

# **Worship Matters**

## **The Principles and Practices of Family Worship**

*Selected Texts*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

April 10, 2022

# The Principles and Practices of Family Worship

## Scripture

Two years ago, I started a series of sermons on Sunday evenings that I called “Worship Matters.” I preached two messages. Then COVID-19 hit and we stopped our Sunday Second services for almost two years. We are now resuming our Sunday Second services, and so I am continuing my series on “Worship Matters.”

Previously, I set a foundation for worship in a message titled, “All to the Glory of God.” Then I preached a message titled, “The Principles and Practices of Personal Worship.” Tonight I would like to preach a message titled, “The Principles and Practices of Family Worship.”

Our text for this series is 1 Corinthians 10:31:

**<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** (1 Corinthians 10:31)

## Introduction

“It’s time for oceans!”

That is what I heard my son-in-law say after supper. My grandson jumped to his feet and ran to the living room, juice in one hand and gummy vitamin in the other hand.

I discovered that “oceans” was my two-year old grandson’s way of saying “devotions.” My wife and I were happy to sit down and join in family “oceans,” also known as “family devotions,” or “family worship.”

Family worship, as the term suggests, is the joint worship given to God by all the members of one household.

## Lesson

In this lesson, I want to briefly examine the principles and practices of family worship.

### I. The Principles of Family Worship

First, let's examine the principles of family worship.

The family is the oldest institution in society. It was not invented by human beings. It was created by God. And though our modern culture may seek to redefine the family, the fact is that God has designed and created the family.

The principle of family worship is seen in history.

*First, family worship was practiced during the time of Noah.* The entire human family was on the ark with Noah, along with his wife, his three sons, and each of their wives. They were the only ones saved from among all the families on earth. After the waters subsided, "Noah built an altar to the Lord" (Genesis 8:20) and his entire family worshiped God.

*Second, family worship was practiced by the patriarchs.* As soon Abraham arrived in the Promised Land, we find him building an altar in the plain of Moreh (Genesis 12:7). The same thing occurred in the valley between Ai and Bethel. Isaac not only renewed the fountains which his father had opened, but kept up his devotions, building an altar at Beersheba (Genesis 26:25). Jacob's altar at Bethel was a family monument and he "said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.'" (Genesis 35:2). The altar

was named El-Bethel. This continuation of family worship was in response to God's declaration that family worship should carry on in Abraham's house (Genesis 18:19). The service of Job on behalf of his children was a perpetual service: he "would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually" (Job 1:5). The book of Deuteronomy is also full of family worship.

*Third, family worship was practiced in the New Testament.* In the book of Acts, we read about "a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God *with all his household*, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God" (Acts 10:1-2). If Cornelius was worshipping with his family prior to his conversion, he certainly continued to do so after his conversion to Christ. And there were other instances of households coming to faith and likely worshipping together as families.

*And fourth, family worship was practiced in the early centuries following the New Testament.* A German church historian, Johann Neander, writes the following: "When a Christian from abroad, after brotherly reception and hospitality in the house of a brother Christian, took his leave, *he was dismissed from the Christian family with prayer*, 'Because,' said they, 'In your brother you have seen your Lord.' For every affair of ordinary life they made preparation by prayer."

Much more could be said. But I will leave it at that.

## II. The Practices of Family Worship

And second, let's look at the practices of family worship.

Joel Beeke has written extensively on family worship. I am borrowing heavily from an article he wrote for the *Free Grace Broadcaster* titled, “Implementing Family Worship.”

Here are some of his suggestions for the practice of family worship.

### *A. General Considerations for Family Worship*

As we consider family worship, think in terms of the what, where, and when of family worship.

#### 1. The What of Family Worship

Generally speaking, this includes instruction in the word of God, prayer before the throne of God, and singing to the glory of God. But we need to determine more of the specifics of family worship.

First, have Bibles and copies of the Trinity Hymnal, Psalter, or songbook and song sheets for all the children who can read. You should also use the creeds and confessions of our church. Children should be taught the Lord’s Prayer. Have your children memorize the *Shorter Catechism* over time.

