

Visitor Evangelism

Do you struggle on what to do for a visitor's first night? In this seminar we are going to look at what we can do for our visitors to and why it's important to do these things.

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 how to handle visitors and why it's important, there are two major areas I wanted to touch on. The first is How to reach them and what to do with them. The second is why this is important.

1. How we reach them is critical to stimulating them to wanting to come back. That should be the primary goal: Plant a seed inside of them that will want them to come back.
2. The second point of the first element is what are specific things, activities, we can do to reach them, to touch them to get them to want to return.
3. Finally, why it's important to make a great first impression on them to get them to want to come back (or at least give it your absolute best effort).

D. After we look at the three 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 what you do for your visitors at your AWANA Club, if there is some formula you have for success that other clubs can benefit from. Also, if you are having a struggle in this area, I'd like to know about that as well since we are all in this together.

MAIN PRESENTATION - (20 Minutes)

- A. Part I – How we reach them is critical to stimulating them to wanting to come back. That should be the primary goal: Plant a seed inside of them that will want them to come back.
1. When a visitor comes to our club, it should be a big deal for us. It shows that the clubber who brought the visitor, likes club enough to want to share it with his or her friends. This is very important to the clubber. How we reach out to the visitor is critical because we want them to feel wanted and invited, but we don't want to go overboard or scare them away. Sometimes in our zeal to want to touch all of God's children, if we don't take a moment to get to know a little about them, they might be shy, we could really turn the visitor off and embarrass the clubber.
 2. One of the most important things is to allow the clubber to introduce his friend to the other AWANA clubbers either on his game line or in his handbook group. If games is your first event, ask the clubbers if they brought a friend and if so, please introduce them. Once the visitor is introduced, make sure you welcome him or her and thank them for coming to our club. In the handbook group, have the clubber introduce their friend and have all the other handbook clubbers let the visitor know it is so nice to meet him or her. Also, make sure you welcome the visitor in as well.
 3. Get to know the visitor a little bit. Ask him or her what they heard about AWANA that made them want to come and check it out. Without prying to much and without putting them on the spot, see if you can find out a little about their background/walk with the Lord. A non-threatening way to do this is by asking them if there is anything the group can be praying for them for. If you use Prayer Cards, explain what their purpose is (you have the clubbers fill them out then you pray for that specific request during the week) ask if they have anything they would like for you to be praying for them this coming week.
 4. be sensitive and watch their nonverbals if you something that puts them at ease, make mental note of it. If you say something and it his a less than positive chord with them, make note of that as well. Remember, we do not have any idea what background they are coming from or their

environments as we know them. This might be their only exposure to the love of Jesus, so let them know Jesus loves them and how grateful that you are to see them at club.

5. Remember, our primary purpose at AWANA is to reach boys and girls with the Gospel of Christ and train them to serve Him. Even though a visitor is with us perhaps only one time, that may be the only time we get to try to reach them with the Gospel. If they are already saved and walking with Jesus, then that is outstanding; however, if they are not, then our work is really cut out for us. By letting them know how special they are in God's eyes and how much He loves them, you are at the very least planting a seed that might get watered at AWANA; but if not, then prayerfully somewhere down the road. If we don't plant a seed in every child who comes across our path in AWANA, then we need to make sure we are as this is critical.
- B. There are several things we can do for our visitors to club to make them feel special and want to come back.
1. If you give a share to the clubber for being on time to the opening ceremony, then give at least one to the visitor as well. Ask the clubber to introduce the visitor and possibly have the person running the opening ceremony to ask if there are any visitors today and recognize them if they are. This makes the visitor feel immediately comfortable and accepted at AWANA. This is important.
 2. During game time, make sure that they get to participate. Recognize them for joining us at AWANA today and thank them for coming out. If possible, let them take some sort of lead in an activity, in other words, without overdoing it, let them have some of the spotlight if possible. If Team Captain's are needed, let the clubber who brought him or her and the visitor be Team Co-Captains. If reward shares are given out at the end of games, make sure the visitor gets one as well.
 3. For handbook time, this will be your best opportunity to share Jesus with the visitor, one-on-one. Give them a start-zone and explain it to them. Encourage them to work on it during handbook time and if they finish any of the sections during handbook time, consider giving them double shares as an acknowledgement of their hard work as a visitor. As you ask the group questions, include the visitor in the answer process. Remember, we are evangelizing them as well. By encouraging active

