

"Hands On" Prayer Event by Shari McRae

The "laying on of hands" is an ancient practice that we see in the Scriptures as far back as Genesis 48, where we see Jacob laying his hands on the heads of his grandsons to bless them. Throughout Leviticus we read of the offerings presented to God, which describe how the sacrificer laid his hand upon the head of the sacrificed animal before offering it to God. Other uses in Scriptures of the laying on of hands show that it was used when individuals were set apart for leadership or special service, in miracles of healing, and in the bestowing of gifts. We see Jesus in Matthew 19 laying his hands on the little children to bless them. Vine's Bible Dictionary, in discussing the practice of the laying on of hands, says "the principle underlying the act was that of identification on the part of him who did it with the animal or person upon whom the hands were laid". And Colin Brown, in the Dictionary of New Testament Theology, says, "Reference must also be made to the close connection between the laying on of hands and intercessory prayer...The laying on of hands bears witness to the church's conviction that their prayers which are founded on God's promises have been heard." The purpose of this "Hands On" Prayer Event is for us to identify ourselves with the burdens and joys of our sisters in Christ, and to bear witness to our conviction that God hears and answers prayer.

Event Promotion:

Give each woman in the church an invitation that reads: "You are invited to attend an evening of fellowship and opportunity for practical, hands-on ministry to your sisters in Christ. 'Finger foods' will be served!" One idea would be to obtain die-cut paper hands from your local craft store to write the invitations on.

Schedule:

Allow 45 for this event. The event leader should open the meeting with a Scripture about praying for one another (such as Colossians 1:9-12 or James 5:16) and explain the purpose of the event, perhaps using some of the information given above. She should then divide the women into groups of 3-5 by having them number off, and arrange the groups in small circles around the room. Assign one woman in each group to be the "facilitator". The groups will meet together for the next 40 minutes, with each woman in the group taking turns sharing a personal prayer need or praise, and the others in the group then praying for her. At the end of 40 minutes the event leader will ring a bell, signaling the close of the prayer time. She can then invite the women in each circle to join hands while she offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having heard the prayers of his people. Before breaking for fellowship over snacks of finger foods, you may want to sing together "Blest Be the Tie that Binds".

Tips for a Successful Event:

- Instruct each facilitator that they are the "time-keeper" and should divide up the 40 minutes allotted among the number of women in their group (e.g., about 13 min. per person if there are 3 in a group, 10 min. for 4 in a group, 8 min. for 5 in a group). At the end of the allotted time period, the facilitator should say a closing prayer for that person and then move on to the next woman in the group.
- Each woman should be encouraged to briefly share one of the following before being prayed for:
 1. A current circumstance in their life that needs prayer
 2. An answer to prayer recently received, that the group can praise God for together
 3. A current struggle she is having in her spiritual walk
- Everyone in the group is encouraged to pray aloud for the shared request if they are comfortable doing so. The prayers should be short, popcorn prayers going back and forth between group members until the facilitator closes the prayer time for that person.
- Group members should feel free to engage in the Scriptural practice of laying hands on the one being prayed for.
- It is important that what is shared should be something that is directly impacting that's individual's life at the present time. This is not the time to bring up prayer requests for aunts, cousins, or neighbors, however urgent they may be. This is a time for personal "hands on" prayer, to support and identify with one another.
- It is important that the event leader emphasize the confidentiality of what is shared in these small groups, and that everyone understands and commits to keeping these conversations private.
- Consider following up with those you have prayed for in your small group by sending them a card or making a phone call.