

MAXIMIZING YOUR AWANA MINISTRY

Ten Simple Ways to Encourage Your Leadership Team

1) **LET YOUR LEADERS KNOW THAT YOU PRAY FOR THEM.**

Remind your congregation from the pulpit: "We need to remember to pray for our Awana leaders. "Telling them individually that you are praying for them can have a powerful impact as well.

2) **WRITE A NOTE.**

Even if you have 100 leaders, two or three cards a week can be completed. If possible, mention something specific: "I heard you had the privilege of leading a boy to Christ last week. I thank the Lord for your ministry and I am praying for this new creation in Christ. "A note doesn't take that long to write, but the words will have long-lasting meaning to the leader.

3) **DROP IN.**

We all know that working with kids has great rewards, but these volunteers face various difficulties as well. Your presence at the club can communicate the club's importance both to you and to your church.

4) **HAVE DINNER.**

Host a "Thank You" dinner for the Awana directors and their spouses. It is a wonderful way to show them that you care about and appreciate what they're doing in club. It will also encourage them to keep on doing it.

5) **BE A LISTENING EAR.**

Churches (and Awana clubs) are made up of people. A dozen people have a dozen different opinions of how something should be done. At other times, volunteers may get hurt by the judgmental comments of another leader or parent. Be willing to work as a mediator (if necessary) or maybe simply to pray with the hurt person. Continue to remind your leaders of the main goal — to reach children and youth for the Lord.

6) **ENCOURAGE EXCELLENCE.**

Encourage leaders to be accountable to do Awana "by the book." The guidelines of Awana have been time tested by tens of thousands of churches. Awana provides Basic Training for all areas of leadership. You can also encourage your leaders to be familiar with the five principles of Awana and to evaluate how the ministry measures up to them.

The Five Principles of Awana.

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

7) **COMMUNICATE THE VISION.**

Communicate the dream — the vision — in manageable pieces that can be accomplished. Make sure you are setting realistic goals in front of your leadership team. If your club is currently running 40 kids, is it realistic to be running 400 by the end of the year? When realistic objectives are met, the vision becomes reality.

8) **ENCOURAGE LEADERS TO GROW SPIRITUALLY.**

Work with your Awana Commander to periodically plan classes on teaching and leadership. Or offer a class that teaches leaders how to answer common questions that children and youth ask about the Bible. Other practical tools available to you include:

- The Parent Handbook Series (Available for purchase online)
- Adult memorization programs such as TruthScripts
- Your local Awana missionary

9) **SET THE EXAMPLE.**

Make sure to set the example by welcoming new clubbers with equal excitement. Whether it's a scruffy little kid from down the block or the mayor's daughter, let all of your visitors know that Awana is a place where they can feel cared for and safe. Your friendliness and kindness will not only be a testimony in itself, but will encourage your leaders by example.

10) **LEARN THE LANGUAGE.**

You need to know what you're talking about. Learn "Awana language." Do you know the four Awana colors? Do you know what a "section" is? Do you know what a "Timothy Award" or "Meritorious Award" is? Become familiar with what terms to use and what terms not to use. ("Awanas" is one you do not want to use!)

Five Easy Steps to Shepherd the Hearts of Your Clubbers

1) **DROP IN.**

Make it a point as you are walking through the halls on club night to “poke your head in” the door of one of your Awana clubs. Wave to the kids, and tell the leaders they’re doing a good job.

2) **WRITE A NOTE.**

At the end of a year, write a note to those clubbers who have won a Timothy, Meritorious or Citation Award. You may make the coveted refrigerator door of the proud parent with a letter to their Awana award winner.

3) **ASK A QUESTION.**

Take a few moments in the hallway or on a Sunday morning and ask a clubber some questions. Be aware of closed-end questions. In other words, don’t ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.” Rather ask open-ended questions such as:

- What’s the most exciting thing you did this week in Awana?
- What’s your favorite Awana game?
- What verse did you learn? Can you say it for me?

4) **LISTEN TO A VERSE.**

Ask clubbers if they plan to pass any sections. If they say “yes,” give them opportunity to quote one of the verses to you and then tell them, “Good job.” (If they don’t do a good job, help them learn the verse.) If they say “no,” encourage them to work on sections for the next week.

5) **GIVE PRAISE.**

Commend clubbers for what they’re doing. Give them a high five when they do something well. See them as valuable people in smaller bodies, with simpler ways of seeing things.

The key is to take advantage of the opportunity Awana offers to begin building relationships with these children. Be approachable and communicate that you genuinely care. For some of the children attending your club, the encouragement you and your leaders give them may be the extent of encouragement they receive all week.

Three Sunday Service Activities to Promote Awana

1) **DEDICATION SERVICE.**

Have an Awana dedication and commissioning Sunday the week before club starts for the year.

- Ask your Awana leaders to come up to the platform. Or, depending on the size of your church, you could include all children’s ministry workers. Thank them for their willingness to teach the children and youth of the church. Encourage the congregation to pray for the leaders.
- Continue the theme of dedication in your message, emphasizing verses that show the Lord’s attitude toward children. (See Sermon Starters on the Pastor’s Web Page).

2) **PRAYER TIME.**

Make sure the Awana ministry is a consistent part of the church prayer list. Take turns listing, by name, the leaders in the different clubs and 24-7 Ministries in your weekly prayer update.

3) **CLUB PARTICIPATION.**

Occasionally ask the different Awana clubs to participate in a service. Have the Sparkies sing a song on a Sunday morning (a great way to reach unchurched parents on a Sunday morning), or invite clubbers to dress in their Awana uniforms and participate as ushers during regular church services.

Each of these activities helps put the Awana ministry in front of the congregation to remind the people not only to pray, but to be aware of what is happening. These activities also give you an opportunity to communicate and demonstrate the church’s vision that every child in your community will come to know, love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Four Helpful Ideas for Engaging Unchurched Parents

1) **PARENT NIGHT**

Have regular parent nights where parents are invited to participate in their child's club. Remember to share the gospel during Large Group time.

2) **DROP OFF AND PICKUP**

Stand by the doors as parents drop off or pick up their children from club. It is a great opportunity to show friendliness and encouragement.

3) **"THANK YOU" SUNDAY**

Arrange a "Thank You" Sunday when Awana parents are invited to attend a Sunday morning church service. Plan for clubbers to participate by singing a few songs.

4) **HOSPITALITY TIME**

Have a "hospitality time" at club. Use 15 minutes at the beginning or ending of club when greeters from church offer coffee and cookies to the parents and have an informal time of getting acquainted. Give first-time parents a brochure about your church and an Awana Parent's Welcome Booklet (available for purchase online). Direct them to the Awana Web site for further information about Awana.