participation, we are letting them know how welcome they are and we want them to completely fit in. Ask them if they have any questions as you go along. Look for ways you can encourage them. The bottom line: Be Jesus to these clubbers! I mentioned this before, but it is worth mentioning again, we haven't had time to build with them, so we don't know where they are coming from.

4. During Counsel Time, sit near him or her and watch to see how they respond to the message. If the visitor is attentive and has questions for you, answer them to the best of your ability. If he or she is nonattentive or is focusing on something else, encourage him or her to pay attention to hear what is being said.
5. Some other things you can do to help make club attractive and at the same time evangelize the visitor is if it is store night, give him or her a few extra shares to spend at store. This way they have something tangible to take home more than the Start Zone (or whatever beginning publication your specific group has — I know Sparks and Trek do not call the intro booklet Start Zone).

Now that we have looked at some of the hows and what we can do for our visiting members, it's time to look at why it's important to do these things, to reach out to them. However, before we look at those reasons, I wanted to take a couple of minutes and share some thoughts about what to do if things don't go well.

- C. What if your clubber brings a friend and the only thing the friend wants to go is goof-off and distract the other children who are playing games or working on reciting their sections? How do you handle this? Here are some suggestions:
 1. If they are being a distraction, tell them the Marines are looking for a few good men and women. Just kidding....Actually, Jesus is looking for men and women to share His message of love to the world. Anyway, encourage him or her to participate in whatever you are currently doing. If it's games, try to get the visitor to participate. If it's handbook time, give them a beginning booklet and see if they will work on it for you. Motivate them with rewards (small treats) and shares. If it's during Council Time, go and sit next to him or her and politely ask them to pay attention.
 2. If this doesn't work, then ask him nicely to respect those around him.

Let the visitor know that what the others are sharing might be helpful to the visitor and the Bible verses might be verses he or she has been needing to hear. Let them know while being kind and sensitive, that there are rules that govern how AWANA works and we all must adhere to them. Let them know how much you appreciate their cooperation in this matter.

Hopefully, this will take care of business. We do want them to be welcomed and evangelized; however, we also have to balance that will good order and discipline in the clubs.

Part II - Now that we have looked at what we can do with our visitors and some ways of how to reach them, along with ensuring they don't become a distraction or behavior problem, let's spend some time looking at why we need to and want to evangelize these visitors, why it's important to make a great first impression on them to get them to want to come back (or at least give it your absolute best effort).

1. It's not very nice out there in the world sometimes, especially for children. There is so much corruption, so much wrong with the world. The enemy is really after our future. Everywhere they turn, children are getting bombarded with lies and sin. Somebody has to stand-up for these children, someone has to teach them and share with them Jesus' love and God's plan for eternity. Without this knowledge, the kids are lost. Without Jesus, there is no hope and where do they get this hope? Where do they encounter Jesus? If they aren't in a Christian Home or going to a Christ-Centered Christian Church, then they have to experience Jesus somewhere. When we work week in and week out with our clubbers we develop a relationship with them and we get to know them. We get to know whether or not AWANA is the only place where they get to experience Jesus. But what about the visitors? There are several reasons why it's critical that they have a great experience of Jesus' love when they visit club.
2. I mentioned the world and the enemy, look at the media. They are getting challenged on all fronts, whether it's movies, TV, music, video games, and as you will soon see, they are getting fed lies and wrong information from these sources. They tell you that sin is okay and that you really don't have to obey or listen to your parents. They tell you it's okay to rebel against authority. They are being told through music that there is no one who really loves or cares for them. I recently heard a message from one of our

Pastors who relayed that the current top five songs on Billboards top 40 were all trash. The themes were disgusting. Someone needs to show them that they are getting fed falsehoods and that they are cared for and loved. They need to hear the truth. If only a seed gets planted! A good seed. One of our most valuable elements of evangelizing is seed spreading! When we plant seeds of love and truth into these Children, there is a better chance for them than if no seeds were planted at all.

