

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 – 21 Laying on of Hands: For Ordination

The football coach and his assistant stood in front of the group of young men. The boys had all been demonstrating their skills for the coaches, hoping that they would be chosen for the local football team. Adroa was one of the young men who waited nervously. A large box sat at the assistant coach's feet. Adroa knew there were team uniforms in the box. He had played football since he was very young, but had never been on a real team or worn a football uniform. Adroa was desperate to be chosen. He just knew that if he were given a uniform, it would make him a real football player. The coach looked down at his papers and then called a name. The young man next to Adroa stepped forward and shook the coach's hand. The assistant coach reached into the box, pulled out a uniform, and handed it the young man. Name after name was called until the uniform box was empty. Adroa was brokenhearted. His name had not been called. He would not become a real football player that day.

Often people think that if they were just given a title, they could be successful. It is not the title that brings success, but rather the skills and abilities of the person. In the kingdom of God we also find this to be true. Many young people seek credentials and ordination. They mistakenly believe that once they have received the endorsement of the church, they will be successful in ministry.

On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in Jerusalem and the Church was born. The Early Church enjoyed tremendous growth in Jerusalem, until the Jewish religious leaders rose up against them with great persecution. Many believers were arrested and imprisoned. Believers fled Jerusalem, leaving behind only the Apostles. Some of the believers eventually traveled to the city of Antioch, located in the modern country of Turkey. Soon a growing church was thriving in Antioch. Believers were first called Christians in Antioch.

In the church at Antioch were prophets and teachers. Among them were Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus—who would become known as the apostle Paul. Now Barnabas and Paul were well known within the church. They were respected teachers of Christ with proven ministries.

While the leaders were ministering to the Lord and fasting, a prophetic word was given through the Holy Spirit: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." The leaders then fasted and prayed to confirm the prophetic word. Finding agreement in their hearts, they called Paul and Barnabas before them. They laid hands on them and ordained them to the work God had called them to.

Paul and Barnabas then set out on their first missionary journey. They preached the Good News of Christ in many cities and they established churches (Acts 13:2-3).

This very brief story is found in the New Testament Book of Acts. It gives us insight into God's process of ordination. Let's follow Paul's story to see what we can learn. First, we know that God had previously called Paul to ministry and that he had then gone through a time of preparation. He had been mentored by Barnabas and became involved in ministry within the

local church at Antioch. The church recognized his ministry as being from God. He and Barnabas took aid to the starving Christians in Jerusalem. Yet Paul still did not try to advance his own ministry, but waited upon God with Bible study, prayer, and fasting. It was God, the Holy Spirit, who revealed to the leadership that it was time for Paul and Barnabas to move out into their own ministry.

We think about the godly leaders of Antioch, worshiping the Lord. When God spoke clearly that it was time for Paul and Barnabas to be set apart, the prophets and teachers did not rashly lay hands upon them. Instead, they prayed and fasted more. Then they called Paul and Barnabas before them. Placing their hands on them, the leaders ordained them to the work God had called them to and sent them off.

From this we see that the laying on of hands for ordination does not prepare a person for ministry. It is rather a public recognition of the work that God has called and already equipped a person to do. Different parts of the body of Christ have various traditions in the setting apart of ministers. As you prepare yourself for the ministry to which God has called you and submit to church leaders, he will confirm your readiness to receive their blessing. God has a plan and he also has a time for that plan to unfold in your life.

This story is **important** because it clearly explains how God calls people into his work and how the church acknowledges and blesses the minister who is prepared already for the task. It is God who calls laborers and the Church that sets them apart for ministry.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the Holy Spirit will choose and direct people for ministry as believers worship, fast, and pray for God to lead them. In his time he will open the doors for ministry.

Let's **review** this story from the Book of Acts,

1. In what city were Paul and Barnabas ministering, before they began their missionary work? [Pause 5 seconds]

A. If you said that Paul and Barnabas were ministering in the city of Antioch, then you answered correctly.

2. Who ordained Paul and Barnabas to do their missionary work? [Pause 5 seconds]

A. If you said that the leaders of the church in Antioch ordained them, you are right.

3. How did the church leaders of Antioch ordain Paul and Barnabas to the work God had called them to? [Pause 5 seconds]

A. If you said, "They prayed and fasted, then laid hands on them," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this lesson as many times as is necessary to learn the story. Then, examine your own life, ministry, and calling. Ponder these questions. Where are you in God's process? Do you have a clear call from God? Have you been working hard to prepare for ministry? Are you actively involved in ministry in your local church? Are you fasting and praying for further direction from the Holy Spirit through your leaders?