

WINTER

HAPPY NEW YEAR

January and February are peak months on the Awana calendar. The weeks immediately following the Christmas holiday are full of opportunities to attract boys and girls to club.

Beat the Clock Night

This theme night can be scheduled for the first club meeting of the New Year. Center the entire meeting around the concept of time.

An official timekeeper can dress up as “Father Time.” If possible, hook up a large clock that ticks off seconds. Other wise, get a stopwatch or wristwatch with a second hand.

Publicity for this theme night is crucial. Most clubs cancel club meetings for two weeks during the Christmas-New Year holidays. Clubbers should be mailed a flier announcing this first club meeting of the New Year as a reminder that club is restarting. The flier might read:

Beat the Clock Night

On your mark, get set, hold on .I didn't even tell you what to do yet!

How fast can you recite the books of the Bible?

How many times can you run around the Awana circle in 30 seconds?

Can you put out a candle with a squirt gun before the clock runs out?

Come to Awana club at ____ on ____ for games like these and many more. Bonus points will be awarded to the team with the most clubbers. –Prizes will be awarded to the team BEATING THE CLOCK most often. See you there!

Beanbag Relay –Instead of the central player running around the team pin and into the center, he continues throwing the beanbag to team members until time runs out. The team leader counts the number of times the beanbag is tossed from the center player to the circle players during one minute. Team with the most throws wins.

Laps –Challenge clubbers to run one lap within a set time.

Obstacle Course –Design a fun obstacle course for clubbers to complete within a set time.

Many other Awana games may be altered to fit this theme. As timed events take place, record on a large chalkboard the names of clubbers able to perform within the time limit.

Give bonus points to the clubber who recites the books of the Old and New Testaments in the shortest time. Be sure to promote this attraction ahead of time, so clubbers can practice at home.

Give a Council Time message on time. NOW is the time to accept Christ as Savior! Present the gospel clearly and simply. Stress the importance of trusting Christ today. Challenge saved clubbers to serve the Lord now, rather than waiting until they grow older. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand (Rev. 1:3).*

Winter Fun

Indoor Tournaments –Keep clubbers attending after the Christmas holiday by scheduling an indoor tournament for several weeks during Game Time. Look in *The Best Awana Games Ever!* book for an explanation of Awana tournaments.

Outdoor Activities –Plan a Snow fest. Look in *The Best Awana Games Ever!* book for outdoor games that can be played in winter.

Although summer camp may seem far away, January is the ideal time to begin camp promotion. Help clubbers to obtain and fill out applications for either Awana Scholarship Camp or your church camp.

Start thinking about AwanaGames early –at least three months prior to the date of the meet. During Game Time, play AwanaGames events and variations described in *The Best Awana Games Ever!* book. Leaders should encourage clubbers to qualify for the team through handbook achievement. Several weeks ahead of time, announce the AwanaGames meet date in your church bulletin to encourage total church support. Remember to invite parents and family members. AwanaGames is a great chance to meet families from outside the church and invite them to the church.

Groundhog Shadow Night

Plan this theme night for the club meeting closest to Groundhog Day, February 2. Encourage each clubber to bring a “shadow” –a friend who has not been to club before. Offer a special treat to everyone with a shadow.

Cut invitations from black construction paper in the shape of a groundhog. Invitations could read:

I'm the groundhog's shadow,
I've waited all year for this date,

Will I appear, or won't I?
I wonder what's my fate.

Come to T&T next Tuesday with your shadow
and find out!

As clubbers arrive, make a silhouette picture. Have the clubbers stand so a bright light casts their shadow on a sheet of paper taped to a wall. With black marker on a sheet of white paper, draw an outline of the clubber's head, including as many facial features as possible. The silhouettes will be used during Game Time. The clubber's name should be printed on the back of the silhouette.

During Game Time, play the following games.

Shadow the Groundhog – Two players link arms back to back and run one lap around the circle. The first player is the groundhog; the second player is the shadow. After completing one lap, the groundhog runs into the center for the pin or beanbag.

Stomp the Shadow – Each clubber is given an inflated balloon tied to a piece of string 18" long. The clubber ties the balloon to one ankle. When attached, the balloon should swing freely at least six to eight inches from the clubber's foot. When the whistle blows, players enter the circle and stomp the balloons, or "shadows," of competing players while protecting their own "shadow" from being broken. When a shadow is stomped, the player leaves the game. The two players remaining in the game the longest win.

Missing Shadow – Mix up clubbers' silhouettes (made at the beginning of the evening) and give one to each clubber. When the whistle blows, each clubber must find his or her own "shadow" and return to his or her own team line. The first entire team to line up wins.

