a Savior. God sent Jesus Christ. God in the flesh as our Savior. That is the first principle. Another translation says the

elementary instruction about Christ. Another translation says the elementary teaching about Christ. The elementary doctrine, or Christian doctrine. The rudiments of Christianity, the first lesson of Christ.

So what we see is that Paul is beginning to show that when it comes to being a Christian, there is a bedrock upon which everything is founded, and that is the understand of Jesus Christ and Him being the Son of God, us accepting His sacrifice, having our sins forgiven so that we might receive eternal life. Very similar to what John wrote in John chapter three. That is the bedrock, but then there is a building that needs to be built upon that bedrock. And that building needs a foundation. So Paul goes on to show that there are six foundational teachings in the Church of God. And they are ones that you might not expect. But these form the basis then, upon which we build the other teachings that the Bible reveals.

It says in verse one, *let us go on to perfection*, We start with an understanding of who Christ is, what He did for us, what our responsibility is toward that sacrifice. That is something that we lay down, but then we have to go on to perfection. And he says, *not laying again the foundation* Then what does he list as the foundation? As the basics? These are teachings brethren, that we must not only understand as doctrines or teachings, but these are things that people should feel and experience as they come in contact with the Church of God. The foundation of, first is listed, *of repentance from dead works* So it is not enough to understand the bedrock of who Jesus Christ is, if it is not then followed by repentance. We must change. We must begin to order our lives, with the help of God, along side the teachings of Jesus Christ. We have to change. It is not enough just to say I love Jesus. I accept Him into my heart. Repentance must follow. Repentance is a turn from going in a way of breaking God's law, to turning now to going in a way of keeping in God's law. That is what repentance is. So, we can see why that would be part of our foundation. We can take an entire sermon or more on the subject of repentance. And we will in the future. But that is not the topic for today.

Repentance from dead works. It is interesting, repentance from dead works. Again, if I am not careful, I will get off onto a sermon about repentance. Repentance is something that happens in the mind, but is expressed through the hands, through the feet, through the actions. It is not enough to say I love Jesus in my heart. We repent from doing the wrong things to now doing the right things. Pretty simple.

It goes on to say secondly, *and of faith toward God*,. We are told a little bit later on in Hebrews, that without faith it is what? Impossible to please God. If we don't understand that God really loves us, that He really is out for our good, that He is working for our eternal life not against it, if we don't trust God to take care of us, we cannot be a Christian because we will fail. We won't trust God to do what He

says what He will do. We don't believe what He says. So faith clearly, toward God, is a foundational principle. A foundational teaching.

It goes on to say then, **Hebrews 6:2** *of the doctrine of baptisms*, The teaching of baptisms is a fundamental teaching of the Church of God, of Jesus Christ, of God's way of life. Because once one understands the foundation, the bedrock or who and what Jesus Christ is and was, and they strive then to build on top the issue of repentance, faith, trust in God, that faith is expressed through baptism where we simply, physically, walk through the experience that has gone on inside the mind. And we go under the water as a public ceremony that I have committed my life to God. This is the way that I want to live. And so we are baptized.

Now it is interesting to note just as a sideline that it talks about the doctrines of baptisms. Plural. The Bible does talk about two different baptisms. They are both foundational teachings of the Church of God. One baptism is under water. Immersion in water. The second baptism that the Bible talks about that is a part of the fundamental teaching in the Church is there is a baptism of fire that the Bible describes that Christ talked about. So if one does not stay faithful to the first baptism, they may experience the second baptism which is being tossed into the lake of fire. So along with God's teachings of mercy and kindness and faith, and all those wonderful things, is the wonderful warning that there will be some who may reject it. You have to receive the second baptism, the baptism of fire in the lake of fire.

But then it goes on to one you wouldn't have guessed if I were to guess for you. I don't think you would have guessed that the next doctrine is one of the foundational teachings of the Church of God. One of the foundational teachings of Jesus Christ, upon which so many other things are built. This is the one that we will focus on today. The doctrine *of laying on of hands*.

