

# Morning Devotions

## Starting the Morning off Right

The goal of morning devotions is to start each day at camp in a positive way. Many campers may still be sleepy at morning devotions, but they start out the day singing, listening, praying, and working together. In this section is a list of materials needed for the devotions and a general outline of each day's devotion and focus. Have fun, plan early, and focus on God.

The suggested garden size is six feet by eight feet. Adjust the size of the garden as necessary to accommodate the number of campers or the size of space available. If the camp is held at a rented facility, obtain permission from the camp manager to plant a garden. An alternative is to plant the garden (excluding the tree) in a box planter or planters that can be transferred to another place such as a congregation, long-term care facility, or school.

### **Materials Needed**

- A small tree, or sapling, ready to be planted
- Four shovels
- Two large buckets
- Three hoes
- Three trowels
- 50 feet of garden edging
- Garden rocks for 48 square feet (optional)
- Mulching for 48 square feet
- One small bag (five pounds) of fertilizer
- One bag of cedar chips to cover 48 square feet (optional)
- One pound of earthworms for earthworm garden — available from a bait shop
- Variety of perennials for the garden
- One pruner
- Small plastic bags filled with seeds (one for each camper)
- Scriptures
- Potted plant to be transplanted into smaller pots

## Day One: Garden Earth

**Materials:** A tree or trees to be planted, shovels, buckets of water

**Preparations:** The morning devotions will be held in the same place each day. Select an area on the campgrounds that a tree or trees can be planted. Prepare the area by clearing out any grass or rocks. If you are able to obtain several trees, have each cabin group plant a tree.

**Greet the Campers:** *Good morning to the first full day of camp! Today we will plant a tree! Each day we will add to the garden. Let's see what we can do!* Sing songs to wake the campers up as they greet the new day.

**Scriptures of the Morning:** *Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on [this] law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.*

—Psalm 1:1-3 NRSV

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.*

—Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 NRSV

**Today's Challenge:** Before planting the tree, discuss with the campers the following:

1. Have the campers identify the tree they are planting
2. Point out that the tree is planted in a site that has plenty of room for its roots and its height, because the tree will grow
3. Care of the tree is essential before and during planting
4. Newly planted trees must be given special care during the early developmental years, just like the campers when they were very young
5. Explain how, as co-creators with God, we are called to care for the earth as God has cared for us

**Plant the Tree(s):** Keep the tree cool and shaded and keep the roots moist before planting. Do not handle the tree's roots. If you are planting a sapling, dig a hole twice as wide and as deep as the rootball. Build a mound of soil, and place the sapling on top of the mound so that it is two inches above the hole's bottom. If the roots are wrapped in burlap, remove it. After placing the rootball into the hole, fill the hole with dirt, tamping it down with your foot and wetting it with water as you fill the hole. If you are planting trees in cabin groups, give each person an opportunity to be a part of the project. Have enough shovels and water buckets for each cabin group. If only one tree is being planted, have one representative from each cabin group involved in the tree planting.

**Closing:** Sing "Vine and Fig Tree" from *Songs for Camps and Reunions* or a similar song. Have a camper close the morning devotions with a prayer.

## **Day Two: Earth Web**

**Materials:** Hoes, shovels, trowels, bucket of water, stones, rocks or garden edging, mulch, fertilizer

**Preparation:** In the cabin groups, have the campers plan their garden around their tree by answering the following questions: What do you want your garden to say? What colors do you want in your garden? What kinds of plants and flowers look well together? Do you want an earthworm garden? Where can you find earthworms?

**Greet the Campers:** *Good morning! Our tree(s) has/have been planted for one day. It is receiving the richness of the soil, the good water, and the good sunlight. Last night you slept and so did the tree(s). Today we begin a garden around our tree.*

**Scripture of the Morning:** *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are variety of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone... For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though & many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*

—1 Corinthians 12:4-7,12 NRSV

**Today's Challenge:** Build a garden. It will not look or be like any other garden. The gardens on a tropical island do not have the same plants or flowers as those in a cold climate. Each garden is beautiful. Each garden is different. Think of yourself as a garden. You are growing. Sometimes weeds get in the way. Sometimes what we thought was a weed might be considered a flower in another garden. We will begin building our garden around our tree today. We will not finish it today. As God works in 'I your life, think of the ways a garden changes. Think of the ways you have changed. Think of all the wonderful plants, rocks, bushes, and flowers that make up a beautiful garden. They are all different, yet they each add to the wonderfulness of a garden.

**Plant the Garden:** Determine the parameters of the garden. Give each camper a rock that will be the edging of the garden. Have each person place their rock to give an edge to the garden. Use the hoes and trowels to loosen the dirt within the garden parameters. Clear the garden of weeds and grass. Add mulch and/or fertilizer as is necessary.