Name the Shadow: Hang a sheet between two room dividers five or six feet apart (or the sheet could be held up by two leaders). Shine a bright light behind the sheet to cast a shadow. The clubbers' area should be dark. Several leaders or clubbers wearing disguises such as false noses or ears, funny hats, paper curls, teased hair, etc., take turns behind the sheet. Award points to teams that correctly identify the shadows.

For Council Time, expand on the following thoughts: Christ is always with us as believers. We ought to be careful where we take Him and what we do (Colossians 3:17). The secret of a successful Christian life is found in Colossians 3:16a – *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.* Unlike our shadow, we can know Christ will be with us in every situation, whether it is a cloudy, stormy day or a bright, sunny day. There *is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* with God (James 1:17b).

Valentine's Day

The history of Valentine's Day is ancient, dating back to the third century A.D. For several hundred years, many observed it as a religious celebration. By the 14th century, the religious significance of the day was overshadowed by non-religious celebrations similar to what we observe today. Today, cards are exchanged between lovers, friends, relatives and mere acquaintances. Valentine's Day provides a special opportunity to say "I care."

Plan this theme night for the club meeting just before or after Valentine's Day, February 14. Create a party atmosphere in your club room with red and white streamers, hearts, cupids, doves, comic valentines, etc. Print invitations to the Valentine Club Night on red hearts cut into four or five jigsaw puzzle pieces. Distribute invitations in sealed envelopes and tell clubbers not to open them until they arrive home. Mail invitations to absentees.

Try some of the following ideas during Game Time:

Scoring for the evening –A large construction paper heart is made in each of the four team colors. A Bible verse about love is written on each heart, and each heart is cut into equal numbers of puzzle pieces. Whenever a team wins first or second place in any event, it is awarded a piece of its puzzle. The first team to complete its puzzle is awarded a prize or earns team points.

Heart Hunt –Hide conversational candy hearts around the club room. When the whistle blows, clubbers hunt for the hearts. Each candy heart with the word "love" earns five points. One point is given for every other heart found. The team with the most points wins.

Broken Hearts –Leaders place small prizes or wrapped candy in several deflated balloons. The balloons are inflated and pinned to a sheet stretched across a doorway. Each clubber is given one turn to toss three darts at the balloons. If a balloon is burst, the clubber keeps the candy or prize.

Heart Hockey –Place an empty candy heart box in the center of the circle and lay one broom per team near the center of the circle. Clubbers line up, shortest to tallest, on team lines and number off one through five, as in Beanbag Grab. When the game director calls a number, that player from each team runs to pick up the team broom. He or she tries to sweep the candy box back across his or her team line.

Transplant Relay –Each team is given a 6- to 12-inch cardboard or plastic heart, secured to an elastic belt. The first team player slips on the belt. When the whistle blows, the player runs one lap around the circle, steps out of the heart belt and hands it to the second player. The second player slips the belt on, runs one lap and passes it to the third player, who runs one lap then into the center for the pin or beanbag.

Candy Heart Sentences –Divide candy conversational hearts among groups of three or four clubbers. The group that composes the most complete, correctly structured sentences using the words on the heart wins. Set a time limit.

For a valentine special, have clubbers give a "Gift of Love" for their Awana missionaries. The following letter explains how you might do it.

Dear Awana missionaries,

For a special valentine event, we adopted the theme "Gifts of Love." For one week, the clubbers earned small amounts of money by doing special errands. They brought the money to club, so they could share their love for our Lord and for you. I used your prayer card and a poster to introduce you and your family to the clubbers and a valentine-shaped box to collect their offerings. The clubbers participated in a wonderful way. I am enclosing their letters (with their unique spelling) as they wrote them. Thank you for serving our clubs.

For Council Time:

Draw a heart (as illustrated) on heavy cardboard. Glue flannel to the back of the cardboard. When the glue is dry, cut pieces to form a jigsaw puzzle. Prepare a list of Bible review verses from the handbooks. When a reference is called out, the first clubber standing and quoting the verse word perfect puts a puzzle piece on the flannel board and earns team points. Continue calling out Bible references. As puzzle pieces on the flannel board begin to make sense, winning clubbers arrange the puzzle pieces in the correct order as they add new pieces. The verse review ends when the heart puzzle is complete. The clubber who finally completes of candy the heart earns a piece

Expand the following thoughts – Valentine's Day is a day for sharing our love for one another. There is no greater love than that which Christ showed when He died for us (John 3:16, Romans 5:8). God gave us the Bible as a love letter. In the Bible, God tells us to love each other (1 John 4:7). Evidence of our salvation is that we love others who are part of God's family (Galatians 5:22; 1 John 3:14). In John 15:9-14, Jesus shares more important thoughts about love.

