

The Value Of Games - Why They Are Important

So much emphasis is put on quality council time messages & getting the most out of handbook time; game time is often overlooked. Come and see why this time in AWANA is so critical, especially to boys.

INTRO - (10 Minutes)

A. Greeting & Introduction.

Greet everyone and introduce myself. Then ask everyone to introduce themselves and state what role they have in AWANA (take notes).

B. Opening Prayer

In looking at Games and why they are so important, I wanted to touch on four major areas:

1. Some general thoughts on Games as taken from the T&T Director's Book (and I believe these will cover Sparks, Trek & Journey as well).
2. What the world presents to us through Games (ideals, goals, how to play, etc.)
3. What AWANA presents to us through Games (ideals, goals, values, how to play, sportsmanship, etc.)
4. The differences between the "World" view and the AWANA view (this will show why games during AWANA is so important).

C. After we look at the these points above, we will have time for some questions and answers. Also, if we have not run out of time, I'd like to hear how your game time at your AWANA club is going, what works well and what you might be having a struggle with because we are all in this together.

MAIN PRESENTATION - (20 Minutes)

A. Some general thoughts on games taken from the T&T Director's book.

1. Games is the main attraction to get boys and girls to club where they will hear the Gospel message. Try this sometime – invite a bunch of elementary school boys to your church by telling them that they will get to hear a 25-minute lesson. Do you think many will come? Then try this, invite them to come and play games, have fun, and learn some things along the way. Which option do you think will draw more children? This isn't a trade off. They will still have the fun that you promised, but I believe you will get more children to attend.
2. Providing fun should be your primary aim during games. You should participate with them,
3. The objectives of game time: Fun, exercise, good sportsmanship, and an opportunity to excel. I will be touching on all four of these later in the presentation.
4. Your role during game time includes making sure each line has at least one leader. The more leaders involved the better.

Cheer and encourage the clubbers. Hopefully, the clubbers will be fully engaged, but if they aren't, find out why. If they are hurt or not feeling well, encourage them to encourage their teammates. If they just don't want to participate, encourage them to do so. Ask them why they don't want to. Try to breakdown any barriers that would keep them from playing or participating. Don't force them to play; however, just love them and encourage them.

Game time should include four teams (unless the club is too small) based on the AWANA colors (blue, green, red and yellow). These teams earn points for winning. At the end of the game period, the team with the most points gets a reward (normally a share for Sparks & T&Ters).

The games should fit the abilities and interests of the children. Some of the Journey games would not work well with Sparkies and the Sparky

crawl would be fun to watch for the Journey kids to do, but not very beneficial.

This is a good time to teach sportsmanship and discipline (more on this later).

B. Now let's look at how the World views games and what the world teaches our children about games.

1. Sportsmanship. Have you ever sat through a college or professional football game. My life used to have major focus on college football. There was one time I particularly liked because of their reputation as bad boys and how they pounded another school that I didn't like on a regular basis. They once showed up for a college bowl game dressed in military battle dress uniforms and in another bowl games had more yards in penalties than they gave up to the other team. Sure they were good, but they were not very sportsmanlike. I watch pro games and there are players who have a "Signature" move after they score a touchdown. It might be a dance, it might be a certain move or act. I don't remember this stuff when I watched football as a kid. And what about fighting? There were some teams in hockey that used to have such a reputation for fighting that people would say they went to a fight and a hockey game broke out (in other words there was much more fighting than hockey). And we as a society condone it. Attendance is up even though ticket prices are ridiculous. Now there are some teams that practice good sportsmanship. I've been to a few Rockies and Sky Sox games and they appear to be very gentlemanly. However is that the norm. A couple of years ago in a baseball playoff game, I watched the highest paid player in baseball purposefully try to knock the ball out of the fielder's glove (which is illegal) and when the ump called him out you should have seen the look on his face.
2. What about Winning is everything? Many years ago I was on vacation in the Catskills mountains in New York (beautiful place) and was asked to umpire first base for a little league game. I called this one child out on a close play and the mother in the stands just unloaded on me. I nearly had to ask her to leave. A "great" football coach once said that winning is the only thing. Teams spend an incredible amount of money on players to try to put the best team out on the

field. In essence, they are trying to buy a championship. Isn't it great to many people when the underdog or team from a lower paying area wins a championship? How about the Rockies last year -- they had one of the lowest payrolls, yet made it all the way to the World Series. There are some franchises out there who won't sell their souls to win, but not many.