You mean that when you are sick? Something about that is foundational to the Church of God? You could look at the rest of the list, I mean it goes on, the fifth one, the resurrection of the dead. Well that is obvious why that should be foundational. Because we are physical, we are mortal, we are going to die. And if there is no resurrection from the dead, there is no hope for the future. So it is clear that one of the foundational teachings must be the resurrection from the dead. Otherwise there is no hope for the future.

And then it goes on to say, *eternal judgment*. It is foundational to the Church of God, to the way of life called Christianity, to understand that the decisions that we make today have eternal consequences for the good or for the bad. And that judgment that is rendered upon us will be eternal. It will last for all eternity. We will either have eternal life at the end of it, or we will have eternal death. So again, you back up, all those seem pretty obvious as to why they would be

fundamental teachings of the way of life called Christianity, God's way of life. But this one laying on of hands doesn't seem to quite fit the mold.

If there were a vote taken of these doctrines or teachings, which are the most important, I would guess that the laying on of hands would probably come last on the list, wouldn't you? I mean the other ones are more familiar, they are more understandable. What is it about the laying on of hands that is so primary, so foundational to Christianity? Why is it in this list of bedrock teachings that a Christian must understand if they are going to go on to perfection? Why is it that important?

To begin to analyze the laying on of hands, we must begin in the Old Testament. What I would like to do for you is list a number of points about the laying on of hands, and then summarize those toward the end of the sermon as to why this is such an important doctrine. Now I think by the time we get there, it will be pretty obvious. But why is this one of the six foundations upon which your faith, my faith, should be built. If it is missing you will see all kinds of difficult symptoms begin to arise. So let's analyze this teaching. Let's go back into the Old Testament.

Point number one. The laying on of hands is done to set someone apart for a special purpose. Every time the laying on hands is described in the Bible, that person has physical hands laid on them and they are being set apart, set aside for a special purpose. And we will talk about some of those special purposes as we go along.

Genesis 48 is where we will begin. Here is an example of two young men being set apart for an important blessing. This was the passing on of vital blessings, prophetically speaking. We won't take the time today to actually go into prophecies, or what they were going to inherit as a result of being set apart for this special purpose, but we will analyze more so the laying on of hands and what it conveyed. Genesis 48:8. You remember the story. It is very near the end of Jacob's life. Jacob also received a second name. The name Israel. It was near the end of Israel's life. And his favorite son, Joseph, brought his own two sons before Israel, and wanted before Israel died, before Jacob died, to pass on a blessing. Please lay your hands on them and ask God to bless them. And so that is the context of what we will read here.

Genesis 48:8 *Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who are these?"* Now it is true that Israel's eyes were pretty much blind at this point. But it's not that he didn't know who these kids were. What you get the sense of here is that there is an official ceremony going on in the same way that you often have in a wedding. Some couples like to begin the wedding with the phrase, "who gives this bride to be wed?" Like, duh. The father is standing right there. Of course he gives her. But it is a formal ceremony. So it is asked who gives this bride to be wed. And of

course, often the father will say well I do, or her mother and I do, or various things like that. It is part of the official ceremony. And that is the sense you get of this ceremony here in Genesis 48.

Whose are these?

Before we baptize someone, I ask them, any minister does, what is your full name? You know what? I already know their name. But it is part of the official ceremony.

Genesis 48:9-11 *And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place." And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them." [10] 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. [11] And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!" I thought you were dead and gone and now I am looking at my grandchildren.*

Genesis 48:12-13 *So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. Again, this is an official ceremony. There is official bowing going on here. [13] And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.*

So they bowed down before and then made the procession up the isle, as it were, up to Israel. This is not done in private. This is an official ceremony. It doesn't comment in this particular section about who else was watching this. Who else was involved with this. But there were very likely a lot of others watching and participating in this by extension.

