

# INTRODUCING AWANA

## WHY AWANA?

The statistics are staggering. Only nine percent of Christian youth and one-third of born-again adults believe in absolute moral truth – the stakes could not be higher for our kids and the future of the church. As researcher George Barna warns, “The church must focus on children and children’s ministry. We have virtually lost a generation. We cannot afford to lose another one.”

Now imagine 250,000 individual leaders trained and equipped to disciple kids of all ages for Christ – and trained to serve so well they could practically engage in any other ministry in their church. Awana exists to help churches prepare and join the battle for a generation. Now, more than ever, the church needs well trained, equipped and intentionally focused adult leadership committed to turning the tide and reaching the next generation.

Take a minute before you begin and ask God to prepare you for this next step in your journey.

## WHAT IS AWANA?

\*\*\*The name Awana comes from the first letters of the phrase “approved workman are not ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15). Look up 2 Timothy 2:15 and write it here:

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Awana is a ministry that helps parents and churches raise children and youth to know, love and serve Christ using:

- Fully integrated programs for ages two through 18
- The best evangelism tools to reach unsaved children, youth and families
- Teaching that builds an enduring biblical faith
- Resources that bring churches and parents together to disciple the next generation
- Initial and ongoing volunteer training
- Healthy mentor and peer relationships
- Irresistible fun for children, teenagers and adults alike!

### **The Awana ministry embraces five principles:**

1. Awana is centered on the gospel.
2. Scripture memory is a key element.
3. Awana is exciting and fun.
4. Children and youth are trained to serve.
5. Awana is built on volunteer leadership.

The content of Awana is God’s Word. Various philosophies and methods of teaching are applied in children ministries. Some focus exclusively on Scripture, and others focus on entertaining children. The principles of Awana clubs are rooted in the idea that children can have fun while learning God’s Word—that capturing a child’s sense of fun actually enhances his learning.

The good news of the gospel is always the main focus in Awana clubs but Awana is also fun. Game time is the hallmark of fun during club. But Large Group Time and Handbook Time can be just as much fun when you incorporate high-energy songs, dramas, exciting Bible lessons and engaging leaders.

At the core of Awana is Awana Clubs—weekly club programs in local churches. From preschool to high school, children and youth have fun playing age appropriate games, memorizing Bible verses in an organized, topical system and participating in large group Bible teaching. The Awana children’s clubs are 90-minute to two-hour club sessions featuring three main segments: Game Time, Handbook Time and Large Group Time.

### **Clubs within Awana:**

Puggles—Children of Awana Leaders under 3yrs

Cubbies—Two years prior to kindergarten

Sparks—Kindergarten through second grade

Truth & Training (T&T)—Third through sixth grade

Trek—Seventh and Eighth grade

Journey—Ninth through twelfth grade

(Trek and Journey are the Awana youth ministry that is called 24-7 Ministries.)

### **Awana Prayer, Purpose and Values**

Awana operates under guiding principles provided by our prayer statement, purpose and values.

Our Prayer; *“Our prayer is that all children and youth throughout the world will come to know, love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Key components of “Our Prayer” are:

**Know**—Our desire is that every child and youth know Jesus personally and know that he has eternal life because he trusts in Jesus. See Philippians 3:10, John 17:3 and Romans 1:16.

**Love**—The Lord desires intimacy with His children. We want to disciple children and youth to grow their love towards God and others. See Ephesians 3:19 and 1 John 2:5-6.

**Serve**—Serving Christ is a supernatural by-product of loving Him. We want all believers to experience the joy of serving. See Colossians 1:10, 2 Timothy 3:17 and Ephesians 2:10.

Our Purpose; *Awana helps churches and parents worldwide raise children and youth to know, love and serve Christ.*

Our prayer and purpose are closely tied together. The goal of both is for children and youth to know, love and serve Jesus. The only difference is that the prayer is the goal and the purpose is the method. Awana seeks to come alongside churches and parents, and provide tools that help churches and parents partner with each other in their efforts to disciple kids.

We keep in mind through it all that children and youth will not come to know, love and serve Jesus because of Awana, but because our Father calls His children to Himself. Awana aims to serve churches and parents and, together, we are all servants of our Lord who want to see all people come to believe in Jesus.

Look up Mathew 28:19-20

1. Are disciples made or born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where should we go? \_\_\_\_\_
3. We are to baptize them in the name of whom? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Who will go with us as we make disciples? \_\_\_\_\_

Awana seeks to accomplish this purpose through ongoing and intentional evangelism and discipleship to all children, youth and families. You will see however, that our club and youth program materials focus on different age groups on different aspects of the statement. The main emphasis of Puggles, Cubbies and Sparks is on knowing God and Jesus. Evangelism is not neglected in any club or program, but the T&T clubs' handbooks are created to solidify knowledge about God and direct these older children toward loving God, and Trek and Journey ministries intentionally try to focus teenager's eyes outward, on ways to serve.

The intention of Awana is to support your church in its efforts to fulfill the Great Commission.