3. How about performance enhancing drugs? Until recently, it was totally acceptable to take steroids, a performance enhancing drug. It would cause the person to play better, but it would take a huge toll on their body. What was especially noticeable was that it altered their personalities. It made them complete jerks and you could normally tell by the negative way they were acting that they were on "something."
4. What about breaking the rules? Look at college teams that get put on probation because their coaches and leaders are breaking the recruiting rules. How is that leading by example? What about the players. It's come to a point in basketball where players are almost allowed to mug each other before a foul is called or they are allowed to take an additional step before shooting the ball.
5. The last thing I want to look at is their lifestyle. Because of being drummed into them that winning is everything and it's okay to bend the rules, their lifestyles reflect that sort of mentality. Look at the increase in professional players making the news for being caught with drugs, fighting in public, flagrantly violating traffic laws, abusing their spouses or cheating on them. I know it happens in all walks of life and in every position, but these kind of things happen more often in certain professions (sports & acting for example). The sad thing is that many kids (hopefully not as many as when I was a kid) look up to these people as role models. I mean no disrespect, but there are many other types of role models for my children other than professional athletes. Now I am not saying that everyone is corrupt; however, the really good ones are becoming more and more of a minority.

Enough of what the world has to offer though games/sports. Now lets look at what AWANA offers.

C. What AWANA presents to us through Games (ideals, goals, values, how to play, sportsmanship, etc.) AWANA to me is exactly how games should be played. Everyone who wants a chance, gets a chance. It's a place where sportsmanship is truly recognized and often times rewarded. It's where winning is not everything, but where you do your best and you cheer for not only your teammates, but the other teams as well. It's where the clubbers don't cheat to get an unfair advantage. It's where boys and girls help each other up if they fall down and they pat them on the back and say "good job, you're great." It's the environment where I love having my two sons involved and where I love being a part of. How's that for a soap box. But really, let's look at some of the great things about AWANA games. And to be fair, I'll use the same categories from above and maybe a couple more.

1. Above all, AWANA games are where clubbers can come to have good, clean fun in an arena of competition. We want them to do their best and we want them to win, but winning is not the only thing! It's where self-discipline is taught along with playing by the rules and adhering to the judge's decisions without being a poor sport about it.
2. Sportsmanship. This is one of the objectives of game time. This is where true sportsmanship can show. It's where you congratulate your opponent when your opponent does exceptional. It's where when a call doesn't go your way that you walk away, cheerfully, instead of standing there arguing or huffing and puffing away. Being a good sport will have far reaching effects more than just games. Being a good sport at work will reap benefits down-the-road. Being a "good sport" at home with their homework and chores will pay dividends. There is nothing wrong with being a good sport. A couple of years ago when Summit was in Denver, a Church was recognized for placing at Bible Quiz. However, shortly thereafter, it was announced that a scoring mistake happened and the Church in question did not actually place. The Church handled it with great Grace and love of Jesus. They were rewarded with the first ever (at least I've not heard of any other) Sportsmanship award. That is their most prized reward that they have ever won. Now that's being a good sport.