Genesis 48:14-16 *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. In other words with knowledge. He knew what he was doing. He couldn't see who the boys were, but he knew exactly what he was doing as he crossed his hands over to pass on this blessing. [15] 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,[16] The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, That was done for two reasons. First of all they were half-Egyptian. Secondly, the name of Israel would primarily travel with the descendants of Joseph. And there is a whole issue of prophecy that we might cover sometime in that regard. But this is clearly an official ceremony. And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

Genesis 48:17-20 *Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; he was the younger, so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. [18] And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." This was an official ceremony. This was the official passing of the blessing prior to Israel's death. [19] But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He meaning Manasseh, 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." [20] 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.*

And in prophetic terms, Manasseh's success has been largely due to the work that Ephraim had accomplished prior, which again, is a whole another story. But you see this official ceremony of passing on blessings. So these boys were set apart for a special purpose. In this case the special purpose was to receive physical blessings from God's providence, God's goodness. And to carry out various prophecies.

Turn to Numbers 8. We will again establish the laying on of hands was done to set aside a person for a special purpose. Laying on of hands was done here as God decided whom should serve Him in the tabernacle and later on in the temple. You might remember, of course, that during the time of the death of the firstborn in Egypt, God said I own the firstborn of every Israelite family. And I am going to take that firstborn of every Israelite family and I am going to send them to the tabernacle and they will do the service of the tabernacle. That is what God originally had said. Now He was making a different approach.

Numbers 8:5-6 *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [6] "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially.*

So what God was going to do He was going to allow every Israelite family to reclaim their firstborn in place of the entire tribe of Levi. So now the entire tribe of Levi would serve in the tabernacle, later on in the temple, instead of the firstborn of every Israelite. So He says clean them up.

Numbers 8:7 *Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.*

So pro-basketball players were not the first ones to bring bald heads into style. The Levites were doing that a couple thousand years ago.

Numbers 8:8-10 *Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering. [9]*

And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. [10] So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites;

Why did every family have to lay hands on the Levites? Well because the Levites were going to be giving them a gift. And so they were passing this on saying I get to keep my firstborn because you Levites are willing to perform this service. I get to keep my firstborn and now the responsibility is yours. So these Levites are not being set aside, set apart, for this special purpose of serving God in the tabernacle and in the temple. So every Israelite in this case, had a responsibility of laying on a Levite saying, I am setting you aside so that I can keep my son, my firstborn.

Numbers 8:10-12 *So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites; [11] and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord, like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the Lord. [12] Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls,*

So they all would parade by and they would lay hands on this bullock. Now why was that done? The Bullock was now being set aside for a special purpose. This bullock was being set aside to represent all the sins of all the Levites. So when that sacrifice was killed, all their sins would be forgiven. They would now be a clean group of people and honorable to serve the Lord, to serve God in the tabernacle

Numbers 8:14-18 *Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. [15] After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them, like a wave offering. [16] For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. [17] For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself. [18] I have taken the Levites ...Some people think they are the ones who decide who should serve God in today's temple. God does that selection. I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel.*

So a laying on of hands was done to set aside the Levites for the special purpose of serving God in the tabernacle and later on in the temple.

In Numbers 27 we see is that we are now nearing the death of another individual. Not Israel or Jacob in this case, but now we are nearing the death of Moses. Moses, chosen by God to be the physical leader over Israel, a picture and type of

Jesus Christ who would come later. Moses was now about to die. And so the laying on of hands, the ceremony, was once again enacted, this time to set an individual apart to lead all of Israel.

Numbers 27:15-16 *Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying: [16] "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, which is interesting that we are told here that flesh does have a spirit component to it, what we call in the New Testament the spirit in man. the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh set a man over the congregation, Moses was about to die. And He knew what the Israelites were like. And sometimes today people say things differently and it shows sometimes a lack of understanding what Israelites are like, or what human beings are like; I don't need any man over me. And Moses realized that Israel did need someone. And we will talk more about that maybe some other time.*

Numbers 27:17 *But he said, set a man over the congregation who may go out before them and go in before them, see, sometimes people today say well we don't need a man because we have God's Spirit. Well pray tell why did God have Paul? Why did God have Peter? Why did God have others in the New Testament performing this same role? That role of love, and service, and care? Because it is important. It is necessary. So he said, 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."*

Whether or not we have God's Spirit, if we do not have leadership, we are like sheep without a shepherd. To think otherwise is simple vanity. It is just simple vanity.