Our values; *We will glorify God and serve the Body of Christ by committing ourselves to these values:*

- We proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with clarity and urgency.
- We commit to God's Word as our guide and standard.
- We treat all people as created and loved by God.
- We maintain a servant heart in all we do.
- We manage God's resources with faithfulness and integrity.
- We pursue excellence as unto the Lord.

### **Importance of Children's Ministry**

Read Mark 10:1-16. What were Jesus and His disciples doing when the parents brought the children to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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That's right. Jesus was in a house teaching His disciples when people (presumably parents) started bringing their young children to Jesus for His blessing. Apparently it irritated the disciples and they rebuked the parents.

Because we know the whole story, it's easy for us to judge the disciples. But consider what we do when we're in adult conversations, especially when we're discussing weighty topics, and children enter the picture. Though we love and value children, we often consider such interruptions intrusions. If we didn't already know the Jesus' response, we might side with the disciples.

How would you describe Jesus' response?

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The Bible says He was *much* [greatly] *displeased* or indignant. Jesus was angry!

Jesus' response demonstrated His prioritization of drawing children near to Him. The disciples prioritized adult conversation rather than children who needed to be brought to Jesus. Research shows that the probability of accepting Jesus Christ as Savior is highest before age 14. We don't have the luxury of time. Bringing a person of any age to Jesus is more important than anything else. Because we know it is children who are most likely to accept Jesus, we must be diligent about reaching them.

### **Child Protection**

We live in a world of sinners. We know this and still we're appalled that we need to protect our children. We like to think our churches are safe from sexual predators, but they're not—there are churches of all sizes around the world that share in this heart breaking reality. Your church should have a strict child protection policy. To ensure child protection there are seven areas to address

1. Develop and follow policies and practices for child protection.
2. Screen workers.
3. Retain records.
4. Train workers.
5. Supervise workers.
6. Seek legal counsel and professional advice.
7. Report abuse and suspected abuse.

It is imperative for the church to do everything it can to create a safe place for children to grow in the Lord.

### **Statistics:**

- A child is molested every two minutes.
- Thirty-three percent of girls and 20 percent of boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18.
- Ninety-five percent of sexual abuse victims know their abuser.
- There are an estimated 60 million survivors of sexual abuse in the U.S. (20 percent of the population).
- The typical child sex offender molests an average of 117 children—most children do not report the offense
- Sixty percent of convicted sex offenders are on parole or probation.

### **LEADERSHIP**

An Awana leader is a committed believer who ministers in an Awana club in a local church.

## **What are the qualifications for leadership?**

1. An Awana leader must be saved.
2. An Awana leader must be walking with the Lord.
3. An Awana leader must be in compliance with all the requirements of leadership in his or her church.
4. An Awana leader must be open to and desirous of spiritual growth.
5. An Awana leader must enjoy working with children.

## **Who's Who?**

Pastor—The Pastor or whoever he designates is ultimately responsible for the entire Awana program in a church.

Commander—The commander oversees more than one club. He or she reports to the Pastor.

Director—The director administers a club and oversees the leaders in that club. He or she reports to the commander. A director may also administer two combined clubs.

Leader—A leader ministers to the clubbers within his or her care. He or she reports to the director of the club. Leaders may also assume the positions of:

Game Director--A game director is a leader who organizes and oversees Game Time.

Secretary—The secretary is a leader who orders supplies, keeps records and has other organizational responsibilities.

Leaders may also be assigned other duties such as Kitchen crew, Records and Store Keepers. Leaders-in-Training (LITs) are teenagers who serve alongside adult leaders in club.

## **What Do I Wear?**

All leaders wear the Awana leader uniform. The benefits of having all leaders in uniform include:

- Discipline
- Unity
- Providing a place to display awards
- Identification of leaders with clubbers

All clubbers should also wear an official Awana uniform. The benefits of having all clubbers in uniform are the same as for leaders.

## **Club Schedules**

All club meetings consist of three main club segments and opening and closing ceremonies. Clubs usually run 90 minute to two-hour sessions.

**Opening Ceremony**—Every club meeting begins with an opening ceremony to officially start the meeting and establish discipline. The ceremony can include any of the following activities; welcome, prayer, flag ceremony, recital of key verses, announcements and singing. Opening ceremony at Zion takes place in the sanctuary and includes all clubs except Puggles and Cubbies. Leaders not assigned to the check in tables should sit with their clubbers and help maintain discipline.

**Large Group Time**—This is a 30 to 40 minute segment during which the entire club meets together. Large group time shouldn't be boring. You can help your clubbers worship the Lord with enthusiasm and be with them as they hear the gospel.

### **Objectives of Large Group Time**

- Present the gospel and other Bible truths to the children.
- Sing praise songs.
- Provide an opportunity to share praises from the week.
- Pray for the whole club.
- Make announcements of upcoming events.
- Recognize clubbers' and leaders' achievements by handing out awards.