3. Also, it's our responsibility as AWANA leaders to reach out to all the Children the Lord sends our way. To think that we really don't have to because they are just visitors and we won't see them again, is not very conducive to expanding the Kingdom. We should be taking every opportunity we have to witness to and share with every child who comes our way. This is a calling, not just something we do to help out the church. Jesus calls us to enter into & develop a Christian relationship with them. They are our responsibility during club time. We are their mentors, role models and disciplers. If I were to ask you when in the New Testament did Jesus get angry, most people would probably say when he chased the Moneychangers out of the temple. However, in Mark 10, Jesus became very angry with the disciples for trying to send away the children who were coming to Jesus for a blessing. He was very upset with them and put them in their place. This tells me how important these clubbers and their friends who they bring are.
4. The above reasons are good reasons for wanting evangelize our visitors, but these are not the only reasons. Here are some more to think about. These that I'm about to share, I have shared as well in Motivating T&Ters. If you have (or are going to) sit in on that workshop, I apologize for the duplication; however, I feel this is critical to share. Most of these come from George Barna's book titled "Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions." This is an excellent read and I encourage you to read it if you get a chance. The stats that follow after the next few paragraphs are very disturbing. I shared these with leaders last year, but I really think they deserve to be touched on again.
5. Our children (these young men and women) will define the future which makes them our most significant and enduring legacy. If we are going to leave the future in their hands, don't we want to do our best to make sure their future is solid.
6. Young people admit to being highly influenced by their role models but

nearly half of all preteens admit that they don't have any role models. We can and need to be those role models. We have that opportunity With these visitors. Every visitor is going to have different needs and hurts. Some of them might have parents who aren't saved and don't take the child to church. We might be the only Christ they see on a regular basis. Let's not let them slip by without having an authentic experience of Jesus' love and caring. If we are their only light source then let's make sure our light is shining brightly for them.

7. Please don't ever think you can't possibly influence someone with only one visit to club. Every time you share Jesus' love, you are influencing them. The spiritual truths you are impressing on them might very well have a long lasting impact. Remember, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world! Check out this info. Three quarters (that's 75%) of young people believe the following:
 - a. The devil does not exist – Satan is just a symbol of evil.
 - b. A good person earns entry into heaven by doing enough good works.
 - c. People are born morally neutral and make a choice as to become good or bad.
 - d. All of the sacred books from different religious traditions (i.e., the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and so forth) are merely Different expressions of the same spiritual truths and principles.
 - e. Spiritual and moral truth can only be discovered through logic, human reason and personal experience.

This should be a great motivator for all of us, but it gets even better. Half or more than half of young ones contend the following:

- a. There are no absolute standards for morals and ethics.
- b. Life either has no meaning or the meaning is realized through hard work, which produces the resources to enjoy comfort and security.
- c. The Bible does not specifically condemn homosexuality.
- d. And my personal favorite: When Jesus Christ lived on earth, He

committed sins.

This clearly tells me one important thing about visitor evangelism. Just do it. If we are their only hope, and I pray we aren't. I pray we are only supplementing what they are receiving at home. But if we are their only hope, let's be a shining hope!

CLOSING - (10 Minutes)

- A. Question and Answer time.
- B. Do you have many visitors to your club? How do you handle them?
- C. Do you do any special recognition that you can share with the group?
- D. Closing Prayer