Numbers 27:18 *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;*

Lay your hand upon him. So we will skip the rest for the sake of time, Vs 23 simply says, **Numbers 27:23** *And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.*

So again, the laying on of hands ceremony is done to set someone apart to receive special blessings, special help, special position, responsibility, etc. directly from God.

Notice Deuteronomy 34, which refers back to the same event that we just read about Joshua.

The laying on of hands in these circumstances does simply transmit special blessings as well. And you can understand why that would be. If God is asking Joshua to lead all of His people, he will need special insight. He will need special

wisdom. Not that that makes him better than anyone else. It is a gift directly from God. But that was transmitted through the ceremony of the laying on of hands.

Deut. 34:9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, why? for Moses had laid his hands on him; That is why he had special wisdom. so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Now did some special gift somehow trickle through the mind of Moses down his shoulders, down his arms, out of his fingers, into the head of Joshua, during the laying on of hands? And the answer is of course not. We already mentioned that the laying on of hands and the setting apart to receive a special blessing or a special purpose is directly from God. Directly from God. So Joshua is given special insight by God, but it was done through the ceremony of the laying on of hands. And there is more that we will talk about, the importance of that, as we go along.

Turn to 1 Samuel 16. Under certain circumstances the laying on of hands was done with olive oil placed upon the forehead. In the Middle East, of course, the most common oil was olive oil because of the natural olive trees that grew in the area that were domesticated, we might say, brought into production, grafted etc, into olive orchards. So when an oil is mentioned in the Bible almost in every case it refers to olive oil or a mixture of olive oil and other ingredients.

In certain circumstances the laying on of hands was done in conjunction with the use of olive oil placed upon the forehead. And here is an example of that here in 1 Samuel 16. It doesn't change the significance of the laying on of hands, but it adds a dimension that we might not have recognized prior to this. We find the setting apart of a man called David, to now become the king over all Israel. So the laying on of hands in this case was done to set apart David so that God directly would place him in the office of king and he would be able to administer that office over all of Israel.

You remember the story, Samuel goes to Jesse's house. Six of he seven sons parade by. And Samuel is told it is none of these. So Samuel asks Jesse is there anybody else? Oh, there is just David out in the field. David is called in and you know the story. He is the one.

1 Samuel 16:12-13 *So he, Jesse, sent and brought him, David in. Now he, David, was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. Some say he might have been a red head. The point was that he was strikingly good looking. Some of us just don't know what that is like. I wish I did. To be strikingly handsome. Square jaw, whatever. I mean he just looked great. Looked solid. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!"* Now the word anoint here, both in verse 12 and in verse 13 [13] *Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers;* the word anoint is the Hebrew word *mashach* means to rub

with oil. It just wasn't poured on the head. This was rubbed onto the forehead in larger amounts than we are used to because it would run down the head and the face. Aaron was anointed in a similar way, to be high priest, and it says the oil dripped off his beard and ran down onto his garments. When it uses this same Hebrew word in regard to buildings, it is translated to paint. So to rub with oil it was done with the physical hand, the anointing was rubbed on his forehead, and the laying on of hands was done to consecrate, to set apart this individual for a special purpose. So if you look up the meaning to the word *mashach*, it means to rub with oil. To anoint. By implication to consecrate. To anoint or paint is what the word means. So it was done with the physical hands of another human being, but it was done to signify that God was setting this person apart for a very important reason. Aaron was anointed the same way. You might jot down Exodus 29:7.

It should be clear from these examples that we have covered up to this point that the laying on of hands was done to set a person aside for a special purpose. Interesting the purpose was always God's purpose, but the instrumentality was always human. That is a fascinating thing to think about it. We will talk a little bit more about that as we go along.

