

A “Harp and Bowl” Worship and Prayer Gathering

by Larry Smith — Pray Big Ministries 06/02/03

All across America church members are gathering on the first Friday of the month to praise God through prayer and worship. Combining worship music with prayer, they are discovering a wonderful time with God.

The name “Harp and Bowl” has been given to many of these meetings. The term “Harp and Bowl” is taken from the book of Revelation. In chapters 4 and 5, we see the 24 elders casting their golden crowns on the glassy sea, falling before the lamb of God with a harp in one hand (a symbol of worship music) and golden bowls full of incense (which are the prayers of the saints) in the other.

In many communities there are groups who have begun praising and worshipping God through song and prayer twenty-four hours a day. Mike Bickle in Kansas City was one of the first to draw attention to 24-hour prayer with his IHOP (International House of Prayer ministry). The World Prayer Center in Colorado Springs and many others also have 24-hour prayer.

Consider beginning a monthly 2-hour-prayer gathering in your church and see what God will do.

One model to consider.

Every church *will be different* in their approach to a *First Friday* worship and prayer time. Let me encourage you to set your sights on gathering together the first Friday of every month to worship and pray to our heavenly Father. Prayerfully ask the Father to show you how to structure the time.

The prayer team at our church has been celebrating *First Friday* for about three years. Below is a simple outline of what we do. This is not meant as a “How to do it” but only as an encouragement to you; to perhaps spark some ideas for your church.

Each month we host a two-hour praise and prayer meeting we call *First Friday*. This meeting is promoted through the internet to the members of the church prayer team and through church bulletin and pulpit announcements to the congregation.

Our prayer team joins in partnership with a worship leader and/or a worship band. The worship leader works with a leader from the prayer ministry who facilitates the time. Many times we invite worship leaders from outside of our church. This helps our people build a sense of community with other Christians in the area.

Almost every gathering is different. We combine worship, prayers of praise and thanksgiving, prayers of confession, God stories and supplication. Sometimes we are in large groups, and other times we break out into smaller groups. Most of our time is focused on corporate prayer, although we do allow for personal prayer and ministry as the spirit leads.

We usually begin *First Friday* with an extended time of worship. Usually thirty minutes or more. Some *First Fridays* we have worshiped in song for over an hour. One *First Friday*, as the spirit led, we worshiped God in praise songs for an hour and fifty minutes.

A good guide to use in both personal and corporate prayer is praying ACTS. **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving and **S**upplication. Many old and new testament prayers follow the basic outline of praising God, thanking Him, confessing sins and asking Him to provide. This is a scriptural way to pray, and it is easy to remember. Try praying in the order listed in the outline and notes found on the following pages. It helps keeps our focus on Him.

Here are some simple thoughts and a rough outline of our time.

Thoughts for *First Friday*

Getting started

- Get a team of like-minded pray-ers together to pray about starting *First Friday*.
- Present your ideas for what your *First Friday* time could be to your pastor and the church leadership (remember you are under their authority).
- Once you have the approval of church leadership move forward.
- Set a date for your first *First Friday*.

Pre-event items.

- Continue to lift up the *First Friday* time in prayer.
- Establish a place to meet.
- Select a prayer leader who can facilitate the event.
- Select a worship leader who can lead in worship and in prayer.
- Put in place a team who can help with name tags, song sheets, greeting, audio equipment etc.
- Do not be discouraged with small attendance. We started with just five. Jesus chose 12 who changed the world. Jesus promises that where two or more are gathered together in His name, He will be there.

A rough outline of First Friday

- 7:00pm - 7:05pm Greetings, introductions. Why *First Friday*? Refer to scripture Revelation 4 and 5. Make new people feel at ease, this is very important, many people have never prayed out loud in a corporate setting. Simply give them the freedom not to pray aloud but to listen and enjoy the evening and to pray only when they are comfortable. Give the people an overview of the evening, so they will be relaxed and know what is coming.
- 7:05pm - 7:45pm **Worship.** Overheads and song sheets are helpful. We give our worship leaders great freedom during this time.
- 7:45pm - 8:00pm **Prayers of praise.** Prayer leader introduces this time. Psalm 100 tells us to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and praise. Depending on the size of the meeting we will break into groups of 15-20 people and encourage people to pray short praises to God. This gives everyone a chance to pray. Remind the people that this is just a time of praise. Later we will make requests.
- Psalm 100 ⁰ A Psalm for Thanksgiving. ¹ Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. ² Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. ³ Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴ Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. ⁵ For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations.
- 8:00pm - 8:05pm We sing a worship song that ties to confession.
- 8:05pm - 8:15pm **Prayers of confession.** Confession allows us to cleanse our hearts for prayer. We usually share some scripture to encourage the group before we pray.

¹ John 1:8-10 ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Isaiah 59:1,2 ¹ Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Neither is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.

Psalms 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

Psalms 103:2,3 ² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

Psalms 103:8-12 ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

Psalms 139:23,24 ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- 8:15pm - 8:20pm ***A worship song of thanksgiving.*** We sing a song of thanksgiving.
- 8:20pm - 8:30pm ***God Stories/thanksgiving.*** This is a time where we ask people to share recent stories of answered prayer or where they have seen God at work in their lives. This time is always exciting and helps encourage all to pray. Remember in the Old Testament that the Jewish fathers were instructed to tell their children stories of God.
- 8:30pm - 8:55pm ***Corporate prayer.*** We ask the people to pray for the church and her ministries as led by the Holy Spirit. We have three things we encourage our people to always pray for:
- > Blessings for our senior pastor
 - > For our church to be a house of prayer
 - > That the Lord of the Harvest would send out the workers. (Matthew 9:37, 38)
- 8:55pm - 9:00pm ***Final worship song.*** Sing a final worship song. Thank everyone for coming and then dismiss the group. We have a tradition of laying hands on the worship leader and praying a blessing for his/her ministry.

Verses to consider:

Revelation 4 ¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. ³ And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. ⁴ And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; ⁶ and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. ⁷ And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." ⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ **the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,** ¹¹ "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."

in Christ.

Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

2. Confession

Before we can come before a righteous God we need to be clean. He is just and faithful to forgive our sins when we confess them to Him. We serve an awesome and loving God who forgives when we ask for forgiveness. Ask.

Psalm 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 103:2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

Psalm 103:8-12 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

3. Thanksgiving

Just like us, God loves to be thanked. As we remember all of the blessings and answered prayers that God has given us — thanking Him for them — draws us closer and closer to Him and keeps our heart and mind fixed on Him. Let us not be like the nine lepers who were healed yet failed to return and thank Christ.

Luke 17:12-17 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him --and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

4. Supplication

Many times we want to start here with our list of needs. Remember to first praise God, confess your sins, and thank Him. Then come to Him with your requests.

Ask for others first. Your spouse, your family, your pastor and others that God has placed on your heart. Then ask Him to reveal to you those things He wants you to pray for. Just listen for His voice. Then pray for your needs.

God has good gifts for His children. Because He loves us. He wants us to simply ask Him in faith. In asking — we depend on Him— allowing Him to provide. As He answers our requests, we are drawn near to Him. This is where real intimacy with the Father begins to be nourished and grow.

He shows us how to ask in His word. Make sure you are asking according to the things that he has taught us. Pray His promises back to Him.

(See things that hinder prayer in the lesson *Prayer Soup: 41 Key Ingredients Needed for Prayer*).

Matthew 7:7-12 ⁷ “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

James 1:5-7 ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

John 14:12-14 ¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.