#### 2. The Where of Family Worship

Family worship may be held around the supper table. However, it might be better to move to the living room, where there are fewer distractions. Whatever room you select, make sure it contains all of your devotional materials.

Before you start, turn your phone and plan to let phone calls go to voice mail. Your children must understand that family worship is the most important activity of the day and

should not be interrupted by anything.

### 3. The When of Family Worship

Family worship should be done when the family is together. When the children are young, it may be best to do it after supper. However, as they grow older and schedules make it difficult to get everyone together, you may find it best to have family worship after breakfast before everyone sets out for the day. The point is to be consistent. Practice the principle of Matthew 6:33 (“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”) in establishing a family schedule.

Carefully guard this time of family worship. If you know ahead of time that the normal time will not be suitable on a certain day, reschedule worship time. Don’t skip it, however, as that can become habitual. When you can keep to your appointed times, plan carefully and prepare beforehand to make every minute count. Fight every enemy of family worship.

#### *B. The Aims for Family Worship*

During family worship, aim for the following:

##### 1. Brevity

As Richard Cecil said, “Let family worship be short, savory, simple, tender, heavenly.” Family worship that is too long makes children restless and may provoke them to wrath.

Start family worship with just five minutes. And as your family gets used to it, you will discover that you will be able to spend more time in family worship.

## 2. Consistency

It is better to have five minutes of family worship every day than to try for extended periods on fewer days—say forty-five minutes on Monday, then skipping Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Family worship provides us “the manna which falls every day at the door of the tent, that our souls are kept alive,” wrote James W. Alexander in his excellent book on family worship.

Don’t indulge excuses to avoid family worship. If you lose your temper with a child 30 minutes before family worship, don’t say, “It’s hypocritical for me to lead family worship, so we’ll skip it tonight.” You don’t need to run *from* God at such times. Rather, you must return *to* God like the repentant tax collector. Begin family worship by asking everyone who witnessed your loss of temper to forgive you, then pray to God for forgiveness. Children will respect you for that. They will tolerate weaknesses and even sins in their parents so long as the parents confess their wrongdoings and earnestly seek to follow the Lord. As A. W. Pink said, “It is not the sins of a Christian, but his *unconfessed* sins, which choke the channel of blessing and cause so many to miss God’s best.”

## 3. Hopeful solemnity

“Rejoice with trembling” before the Lord, Psalm 2 tells us. We need to show this balance of hope and awe, fear and faith, repentance and confidence in family worship. Speak naturally yet reverently during this time, using the tone you would use when speaking to a deeply respected friend about a serious matter. Expect great things from a great covenant-keeping God.

C. *The Specifics of Family Worship*

Let's consider the specifics of family worship.

1. For the reading of Scripture

*Have a plan.* Read a chapter or a manageable portion from the Bible. Or read a series of parables, miracles, or biographical portions. Just be sure to read the entire Bible over a period of time. As J. C. Ryle said, "Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young."

*Account for special occasions.* On the days leading up to Christmas and Easter, you may want to read the Biblical accounts of the events of Jesus' birth and crucifixion. On Sundays when the Lord's Supper is to be served, read Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Matthew 26, or part of John 6. Before you leave home for family vacations, read Psalm 91 or Psalm 121.

*Involve the family.* Every family member who can read should have a Bible to follow along. Set the tone by reading Scripture with expression, as the living, "breathing" book it is. Teach your children how to read articulately and with expression. Don't let them mumble or speed ahead. Teach them to read with reverence. Provide a brief explanation throughout the reading, according to the needs of the younger children.

*Encourage private Bible reading and study.* Be sure that you and your children are personally reading the Bible daily.

*Be plain in meaning.* Ask your children if they understand what you are reading. Encourage family dialogue around God's word. Especially encourage teenagers to ask questions: draw them out. If you don't know the answers, tell them. En-



courage them to search for answers. Remember, if you don't provide answers for your children, they will get them elsewhere—and often those will be wrong answers.