Let's go on to point number two. Point number two is the laying on of hands is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit. Turn with me to the New Testament to Acts 8:14. Now there are many arguments people would say, well is it impossible for God to give the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands? What if a person is on a desert island all by themselves, they come across the Bible, they repent, they jump out into the ocean to baptize themselves, can't they receive the Holy Spirit without some one laying hands on them? There is no one else around to lay hands on them. And all I can say to that is what a stupid argument. I hope that doesn't sound too insulting. But the idea is you take this outlandish, far out, impossible to happen example to define everything else about the teaching. That is silliness. That is what Timothy is told about by Paul, it is vain babbling. It is just excuse making. Don't fall for that. When the scriptures are clear, they are very clear. Is it possible for someone to receive the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands? I suppose it is possible. But when we look at what the scriptures say about it, they make it very clear that that is what we need to be doing to receive the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 8:14 the story, as you remember here, is how the gospel spread to the city of Samaria. Philip went to Samaria. Began teaching about Christ. And people began to believe. Philip was apparently not an ordained minister of Jesus Christ. He was apparently a deacon. But he was not ordained as an elder in the Church at least in this point in his life. He may have been later. But he baptized a number of individuals.

Acts 8:12 *But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.*

So if we want to receive the Holy Spirit we need to be baptized. And it shows later, we need to have the laying on of hands.

Acts 8:13 *Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.*

Sometimes we are flabbergasted when some who have been baptized turn out to be Simons. Turn out to be traitors. Turn out to fall away. We shouldn't. It has happened since the very beginning of the New Testament Church. And it will to the end of the New Testament Church.

Acts 8:14 *Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Sa had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,*

Now why did Peter and John have to go there? Couldn't Philip handle things? No. He could handle things very well. But he was not allowed, apparently, to do the laying on of hands.

Acts 8:15 *who, when they had come down, prayed for them, these new baptized individuals, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.*

You see sometimes when we counsel individuals for baptism we will ask kind of a trick question, ask somewhere along the line, why do you want to be baptized? And more often than not, the answer is because I need God's Holy Spirit. And so we go on to explain baptism doesn't give you God's Holy Spirit. Baptism doesn't give you God's Spirit. That comes through the laying on of hands. Baptism simply forgives your past. It erases the slate. It washes, symbolically, the sins that you have committed, that I have committed. But it is through the laying on of hands that we receive the Holy Spirit. And God does it for a very important reason.

Acts 8:15-17 ...prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. [16] For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [17] Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

So while every time baptism is mentioned in the New Testament does not also always mention the laying on of hands, you can't have a much clearer scripture than this. That they were baptized, then they had hands laid on them by individuals who had been selected by Christ, in other words other ordained individuals, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Why didn't Philip lay hands on them as soon as he baptized them? You see, we understand that it is ordained individuals, individuals like Peter and John who had been ordained or anointed, or set apart, in all likelihood had hands laid on them by Christ Himself who are allowed to do this. And there is symbolism in that. There is important symbolism in that which we will cover as we go along.

Baptism might be done by anyone, but the laying on of hands to receive the Spirit of God needs to be done by an ordained individual. Notice Acts 19:1. As we have mentioned, baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. The laying on of hands follows baptism, is to receive the Holy Spirit. Now again, is it that the minister lays hands on a person's head and the Holy Spirit somehow vibrates out through his fingertips into the head of the other individual and now they have God's Spirit? And the answer is no, of course not. It is consistent with the Old Testament teaching. The laying on of hands is to set a person aside to receive a special blessing, a special purpose. In this case to receive the Spirit of God directly from God. God is our Father, not the person who laid hands upon us. It is the ceremony. It is simply a ceremony in that sense.