Heart X-rays – The leader presenting this Bible message should be dressed in a white doctor's jacket. He has with him a stethoscope, a box representing a very special X-ray camera and a Bible. Adapt and use as much of the following script as you feel is applicable to your group. Expand the thoughts and explain the Bible verses for the age level of your clubbers. Point out that the word "heart" in this Bible message refers to the kind of life a person is living. The heart with problems may represent a Christian clubber who is living in sin or is defeated in some area of his Christian life (Psalm 101:5b). A deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9) or a deceived heart (Isaiah 44:20) may be applied to both saved and unsaved clubbers.

Introduction: We have a heart specialist here to speak with us tonight. Please welcome Heart specialist: The thing that makes me such a good heart specialist is the intensive study I've done in a special heart book. (Pick up stethoscope.) Doctors examine hearts with a stethoscope. They listen to how slow or fast the heart beats or if it skips. Doctors also use X-rays and electrocardiograms to examine hearts.

Tonight I will use my special X-ray machine camera and heart explanation book. (Pick up Bible.) Let me point my camera out there and get some pictures of hearts in our group tonight. (Snap.) (Look at pictures which you pretend to remove from camera.) Oh, this heart has trouble. It is a proud heart. Now let me consult my Book. (Read and explain Psalm 101:5b.)

(Snap another picture.) Oh, this is a deceitful heart. Listen to what my heart Book says. (Read and explain Jeremiah 17:9.)

(Snap another picture.) This time I see a deceived heart. This is a very serious condition – different from a deceitful heart. This heart is deceived by Satan to think it doesn't have to believe God. This person thinks it is not important to obey the commandments of God's Word. But my Book says the truth about the deceived heart is that it feeds on ashes. (Read and explain Isaiah 44:20.)

(Other hearts you may refer to, depending on the age and understanding of your group, are: stony heart –Ezekiel 11:19; heart with evil thoughts –Matthew 15:19.)

Is there any help or health for such hearts? Let's take a few more pictures and examine the Book. (Read and explain: broken heart –Psalm 34:18; heart to know God –Jeremiah 24:7; and obedient heart –Romans 6:17.)

Hearts and flowers (for girls only): Props include: a table, paper hearts and flowers, and pins. The following script may be expanded or adapted as needed. Often there are people who mean a great deal to us. These may be people who have done something for us or helped us in a special way. We appreciate these people and really like them. Yet sometimes we feel shy about telling them how we feel. Tonight is a special time to say "thank you" to those people we appreciate in a special way.

After I finish my explanation, I'll ask each of you to take a heart or flower to someone in this room. She might have helped you in some way. Or she might just be your friend, and you can say, "Thanks for being my friend."

Pin a heart or flower on the person to whom you wish to show appreciation. We want everybody to receive a heart or flower. So if the person you've chosen gets a heart or flower before you reach her, think of another person. Some of you may want to choose a leader. That's fine. But if you choose a leader, also choose a clubber.

(Note: In advance, alert leaders to spot girls who may not receive a heart or flower from another clubber. Leaders should be responsible to give hearts or flowers to those girls who might otherwise be left out. The club director or specific leaders should also observe other leaders. Usually one or two leaders are very popular. Be sure each leader receives a heart or flower from either a clubber or leader.)

How does it feel when someone says "thanks" to you or says something nice to you? (Allow time for clubbers' response.) We all like that, and it makes us feel very special.

That's how God feels, too, when we praise Him. We can praise Him for how great He is. We can thank Him for the way He cares for us and supplies all our needs. We can praise Him for so many things.

Tonight, we know God is with us, even though we can't see Him. Is there something for which you want to say "thanks" to God? Think of one thing. Stand up and say, "I thank God for (Give each clubber opportunity to participate ...but don't prolong the meeting.)"

If you have additional time, ask each clubber to turn to Psalm 136. (If Bibles are not available, project the Psalm with an overhead projector, or write it on large poster board.) Ask clubbers to read, in unison, the first phrase of each verse and ask leaders to read the phrase, *for His mercy endureth* forever.

Presidents' Night

Plan this theme night for either the club meeting before or after Presidents' Day. The week before, display a poster with a large hatchet and the (sample) following words:

*No chopping trees, but chopping fun!
Come to George Washington Night
everyone!
Next Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at Awana club.*

Display red, white and blue streamers; flags; eagles; and silhouettes of George Washington and/or Abraham Lincoln. The game director can dress up as one of these presidents.

Paul Revere's Ride — Begin Game Time with this stunt. Place pans of water at intervals around the game circle. Ask for one volunteer from each team to go riding with Paul Revere. Contestants remove their shoes, are blindfolded and instructed to walk one lap around the circle without stepping into or bumping the pans of water. Just before the game begins, leaders quickly remove the pans from the circle area. When the whistle blows, Paul Revere's Ride begins.