**Handbook Time**—This is a 30 to 40 minute segment when clubbers meet with individual leaders in a small group setting. This time allows you to disciple children by building relationships, listening to verses and helping them understand the verses' meanings. You may have time to answer questions about the Bible lesson and to share the gospel with clubbers.

### **Objectives of Handbook Time**

- Listen to clubbers recite verses and have sections signed off.
- Help clubbers memorize God's Word.
- Help clubbers internalize God's Word.
- Keep track of clubbers' progress and awards.
- Encourage clubbers to finish their handbooks.

### **Scripture Memorization**

A key feature of all Awana clubs is Scripture memorization. We want children to commit Scripture to memory—so it is as we read in Psalm 119:11, hidden in their hearts. There are three reasons to memorize Scripture; 1.) to please God 2.) to guard us from sinning against God and 3.) to draw on as we witness to others. Awana is not a rote memorization program. The intent of Awana is for clubbers to learn and live God's Word, not just be able to recite it. Look up Psalm 119:9-13. What do you learn about Scripture memory from these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

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Leaders, especially, are key people in this endeavor—they can merely listen and sign sections as kids recite verses, or they can engage kids in figuring out what God's words mean and how He wants us to live.

### **Enforcing the standards for passing a section:**

The goal is not just to have clubbers get sections signed off. The emphasis is that they learn the verses so they can recall them later when they need them. You're not doing them a favor if you let them off easy. The standards exist to help ensure they know the verses and also know where in the Bible to find them.

## **Standards**

- Clubbers must pass an entire section during one session. They are not allowed to say one verse and then study before reciting a second verse in a section.
- You may not give more than two helps per section. A help contains no more than three or four words. A help is any sort of hint that you give a clubber. Standards can be adjusted for kids with special needs. Encourage aggressive learners to recite with no helps.

This two-help standard also applies to the extra-credit handbook and cumulative review.

- Clubbers must recite the references and the verse.
- Clubbers must be able to answer questions pertaining to the section.
- Clubbers must pass sections in order.
- Pace clubbers by limiting them to a maximum number of sections if necessary.

**Game Time**—This 30 to 40 minute segment features games, often but not always, on the Awana Game Square. There are usually four teams—red, blue, green and yellow. A game director plans and leads the games. It is a fun, high energy time that attracts children to club.

### **Objectives of Game Time**

- Fun
- Exercise
- Good Sportsmanship
- Opportunity to excel

As such, line leaders, scorekeeper, equipment managers and anything else your game director needs.

**Closing Ceremony**—Similar to opening ceremony, this is a 5 to 10 minute segment. The purpose is to present awards, make final announcements and announce the overall winning team for the evening. (Zion does not have a closing ceremony.)

## **DISCIPLINE AT AWANA**

The word discipline often is used negatively. Actually, discipline is meant to be a loving approach to teaching children appropriate behavior. It comes from the word disciple and literally means “to teach” or “to mold”. Children need discipline to become healthy, mature adults. The correct use of discipline involves standards (expectations), rules (policies), consequences and correction. Positive discipline seeks to instruct as well as change behavior. Discipline actually helps a child feel loved and secure. Children will act out, looking for boundaries, and it’s unsettling not to find them. It is our responsibility to be godly disciplinarians. The motivation for discipline is love for clubbers. The key to doing it well is to make sure your actions and words are guided by the Holy Spirit and done with grace. Discipline begins with the opening ceremony and is part of every aspect of club.

## **The Five-Count for Group Discipline**

Whenever an adult wants everyone's attention, she/he will begin counting from one to five, holding her/his hand in the air and using her/his fingers during the count. By the time the count is at five, all clubbers should be waiting quietly. This is called the five-count. For the benefit of new clubbers, regularly review the five-count and expected behavior for the first few club nights.

## **The Three-Count for Individual Discipline**

Generally, a verbal reprimand is all it takes to get a child back on course. Whereas the five-count is used in a group setting, the three-count is for an individual child who continues to misbehave after given opportunities to correct his or her behavior. One disruptive child cannot be allowed to distract an entire club. Count-one: Give a child a specific warning that his behavior is inappropriate and he has been warned enough times. Count-two: Ask your director to speak with the child.

## **AWANA GOSPEL WHEEL**

The Gospel Wheel was designed to be a simple tool to help you remember and present the gospel. There is an outline within the model, but the real value is to prompt you to share the gospel using Scripture. In conversation, you can discern what aspect of the gospel message to start with, depending on the other person's questions. Respond to the other person's needs and let the Holy Spirit use the Word to lead a person to faith in Christ.

At the center, of course, is the gospel. (Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again.) The segments align themselves along two dimensions. The **character** line could begin with a discussion of God's character (love and holiness) or man's character (sin). Either point gets you to the gospel. You could share along the **action** line, that Jesus shed blood on the cross provided for our salvation, or the corresponding action of a person, which is to trust (have faith or believe) in Jesus Christ's death for our sins. Start anywhere but get to the gospel.

As part of your Awana leader training certification, memorize the six verses that make up the Gospel Wheel.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

John 3:16

Acts 16:31

Romans 5: 8