Acts 19:1-6 *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, or borders or parts or coasts, came to Ephesus. Paul's headquarters of the Gentile area. It really was Ephesus. And finding some disciples in other words, people who were believing and learning, living God's way a best they could. [2] he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Did you get God's Spirit? So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." We didn't even know about that. [3] And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" He said have you been baptized? They said yes. Have you received the Holy Spirit? They said they haven't even heard of the Holy Spirit. Well, what was your baptism like? So they said, "Into John's baptism." You see, John encouraged repentance. Encouraged turning around. Encouraged belief in the One whose shoes, remember he was not worthy to unlace, referring to Christ the Messiah. [4] Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." [5] When they heard this, they were baptized, the second time.*

They were baptized by John but they had such limited knowledge they realized they should be baptized again. Probably like you. I was baptized as an infant. Well it wasn't real baptism. It was kind of a sprinkling. Had water poured on my head as a several month old child. But when God began to work with me and call me I realized I had to be baptized. If I was truly going to grow and overcome and live God's way of life, it was a requirement. No way around it. I couldn't do it on my own. Still can't. We need baptism and we need God's Spirit. Can't forgive my own sins. I need baptism to wash those away. [5] *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* [6] *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, How did they receive the Holy Spirit?*

They received it directly from God through the ceremony of the laying on of hands.

And you ask yourself a question as we go through here, why? Why does God have a physical individual as we see here again, an ordained individual, involved in the process at all? Couldn't God just give us His Spirit? Well of course He could. Why doesn't He? That is an important question to answer, especially in today's Church of God. So we see the laying on of hands is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit.

Point number three. Point number three is this; the laying on of hands is used to transmit a blessing to children. Turn with me to Matthew 19. This is one we are very familiar with in the Church of God, of course, because it is a ceremony we imitate what Christ did, at least once a year, if possible. Young children come out of the womb pretty much helpless. And as they begin to grow they are at risk in a way that they are not later on in their lives when they begin to learn how to care for themselves, how to protect themselves, how to be safe. So God set up a ceremony in His Church, shown by Christ here, where the laying on of hands is done to small children. And during that laying on of hands, a special blessing of protection and guidance is asked for so that they might grow to maturity, living God's way.

Matthew 19:13 *Then little children were brought to Him Why? that He might put His hands on them and pray,*

Individuals wanted Christ's blessing upon their children. Now not that it was something that He was going to give, but He set them apart again to receive a blessing from God. Could Jesus Christ Himself follow through on giving them this blessing? No, He was going to be dead in a few years. So He asked God to bless them. To set them apart because God can watch over them in that sense.

So the disciples rebuked them, at the end of verse 13. **Matthew 19:14-15** *But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* [15] *And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.*

So the laying on of hands in this case, again a ceremony to set someone apart, in this case to receive the special blessing of protection and guidance and care during their early formative years when it is difficult for them to provide that for themselves.

Notice over in Luke 18:15. In this case it talks about being infants. **Luke 18:15** *Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them;*

What was it about human touch conveying God's blessing that was so important? Why did God have it done that way? Why does He still have it done that way? What is the point of all that? Why is this a foundational teaching of the Church of God? Of the scriptures? Of Christianity? What does it have to do with all of those things? The answer is probably coming more clear to you.

Luke 18:15-17 *Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. [16] But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. [17] Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*

Let's go on to point number four. The laying on of hands is used to ordain a person to spiritual office, or spiritual service. Acts 6:6. You remember the story here, there was a need in the early Church of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. Many widows needed caring for. And some of them were being neglected. They were being overlooked. When people get very busy and things are exciting, it is easy for people to be overlooked. And there were widows here being neglected. Being overlooked. Not spited. Just overlooked. And so God decided that there needed to be an office of responsibility, a position of service in the Church of God to care for physical detail. In this case, making sure the widows had enough to eat because they didn't fend very well for themselves, especially if they were elderly they might have had a great deal of difficulty doing that.

Acts 6:3 *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;*

So while we have often said that the office of deacon or the role and responsibility is a physical office, it is very much a spiritual responsibility. Not the same as a Pastor or shepherd, or a Presbyter, as the New Testament calls it, but nonetheless it is an important office of spiritual help.

Acts 6:4 *but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

Do you want to know what the job of the ministry is? That defines it. That is what Pastors ought to be doing. That they ought to be taking care of. Sometimes we think well Pastors are also employees so they ought to be doing all these other things. The Biblical definition is pretty clear. To give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. That is the job of the ministry. Now there is more to it than that, the role of the shepherd, but that is just the foundation.