*Be pure in doctrine.* Titus 2:7-8a says, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech.” Don't abandon doctrinal precision when teaching young children.

*Be relevant in application.* Don't be afraid to share your experiences when appropriate, but do that simply. Use concrete illustrations. Ideally, tie together Biblical instruction with what you recently heard in sermons.

*Be affectionate in manner.* Proverbs continually uses the phrase “my son,” showing the warmth, love, and urgency in the teaching of a God-fearing father.

*Require attention.* Proverbs 4:1 says, “Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight.” Fathers and mothers have important truths to convey. You must demand a hearing for God's truths in your home. That may involve statements at the beginning like these: “Sit up, son, and look at me when I'm talking. We're talking about God's word, and God deserves to be heard.” Don't allow children to leave their seats during family worship.

## 2. For praying

*Be short.* With few exceptions, don't pray for more than a few minutes. Tedious prayers do more harm than good. Don't teach in your prayer. God doesn't need the instruction. Teach with your eyes open; pray with your eyes shut.

*Be simple without being shallow.* Pray for things that your children know something about, but don't allow your prayers to become trivial. Don't reduce your prayers to self-centered,

shallow petitions.

*Be direct.* Spread your needs before God, plead your case, and ask for mercy. Name your teenagers and children and their needs one by one on a daily basis. That holds tremendous weight with them.

*Be natural yet solemn.* Speak clearly and reverently. Don't use an unnatural, high-pitched voice or a monotone. Don't pray too loudly or softly, too fast or slow.

*Be varied.* Don't pray the same thing every day; that becomes monotonous. Develop more variety in prayer by remembering and stressing the various ingredients of true prayer, such as: Invocation, adoration, and dependence.

*Confession for family sins.* Confess the depravity of our nature, then actual sins—especially daily sins and family sins. Recognize the punishment we deserve at the hands of a holy God, and ask God to forgive all your sins for Christ's sake.

*Ask God for temporal and spiritual good.* Pray for his provision for every need in daily life. Pray for spiritual blessings. Pray that your souls are prepared for eternity.

*Remember family needs, and intercede for family friends.* Remember to pray in all these petitions that God's will be done. But don't allow that subjection to God's will stop you from pleading with God. Plead with him to hear your petitions. Plead for everyone in your family as they travel to eternity. Plead for them on the basis of God's mercy, his covenant relation with you, and upon the sacrifice of Christ.

*Thanksgiving as a family.* Thank the Lord for food and drink, providential mercies, spiritual opportunities, answered prayers, returned health, and deliverance from evil. Bless God for who he is and for what he has done. Ask that his kingdom, power, and glory be forever displayed. Then conclude with "Amen," which means "certainly it shall be so."

3. For singing

*Sing doctrinally pure songs.* There is no excuse for singing doctrinal error, no matter how attractive the tune might be. Hence the need for doctrinally sound hymnals such as the *Trinity Hymnal*.

*Sing psalms as well as sound hymns.* Remember that the Psalms, called by Calvin “an anatomy of all parts of soul,” are the richest gold mine of deep, living, experiential scriptural piety available to us still today.

*Sing simple psalms, if you have young children.* In choosing Psalms to sing, look for songs that children can easily master and songs of particular importance for them to know. Choose songs that express the spiritual needs of your children for repentance, faith, and renewal of heart and life.

*Sing heartily and with feeling.* As Colossians 3:23 says, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” Meditate on the words you are singing. On occasion, discuss a phrase that is sung.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, as you retire for the night, pray for God’s blessing on your family worship: “Lord, use the instruction to save our children and to cause them to grow in grace that they might put their hope in you. Use our praise of your name in song to endear your name, your Son, and your Spirit to their never-dying souls. Use our stammering prayers to bring our children to repentance. Lord Jesus Christ, breathe upon our family during this time of worship with your word and your Spirit. Make these life-giving times.” Amen.



## Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons)
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp)
3. [www.sermonaudio.com/source\\_detail.asp?sourceid=FreddyFritz](http://www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FreddyFritz)

## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)