Reading the News — Announce: "When Abraham Lincoln was Postmaster, he read all the newspapers mailed to New Salem residents. He continued reading papers all his life." In this game, clubbers imitate a pepped-up version of newspaper reading. When the whistle blows, the first clubbers on each relay team pretend that they are President Lincoln. They open the newspaper to page three, then five, then seven. Then they carefully refold the newspaper in good condition and pass it to the second players. The action continues until all team members have participated. The team finishing first wins. As a surprise, bonus points are awarded to the team with the neatest newspaper (team leaders act as judges).

Galloping George – Announce: “George Washington was as much at home on a horse as you are riding in a car.” When the whistle blows, one player from each team gallops one lap around the circle and into the center for the pin or beanbag.

Crossing the Delaware – The game director lays two pieces of rope two feet apart in the middle of the circle. The first player from each team lines up on the shore of the “Delaware” ready to jump across the stream. Each successful player earns team points. For each successive heat, increase the space between the shores (ropes). Play continues until one or two players remain.

Who cut down the cherry tree? (A game for a small club.) – The legend of George Washington cutting down the cherry tree is fictitious. The story is repeated many times, however, as an example of his honesty. All clubbers stand in a circle with one blindfolded clubber standing in the center. When the whistle blows, the clubbers in the circle move in a clockwise direction.

The blindfolded clubber (acting as George Washington’s father) calls “Stop!” Players stop moving. “Father” – points to one clubber and asks, “Who cut down the cherry tree?” Disguising his voice, the clubber answers, “Father, I cannot tell a lie; I cut it down.” The father tries to identify the player’s voice. If he fails, he tries again with another clubber. After three tries, another clubber is selected to take Father’s place. At the end of a specified time, each clubber who has not been identified earns team points.

Red, White and Blue – Each team is given one roll of red, white and blue crepe paper. When the whistle blows, the first player unrolls the red roll, then rerolls it. He or she then hands the red roll to the second player, who repeats the action. When the first player relays the first roll, he or she immediately repeats the action with the blue roll, relays it to the second player and then starts on the white roll. When the third player has wound up the white roll of crepe paper, he or she runs into the center for the pin or beanbag. Note: Make sure the rolls are short, so the game moves quickly.

Ask questions of individual clubbers. If a player does not tell the truth (answers a question incorrectly), he or she must pay a consequence. Suggested questions:

1. Why are statues of Washington always standing? Because George Washington did not lie.
2. What is the best thing to put into George Washington cake? Your teeth.
3. What famous bridge is named after George Washington? The George Washington bridge.
4. Why did George Washington cross the Delaware? To get to the other side

Suggested consequences:

1. In each of the four corners of the room, laugh, cry, whistle and sing all at once.
2. Yawn until someone else yawns.
3. Perform an acrobatic act, such as a cartwheel, somersault, handspring, etc.
4. Give this yell three times very quickly: “Ohwatagoosiam.”
(Said quickly, this becomes, “Oh, what a goose I am!”)

For Council Time, consider using one of the following ideas.

Abraham Lincoln said, "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it." The Bible is a mirror - James 1:22-25. The Bible is like cleansing water - John 15:3. The Bible is a lamp - Psalm 119:105. The Bible is a sword - Ephesians 6:17. The Bible is milk to help us grow spiritually - 1 Peter 2:2. The Bible is meat for the mature Christian - Hebrews 5:14,

Our country especially honors two great men, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. These men were very unlike each other. Each came from extremely different backgrounds. George Washington came from a well-to-do family. But this did not make him a show-off, nor did it stop him from being a hard worker.

He did not say, "Oh, I've got all the money I need, so I can just live it up and have a good time." Even as a boy, George Washington loved his country and was willing to work hard and suffer for it.

Some characteristics that made George Washington such a respected man and leader of his country were his truthfulness, dependability and his trust in God.

In 1789 George Washington declared: "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and to humbly implore His protection, aid, and favor." Under his leadership, the colonies won their independence from Great Britain. Later, he became our country's first president.

Abraham Lincoln, on the other hand, was born in a log cabin. By the time he was seven, he knew how to swing an ax. Everyone seemed to like Abraham Lincoln because of his good nature and his keen sense of justice. When he became president, he said: "Unless the great God who helped George Washington shall be with me, and help me, I must fail. Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now."

During his days in the White House, Abraham Lincoln often slipped into church to pray. He believed that God would answer his prayers. He knew he needed to pray for God's help.

The Bible says: ... *them that honor Me I will honor ... (1 Samuel 2:30)*. Washington and Lincoln serve as two examples of how God faithfully keeps His Word and blesses those who honor Him.

Close with prayer for our country and wisdom for its leaders. Note: Make this message real for clubbers. They need to understand the importance of prayer for our nation.