

Morning Devotions

Day 1: Building Community

Location: Near a pond, stream, lake or whatever body of water you have at your campgrounds. Choose the most lovely setting you can find.

Preparation: (Read through this entire devotion before proceeding.) Ask several campers to help with a skit during the story. Two campers will be needed to sit in a canoe or boat with paddles as it rests on the grass. Another person is needed to be Jesus, dressed in a long white robe and standing to one side of the scene as it begins. He will need a bag or pocket filled with paper fish or fish crackers. A pitcher of water and a glass should be where he can reach them. Another pair of campers will be needed for the stage crew. They will need squirt bottles with water inside. To set the scene, focus on the empty canoe and sing “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” page 40 in *Songs or Camps and Reunions* or “Peace I Ask of Thee O River”

Say: The scriptures tell us Jesus was always around water or used water for lessons and stories.

- He was baptized in the water of the River Jordan. (Jesus walks to the water, looks out, looks up, turns to face the group.)

- Jesus taught the people from the shores of the lakes. (Jesus spreads his arms toward the group, including each one.)

- Jesus walked on water (Jesus moves across the grass to stand beside the canoe.)

- Jesus calmed the storms and blessed the catching of many fish. (Jesus throws a handful of paper fish or fish crackers toward the group.)

- Jesus is the everlasting water. He told the woman who met him at the well, “Whoever drinks of the water which I give shall never thirst, for that water will become in them a spring of water gushing up into everlasting life.” (Jesus pours a glass of water and hands it to a camper.)

- John 7:37 records Jesus’ words during the Festival of Booths. “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water”

- Jesus challenges us this week to walk on water with him—to join him in this great adventure, (Two campers come forward and walk to Jesus. He takes their hands and helps them into the boat. Then he climbs in, taking the back seat.)

- Taking the challenge is like getting into a canoe or boat with Jesus and sitting back to enjoy the ride and the scenery. (The boat occupants sit back, relax, and smile.)

- Then with a panicky feeling you suddenly realize that you are at the beginning of a very long, churning twisting set of rapids. (Campers sit up and look ahead. Stage crew comes out; rocks the boat, and spray water from spray bottles. Campers grab the sides and hang on. *OPTION have staff members spray all campers at the time campers in the canoe get sprayed*)

- Every bend, every twist in the river brings you a new set of challenges, of rushing water, of moments when you hang on white knuckled. And yet you know that Jesus is still there with you. (Jesus reaches forward, pats a camper, chooses a paddle, and helps guide the boat.)

- You know Jesus has the power to calm storms. (Jesus stands, raises arms, stage crew backs off and moves away.)

- You know Jesus blesses all you do. (Jesus smiles and tosses fish toward the campers.)

- You enjoy the scenery, the cool water, and the overwhelming sense of love you feel when traveling with Jesus.

- (Jesus steps out of the boat.)

Will you accept the challenge of the River of Life yourself? Peter jumped right in when he saw Jesus walking on water and wanted to come to him. (Canoe occupants jump out and take Jesus' hands. They walk off toward the next activity)

- Will you jump into the River of Life? Are you willing to accept the challenge and follow Jesus into the world? (Campers who have been prepared rise and slowly head in the same direction. Leader encourages others to follow.)

Day 2: Christian Values

Location: Gather near a pond, stream, lake, pool, or other campground body of water. Choose the most picturesque setting you can find. Use "Peace Like a River" SCR 40 with these verses:

I've got peace like a river.
I've got joy like a fountain.
I've got love like the ocean
I've got tears like the raindrops
I've got hope like a rainbow

Show a lighted candle, a glass of water, and a large denomination bill. Ask the campers to decide which has the most value. Which would be of most value in a dark cave? Which would be of

most value in the desert?

Today's activities will focus on Christian values. What is considered important or valuable in the Christian faith?

Jesus started the lessons at the water (Have someone read the story of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3: 1-17. While it is being read, have persons portray John the Baptist and Jesus. As Jesus "comes up out of the water" have someone bring him a dove as if it is descending. Jesus walks off toward the camp and John steps out of the scene.)

Jesus demonstrated the sacrament of baptism. He made us aware of the sins in our lives. You are invited to come forward and dip your hands into this bucket of mud to symbolically represent sin. (Have someone start the action and encourage others to follow.) Explain that they are only to stand still looking at their hands while the next part of the worship is read.

Say: Renewal is one of the Christian values we hold dear. Without it we would continue through life dragging everything we had accumulated, good and bad. Renewal comes when we choose to be baptized or reborn and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit was described as "descending like a dove" Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered for the work ahead.

We have the same opportunity for renewal through baptism and confirmation. As a river flows, it washes away dirt and rough edges from the rocks. In baptism soil and rocks in our lives such as sin and hardheartedness are washed away, allowing us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Look at your hands. What has happened to the mud? How does it make your hands feel? Would you like to go

through life with your hands like this?

Come forward and wash your hands in these buckets of water Dry your hands on these towels. Now how do your hands feel? What can you do with your hands now that you couldn't do a few minutes ago?

Join hands as we offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God who gave us Jesus, forgave our sins, taught us values such as baptism and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and changed our lives.

Day 3: Restoration Principles

Location: Outdoor setting, preferably near the water. Signs should be placed side by side facing the campers so they see them as they come to worship. The center sign will say *Restoration Responses*. The ones on either side will say 1838... and (*this year*)...

Preparation: Simple pioneer type costumes from the 1800s would be helpful. Otherwise ask participants to wear signs that say either 1838 or (this year). The worship will include experiences that span roughly 170 years. There will be two greeters, two scripture readers, two leading music, two offering prayers. Those reading scripture should have an old King James Bible and a Youth Bible.

