**Earth Creatures**

*An Overview*

It can seem both kind of silly and kind of obvious for camp – let’s talk about earth creatures! Banana slugs, squirrels, redwood trees… a more fun (and nicer) version of Noah’s Ark. Who wouldn’t love it?

And we’ll do that – the entire first day is all about Genesis 1 and the incredible world we’re a part of.

But as great as that is – and as much FUN as we’ll have with that at camp – it’s not the full story.

If the campers come away with nothing else over the course of the week, it needs to be this:

**We are creatures *of* the earth, and we are creatures *for* the earth.**

**(We’re earth creatures!)**

**What are we getting at?**

The biblical story is pretty clear that we’re an integral part of THIS world – we exist and live and depend on and interact with the trees, animals, seas, winds, fish, birds, and vegetation. This world is ours and we are the world’s. But the biblical story is also pretty clear that God has a particular sort of love for us as humans – that though we are one piece of this vast, incredible world, we are an important piece and God has chosen to have a special sort of relationship with us. We’re even considered to be God’s own image. And because of that, we’re called to interact with the world in unique ways. Just as God can create, we can create. Just as God can mold this world to give new life, we can mold this world to give new life. But we’re not just called to create and mold. We’re called to create and mold *for the benefit* of this world and all who live in it. In God’s wisdom, we’re set as both creatures of the earth and creatures for the earth. We’re a small part of the whole, but uniquely gifted and called to benefit all!

**Why this theme?**

Well, it’s literally the foundation of our faith. Regardless of the specifics of what we feel called to do in this life (like be a marketing analyst or a teacher or a poet), we can’t get around the fact that we’re children of God who are a part of this world and are called to love this world. As adults, the question becomes: how do I love the world with my skills and passions and gifts? How do I work for the conservation of this earth even though my day job doesn’t focus on it? But for our campers, their current “job” is to learn – so how does that fit in? Regardless of the details behind the question, it still boils down to the fact that we are creatures of this earth who are loved by God and called by God to be *for* this earth. So reminding campers of this foundational truth seemed like a good idea.

It’s also really obvious and fun for camp. So we’ll play into that. :)

AND, it also helps us place ourselves in the larger picture. So often we, as humans, tend to lose sight of that. We start believing we’re all alone or that we’re so different and disconnected from the world that we have no support and nothing to contribute. Or, we start believing that everything depends on us and if we don’t do everything just perfectly then things will fall apart. And when we start believing either of those things, it’s easier for us to believe the voices of fear, ego, anxiety, shame, and doubt - than it is to believe that we have both less ability to screw things up than we think and more ability to create goodness and life than we think. But the stories we’ll look at within this theme remind us that we’re creatures of the earth – a very small part of a larger, beautiful whole – and creatures for the earth – called children of God with abilities to create life. *And nothing can take that away from us.*

**How will we do it?**

**Sunday: Earth Creatures**

Introduction to the theme! We don’t focus on one text specifically but ask the campers questions to figure out what they think of when they think of the theme and we set the stage for what’s to come.

**Monday: Creatures of the Earth**

Genesis 1:1-2:4

This is (one of) the stories of creation in the Bible. It’s a beautiful set of poetry that describes the love and care God has towards all of the world. Here we see ourselves as part of one, big, incredible world, right alongside all the rivers and trees and animals and skies and mountains…

**Tuesday: Creatures Loved by God**

 Psalm 8

We’re still talking about the world and our place in it. But this time we’re recognizing that we have a unique and special place in it. God cares for us as humans specifically!

**Wednesday: Creatures Called by God**

 Matthew 14:13-33

This is where the rubber hits the road. When faced with situations that seem out of our control, we tend to doubt, or find a way around the situation. But instead, Jesus calls us to use our gifts as children of God to actually *do* something. These two stories call us to trust in God and trust that we’ve been given all we need.

**Thursday: Creatures for the Earth**

 Isaiah 61:1-3(4-11)

So we’re called by God to do something. But what, exactly? What sorts of things should we be focusing on? Isaiah lays it out for us. It’s not just about being nice and happy; it’s about bringing healing and joy to situations of destruction and despair so that the whole earth can breathe new life.

**Friday: Earth Creatures**

We wrap everything up! Again, no specific passage – just go through them all and tie up the loose ends, sending campers home with the confidence of who they are and whose they are!

*“LORD, by your wisdom you made so many things; the whole earth is covered with your living creatures!” - Psalm 104:24*

**For the Devo: Pray and think about what it means to you that you’re both a creature of the earth and a creature for the earth.**

**For 1 Point: Write a couple sentences on the above and either email it to Sarah or post it in the Facebook group.**