3. What about winning is everything? In AWANA, it should not be that way. What should be important is providing an atmosphere where the kids have fun. This is another objective of Game Time - - - having fun. Believe me, if they are not having fun, then they aren't going to want to do it for very long. I really believe that if they have a great deal of fun, that is what they will remember. Winning or losing will be secondary. Along with this is another key objective of Game Time - providing an opportunity to excel.
4. One of the things I really like about AWANA games is that everyone gets a chance to participate and excel. Everyone is encouraged. It doesn't matter if you are the most athletic on the team, you get to play (if you want) and if you don't win, you still get a high five or a hug. We are building character in these boys and girls. We are teaching them teamwork, an idea that is huge in other environments. Everyone likes a team player. Sometimes you have to take one for the team. If you are selfish or individualistic, then you are going to have a more difficult time. Knowing that everyone is going to play (unless circumstances intervene) can be so encouraging and uplifting to a child, especially if that child is not the most talented or most athletically gifted. I know growing up, I wasn't the best athlete around and when I got picked to play, that meant so much to me. I didn't know if I was always going to get picked, but in AWANA games everyone has a chance.
5. Also, it's good exercise. The clubbers get to run around and jump around and just have plain good fun while exercising. The effects of having a good exercise program is well documented and if we can impress on them the value of exercise at an early age, it might stick with them as they get older.
6. What about obeying the rules? Notice, I didn't bring up performance enhancing drugs...those are not needed or accepted here. Fortunately, the clubbers minds are on far better and more meaningful things than cheating to win. When it comes to rules, every place has them and if we can instill in our children the value and importance of obeying rules and playing by the rules, they will be better for it. AWANA has great kids and it should be easy for them to follow the rules. There are many rewards down the road for them if they can learn to follow the rules in the context of games. Most every

business and walk of life has rules. There are even rules in Bible that we are called to follow. When we follow the rules, we demonstrate that we are trustworthy and people of integrity. These two qualities really need to be passed down to our children. Outside, they aren't going to see very much of this. AWANA game time is an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate the value of playing by the rules.

7. The last point I want to bring up about AWANA game time is what kind of lifestyle are we demonstrating to these clubbers in games. By having all the right values, the good sportsmanship, the fun, the opportunity to excel; we are providing the proper arena for their spiritual growth and development. We are helping them become better rounded and have a better outlook on life. By showing them the value of them reaching their hand out to help a fallen person, whether on the same team or opposite team, we are preparing them to reach out a helping hand to those who have fallen and need a hand getting back up.

This leads me into our last category in the main presentation. Let's look at some of the differences between the world view and the AWANA view when it comes to games. This will show why games during AWANA is so important.

D. Why AWANA game time is so important.

1. Let's look at sportsmanship. The world wants people to do whatever they can in a game to win with no regard to other players....it's all about "me", "I'm the star." AWANA games demonstrates the need for good sportsmanship: Helping each other out, cheering each other on, being a team player. These qualities typify how Jesus wants us to be. He wants us helping each other out and being people of joy and good cheer.
2. Winning is everything. That's what the world wants us to think. The one with the most money, the most toys, etc., they are the winners. AWANA shows that in Jesus, we are all winners and that plays out on the game floor. The AWANA game time emphasizes having fun and having an opportunity to excel. These are key objectives. If it's not fun, how long are you going to do it before walking away? If you don't include everyone and give everyone an opportunity to excel, then

what about those who aren't quite as athletic as the others? AWANA includes all the clubbers at game time and everyone has a chance. Those are odds that I like.

3. The world tells us it's okay to bend the rules in your favor, maybe even break them if you can get away with it. Not in AWANA. The Bible tells us that we are to obey the rules (as long as they don't go against the Bible) and be humble. Game time helps to teach that humbleness is important.

In closing, when you look at how the world views games, what values are associated from a world view (winning is everything, you don't really have to be a good sport, go ahead --- bend or break the rules) are not the values that Jesus taught us and the Word reinforces! The place where games can be conducted and participated in with a Biblical foundation is at AWANA game time and that is one of the main reasons why Game Time is sooo critical and valuable to these clubbers.

CLOSING - (10 Minutes)

- A. Question and Answer time.
- B. What do you think about AWANA game time? Important or not? Does it teach our clubbers the right ways to approach games?
- C. Have are games at your club? Are they fun? Are they an integral part of the AWANA process at your club?
- D. Closing Prayer