Acts 6:5-6 *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, [6] whom they set before the apostles; And what did the apostles do? The apostles laid their hands on them. and when they had prayed, who was responsible for praying? The apostles. they laid hands on them.

They were ordained to serve. To wait upon. Not to be served. Not to receive an office of superiority. Not to receive an office of vanity. Not to command around others, but to serve. It was done through the laying on of hands. Do they need to have laying on of hands? The answer is no. That wasn't necessary physically speaking. But they were set aside through this ceremony of laying on of hands to receive this special help they would need to carry out the position of service that they were given. And if you don't believe that people need a special help to serve, then we haven't done much service. Because when you start to serve people, no matter how perfectly you might do it, you will catch all kinds of flack and you will need special spiritual help to deal with it. That is just the way it is.

When the Greek uses the word ordained here, to ordain, the word ordain is the same in the Old Testament, it means to divide, to separate, set apart, to separate one, to divide one out, to judge. These men were judged, set apart, to receive this special blessing of serving the people of God. Organizing things for the people of God so that no one was neglected. It was their responsibility.

Acts 13:1-3 *Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Leadership of the local congregation, we might say, such as Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. So five elders, five ministers, five teachers or prophets. The word prophet again can be teacher. These are the ones helping, serving, overseeing you might say to the Church in Antioch.[2] As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So, two people being selected, set apart for a special purpose. What ceremony went along with that? Well of course, the laying on of hands. [3] Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

They would need special help to deal with the trials that would come from the service that they were about to render. They would need special wisdom, special insight, special help. So again, they were set aside through the laying of hands to receive that blessing.

Notice 1 Tim. 4. There is something amazing about the laying on hands in that it is used by God to set a person apart so that God can give them special help, special blessings. ! Timothy 4 reveals that Timothy was given special gifts through the ceremony of the laying on of hands. Not that those hands transmitted those gifts, but those hands were symbolizing God's hands. Those hands were symbolizing God's involvement.

1 Tim. 4:14 *Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, or by preaching, with the laying on of the hands of whom? The laying on of hands by the presbyter. In other words, the eldership.*

You can look up that word if you would like. It simply means the ordained elders. So in the New Testament while we find that the brethren suggested names for deacons, we find that the presbyter has the responsibility to ordain elders and lay hands upon them and set them apart for the specific purpose of receiving the help that they will need to serve and to oversee the people of God.

1 Tim. 5:22 Timothy is warned. *Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.*

In other words, don't confer upon anyone too quickly the role and responsibility of presbyter, elder, overseer, bishop, all those words mean one and the same thing. Don't do that quickly. Make sure of a man's fruits over the course of time. Now is that fool proof? Nope. It sure isn't. But you are stacking the deck in favor aren't you? When you let some time go by? You are a little more sure than when you meet the person and say hi would you like to be an elder? Well come on I will lay hands on you. You see, Timothy and Titus were ordained when they were called. They were told, they were commanded to ordain, remember the word ordain? Set aside, elders in every city as they were commanded. That was necessary for the Church of God. These people had God's Spirit and yet they needed, they were commanded to have an elder in every city. Every place there was a church congregation. Why? Because that is what is necessary for us as sheep. We need guidance. To think we don't is simply vanity, once again. I need guidance. We need guidance.

Let's go on to point number five, the last point before we cover the final wrap up, the significance of this doctrine, this foundational teaching of Christianity.

Point number five is this. The laying on of hands is done to request healing from God. Notice Luke 4:40. Now when Christ healed individuals, it is not always mentioned in these circumstances that He laid hands on the individuals. But Luke 4:40 seems to show that while a lot of scriptures talked about healing and don't mention the laying on of hands, this scripture seems to indicate that every time Christ healed someone, there was physical contact with that person. Now, does God have to have physical contact to heal a person? The answer is no. Of course not But He did.

Luke 4:40 *When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him meaning Christ; and He did what? laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.*

He laid hands on everyone of them. So while it is often not mentioned in the context of the healing that Christ did, the implication certainly from Luke 4:40 is that is what Christ always did. It was such an understood and routine thing in that day and age of Israel that it didn't have to be commented on every time it happened. Christ laid hands on every single one of them.