**Closing:** Sing "We Are One in the Spirit" *Hymns of the Saints 466*, emphasizing the third verse. Have a camper close the morning devotions with a prayer.

### Day Three: Earth watch

**Materials:** Plants, flowers, shrubs, cedar chips for the garden. If the garden is to be an earthworm garden, have earthworms on hand to put into the soil.

**Greet the Campers:** Our theme for today is Earth Watch. Today we put the flowers, shrubs, chips, or maybe earthworms into our garden. Teach the song “Morning Has Broken,” *Hymns of the Saints* 22.

**Scripture of the Morning:** *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.* — Genesis 2:15 NRSV

**Today’s Challenge:** We are called to be stewards of God’s creation, not owners of it. Today we will plant flowers, shrubs, or create an earthworm garden. Just planting a garden is not enough! As we serve and care for God’s creation, we gain an understanding of all creatures and appreciate the garden that God has given us. We are called to be responsible and become engaged with God in keeping, nurturing, and healing God’s creation. It does not matter how old or young we are. We all have a responsibility to respond to the call to help in creating a harmonious relationship between human beings and our world.

**Creating the Garden:** If you are creating one garden, have a representative from each group (a different one from the previous day) plant the flowers, shrubs, and/or bushes in the garden. If you are creating an earthworm garden, be sure the soil is moist, compost is added, and do not forget to add earthworms to the garden.

**Closing:** Have campers sing “Morning Has Broken” to close. Have the camp pastor say a prayer for the campers as stewards in God’s garden earth.

## Day Four: Earth Quake

**Materials:** Buckets of water, pruner, trowel, a potted plant that can be transplanted into smaller pots

**Preparation:** Dress one of the counselors as a gardener pushing a wheel barrow filled with the needed materials.

**Greet the Campers:** Have the campers gather in a semicircle. *Today's theme is Earth Quake. Every day we move. Even though you cannot see it, the garden you planted yesterday is moving. The plants are growing. The tree is growing. At times it is necessary for us to help in the moving and shaking of the earth. Let us see how that is done.*

**Scriptures of the Morning...***Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit*  
— John 15:2 NRSV.

*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.*  
— John 15:5, 8 NRSV

**Today's Challenge:** The “gardener” enters the area holding the pruner and asks the questions, “What is this?” “What is it used for?” “How many of you have ever used this tool?” The gardener does the same with the trowel, saying “Here is a plant that is very large. It is growing out of its pot. It is necessary for the plant to be put into a bigger pot. Sometimes we have to prune a plant so that it will grow.” The gardener then demonstrates the task of repotting a plant. Tell the campers that what was once plant is now two plants. The garden is enhanced. In the garden; it is also necessary, at times, to weed the garden. The gardener explains that weeds are not good neighbors to other plants. Weeding teaches us to be patient and humble. Can the weeds in one garden be flowers in another kind of garden? God's peaceable world is possible when everyone recognizes God's will and is willing to live accordingly. The gardener explains that pruning a tree or bush helps the plant to be healthier, stronger, and to bear better fruit. Peace and justice are the best fruit that God wants us to bear and share with those around us.

**Closing:** Have the gardener close the morning devotions with a prayer.

## Day Five: Harvest Earth

**Preparation:** Plant into the garden a flower or fruit that can be harvested. In very small plastic bags, have a variety of seeds for each camper. They will be passed out to each camper at the end of the morning devotions. Meet with campers who can dramatize the harvesting as written in the Bible. While you read “Today’s Challenge” they will act or mime the message.

**Greet the Campers:** *Welcome to the harvest! This week we have planted, watered, hoed, and pruned. The harvest is a time of celebration. Let us celebrate!*

**Scriptures of the Morning:** *As long as the earth endures, seedtime, and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. — Genesis 8:22 NRSV. ... The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. — Matthew 9:37-38 NRSV:*

**Today’s Challenge:** *In the land of Jesus harvests took place from March to November. Flax was harvested from March to April. Barley was harvested in April and May Wheat was harvested in May or June. In August and September, the summer fruits (figs, grapes, and pomegranates) were harvested. Olives were gathered from September to November. Everyone in the family helped with the harvest (Campers — enter with baskets of fruit and bread covered with a brown cloth and act as though they are harvesting different crops.) Proverbs 10:5 speaks harshly about lazy adults and lazy children. (Campers act out the parts of hard working and lazy persons.) We are also asked to work together and not be lazy Harvest was a time of happiness and joy It was also a time of sharing. (Campers uncover the fruit and bread in their baskets and give each camper a portion.) The Festival of Booths is a celebration that says God’s blessing plus a good harvest equals great joy. As you leave camp, know that you are God’s blessing. The testimony you share with others is the harvest that brings great joy to others.*

**Closing:** Sing “I’ve Got the Joy.” (A newer version from *Songs from the Loft*, book and CD, is available at many Christian bookstores.) Have the camp director say a prayer for the camp.