Greeters:

1838: Good morning friends and neighbors. We are glad to have this opportunity to gather together in God's glorious presence.

This Year: Welcome, campers. We hope you had a good rest and are looking forward to this day. May God be with us in all we do.

1838: We know some of you left early this morning, traveling many miles by wagon or on foot to meet in this place.

This Year: We know it was hard for some of you to get up and around this early, but we appreciate your efforts to come together for worship.

1838: Brother (Sister) _____ will lead us in the opening hymn. Since you have no music, we will sing in the usual manner by lining it out. Our leader will sing a line of the hymn and we will sing it back. (Music leader uses a verse from a hymn at least 50 years old.)

This Year: _____ will lead us in morning praise with [choose a familiar camp song such as "Jesus in the Morning" that all campers know.]

1838: Our scripture this morning comes from Psalm 8. Sister (Brother) _____ has kindly brought their family Bible to share with us.

1838: Scripture Reader: O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

This Year: Our scripture this morning also comes from Psalm 8. _____ will read it from the Youth Bible.

This Year: Scripture Reader Lord, our Lord, your name is the most wonderful name in all the earth! I look at your heavens, which you made with your fingers. I see the moon and stars, which you created. But why are people important to you? Why do you take care of human beings? Lord, your name is the most wonderful name in all the earth!

1838: Oh Heavenly Father, thy children gather to worship ye this morrow and to praise thy name. Grant us wisdom and courage. In the name of thy son, even Jesus the Christ, we pray, Amen.

This Year: Oh God, our heavenly parent, your children come to worship you this morning and to praise your name. Give us wisdom and courage. In the name of your son, even Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.

Day 4: Peace and Justice

Location: Gather around a scenic water site. Seat the campers with their backs to the water.

Greet the campers from behind the group. Ask them to continue to face away from the water and sing together, “Lord, Be Glorified,” SRC85.

As they are singing, a scene should take place some distance away. A camper is wandering, appearing to be looking for something. As the song continues, a camper who has been asked to do so gets up, goes to the one who is lost, asks questions, points toward the group, and the two walk back and sit together.

When the song ends say

something like: We often go with the flow in life. We do things the way we see everyone else doing them. Normally when we come to worship, we sit facing the beautiful water

But if we had done so this morning, _____ wouldn’t have seen _____ wandering and lost. By keeping our eyes open and looking around, we may see things Jesus would have us do. It is good to flow along with others who follow Christ. But there are times when we are called to be a counter current—to move against the current of the world.

Jesus did this several times in his ministry. (Read the following scripture stories still from behind the campers. If desired, have mini scenes some distance away showing Jesus and Matthew and Jesus and with the money changers.)

First Reader: As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick—Matthew 9:9-12 NRSV

Second Reader: The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those

who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

—John 2: 13-16 NRSV

In each of these stories Jesus stood against a strong force to do what was right. The way the world chooses to flow isn’t always the right way. Sometimes we are called to be a counter current like Jesus on these occasions.

Think of times when you saw an injustice being done, something cruel being said, or someone or some thing being hurt. (Ask for examples.)

If you witnessed this injustice, what would you want to do about it? What could you do?

Today we will be exploring peace and justice issues. Think about these and other ideas that come to you during the day.

Close the worship with “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian,” and a prayer. As the campers leave, ask them to choose a purple or gold ribbon from a basket. The attached pin should be used to put the ribbon on a prominent place on the camper’s clothing. This ribbon will be required for activities all day.

When the campers arrive at breakfast, announce that those wearing gold ribbons get to move to the front of the line and eat first. There will be reactions. Remind them that this is peace and justice day. (At noon reverse the color to eat first.) For the evening tell them that one color will be selected to eat first. They must guess which will be chosen. They can trade ribbons if the other person is willing.

Day 5: Community Responsibility

Location: Pick an outdoor setting, preferably near a body of water. Place the long piece of blue cloth used

the second day to represent a river flowing out of the water source toward the campgrounds. At the point where the river (cloth) flows out of the water source, place a sign that says *Building Community* the theme used for the first day. Further down the river, place a sign that states *Christian Values*, then a sign that says *Restoration Principles*, then one for *Peace and Justice*. At the end of the river place a sign that says *Community Responsibility*. You may write, “Where I Live... I Show I Care” under *Community Responsibility*.

1. Greet the campers. After the campers have gathered for worship, talk about the fact that they will soon be returning home. Point out the theme for this day— *Community Responsibility— or Where I Live... I Show I Care*. The campers will be taking everything they have experienced and learned this week to their homes—to cities, suburbs, and rural neighborhoods.

2. Share with the campers that the river they have been traveling on this week is coming to a point where it will flow out into their individual homelands. How can they show they care once they leave the camp?

3. Give each person a note card and a pencil. Ask them to write something they can do to share responsibility in their community. Examples of community responsibility are:

- recycling
- obeying local laws
- roadside cleanup
- tree and/or flower planting
- helping their parental figures in their homes
- sending someone a get-well card.

4. Ask the campers to share some of their ideas for their communities. When the discussion is complete, have them use straight pins to attach their cards to the blue cloth that represents a river

5. Thank the campers for their contribution to the “River of Life.”

6. Close the worship with one of the following songs:

This is My Father’s World
Lord, I Want to be a Christian
Where Justice Rolls Down
Thank You, for Giving Me the Morning
Peace I Ask of Thee, O River
Go, My Children (SP 44)

7. Have the campers form a semicircle around the “River of Life.” Ask the campers to join hands and offer a silent prayer. Say a prayer that focuses on the celebration of the lives of each camper and the encouragement they receive from each other as they prepare to return home and demonstrate community responsibility.

8. Keep the “River of Life” and use it in the worship setting for the campfire in the evening.

9. Thank the campers for their participation and dismiss them to break fast.