Notice Acts 28. Paul here carries on the same tradition that Christ is seen doing there in Luke 4:40. Paul is the subject, the individual being described.

Acts 28:8 *And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery, things that would probably kill a person in that day and age. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.*

Why does God want the laying on of hands done in that regard? Why do we have another human being involved? Turn to James 5. This is the one we are most familiar with then it comes to the laying on of hands in regard to requesting from God.

James 5:14 *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for who? the elders of the church, now, never do you find the word elders in the New Testament just referring to the older people. It always refers to ordained individuals, the Presbyterians, the bishops, the overseers, and let them pray over him, why? So they can feel important? Of course not. It has nothing to do with it. There is an acknowledgement going on that is vital to understanding Christianity. We will talk about that in a moment. and let them pray over him, if we were in Hebrew, painting him with oil, *anointing him*, setting him apart, setting this individual aside to receive the special blessing and benefit from God of healing. The minister doesn't heal, God does. *Let him pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord, not the minister, the Lord, will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.**

So laying on of hands is done to request healing from God. In other words, in Biblical language, to request an anointing. It simply means a painting of oil and a laying on of hands. Now what are we to learn from all these things? We know that the laying on of hands is done to set someone apart. We know the laying on of hands is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit. We know that the laying on of hands it to transmit blessing to children. We know laying on of hands is to ordain a person to spiritual office. We know the laying on of hands is done to request healing from God. The Church of God also has a tradition that the laying on of hands is done at a wedding to set aside this new couple to be blessed. As a new family unit as a picture and type in the family of God, they have hands laid on them.

Isn't it interesting that we are supposed to learn something very foundational about Christianity through this ceremony. What are we to learn? Why would this teaching be a part of the foundation that makes up the truth that we follow?

Well for at least a couple reasons. You might have others that you might add to this, but I jotted down two specific ones that is important that we understand.

First, the laying on of hands shows God is at work in us. Isn't it interesting that almost every phase of a person's life has a portion of the ceremony of the laying on of hands involved. When a person is born they are brought before the minister and God is asked to bless this child through the laying on of hands of the minister. When a person is married, hands are laid on them. The human touch is so vital to God. They are set aside at that point in their lives to receive God's special blessing. When a person is baptized God has another human being involved, laying hands upon them as they start their spiritual life, not just their physical life.

And I have often been at people's bedsides when they are near death. And I lay hands upon them as they depart this physical life and go to the grave. You see, God wants us to understand that He is involved with every aspect of our lives. From birth to death. From cradle to grave. While we cannot see Him, the laying on of hands reminds us that He is always overseeing our lives, especially at the critical junctures. That is what we are to learn from that.

The second thing we are supposed to learn is the laying on of hands teaches the government of God. When we have hands laid upon us at our baptism, we voluntarily show the world that we have come under the government of God. The government of God invariable involves other people. Does that make them better, good, super intelligent? Of course not. But it expresses faith on our part that God does work through human beings. That God does have a Church. That God does want us together. You can't be an individual Christian out on your own very easily. God specifically shows through this laying on of hands that we are a family. He wants us to touch. To have that physical contact as family members should. The laying on of hands teaches us the government of God. When we receive the Holy Spirit, the seed of eternal life, God has this done through another human being who has been ordained to guide and to serve and to help us attain our destiny.

Inherent with the laying on of hands is structure and organization. We respond directly to God and we work within the structure that He has provided for our growth. Those two points, brethren, are foundational to Christianity. They are fundamental. And that is why the laying on of hands is listed as one of the six basic and foundational teachings of Christianity. And sadly some in the last few years have misunderstood that. Have lost vision of that. And maybe never understood it in the first place.

So brethren, I hope this has shed some fundamental light on this basic foundation of Christianity. I hope we will have the time in the future to cover the other five basic and foundational teachings that are described here. In the meantime, let's thank God for the wonderful blessing of the laying on of hands.