

# AWANA

## UNDERSTANDING OUR PURPOSE AND VISION

As we look to the coming year it is always good to get back to basics. This meeting is designed to reexamine our foundations and purpose in our AWANA program. This brief session is designed to demonstrate that purpose and vision AWANA is intended to provide in our church and community.

It all begins with a verse of scripture . . .

*"Work hard so God can say to you, 'Well done.' Be a good workman, one who does not need to be ashamed when God examines your work. Know what his Word says and means." 2 Timothy 2:15 (TLB)*

The AWANA home site makes this bold statement about its primary purpose . . .

*Awana reaches kids for Christ through fun, Scripture-rich experiences that lead them to know, love and serve Him.*

If we are to fulfill the purpose of AWANA and our church mission there are three things we need to focus on.

### 1. To Know Him

If we are going to help the children to really "know" Christ we must do more than just have them memorize scripture. We must teach them what it means. How many of us have memorized The Star Spangled Banner, but do not know the true meaning of the words? If we did, we would sing it with a deeper respect for what it represents. In the same way, we quote a verse with a deeper respect and love when we understand it.

Our club must focus more on what God's Word means than just what it says. To do less is a great disservice to the Kids and to our Lord. In the Great Commission it says, "go and make disciples." A disciple is someone who understands and follows the teachings of a master. We need to focus on knowing what God's Word means more than a word for word repetition.

*"Success should be measured, not on how many verses a child memorizes, but on how many they understand and want to follow."*

I therefore recommend that a discipleship approach (*which is not only what AWANA originally intended and is now returning to*), is what we must follow in the future. Success should be measured, not on how many verses a child memorizes, but on how many they understand and want to follow.

## 2. To Love Him

As His arms, His eyes, His heart is clearly demonstrated through us, we must show His love for these Kids in everything we do. Getting to know these Kids and building relationships with them is of utmost

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importance. Often we are the only glimpse of Jesus that they see in their lives. Many do not come from Christian homes and live in difficult circumstances at best. For many, we are the only ray of hope in their young lives.

My question is, “Do they know we love them?”

Because if they don’t know we love them, how can they know God loves them?

I therefore recommend that we focus more attention on building relationships through hugs, prayer, encouragement and loving discipline. The real reward they should look forward to each week is not the store or game time, but you!

## 3. To Serve Him

If service is measured in participation and activity, then what is the underlying motivation for that service? If the only reason for participation is reward, then how are we teaching the Kids to serve Him? This has always been a challenge. I have watched over the years how the AWANA program have changed and refocused the incentive program for involvement. Their primary purpose was to encourage continued participation and there is absolutely nothing wrong with the motive. What is at question however is “How does this prepare them for the future?” “Will they serve God only for the rewards? Or for the real reason . . . love?”

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Rewards and Awards are two different things. Rewards are primarily for incentive or for making an effort. An award however is an honor bestowed upon for merit. A recognition of respect. There is no respect attached in a visit to the store, but there is with an award given for merit.

I therefore recommend that the reward and award systems be revised to focus on their intended purposes and points and merits be regarded as separate focuses.