

LARGE GROUP TIME SERIES

LARGE GROUP TIME 101

Have you thought about Large Group Time (or Green Meadow Time for Sparks) ... beyond “Oh no, what am I going to talk about?” That is, have you ever *really* contemplated the incredible opportunity of presenting a Bible lesson to children? Here’s a simple formula to put it into perspective: **Prayer + Preparation = Opportunity.**

Prayer seems like a “no-brainer,” yet many fail to include this vital component. Whether it’s praying for the children who will hear, or asking God to give you peace and wisdom as you prepare and share, Philippians 4:6-7 is an instruction and a comfort: *Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Preparation also seems like an obvious point, but all too often we don’t set aside enough time to prepare for Large Group Time. Think about it: How thoroughly would you prepare if you were asked to speak before a large gathering of adults in church or elsewhere? The opportunity to share Christ with children is equally valuable in God’s eyes (see Mark 10:13-16), so shouldn’t our preparation be just as good?

Here are a few thoughts on preparation:

- Remember, it is God’s Word and the Holy Spirit that change lives. Always put more emphasis on the Scripture than on the illustration – both in your preparation and in your lesson.
- It is difficult to prepare an effective Bible lesson the night before, or worse, after work on club night. Read your lesson well ahead of time, making notes about what preparations are needed. Of course, you can use the written lesson, but always be prepared enough so that you don’t read the lesson to the children.
- Planning ahead is the key! In the case of the **Great ShakeUP** lessons, note that the Week 3 lesson includes a skit for which you’ll need to find people and give them the script to look over.

Opportunity can be summed up with one thrilling/sobering thought – *this may be the first time some of your visitors have ever heard the gospel.* How exciting! What a privilege to share Christ with them! Yet the entire concept of sitting and listening to a Bible lesson is something that they may not have thought about, much less done. You can think about several simple things to capitalize on your Large Group Time opportunity.



1. Environment

- If your group is small enough or your room big enough, arrange the chairs in a circle. Not only does this formation put EVERYONE in the front row, but it also gives more of a “sitting-around-the-fire-for-a-story” feel rather than a structured “school” feel. (We understand, of course, that many of you have Large Group Time in an area where kids sit in stationary pews or chairs and you can’t change the formation.)
- Ask the kids to sit so that they’re facing a blank or uncluttered wall. If they face an open door or window (with people walking by) or have a variety of pictures to look at, you’ll be competing for their attention.
- Ask your leaders to sit among the kids (especially if your leaders tend to gather in the back of the room and exchange recipes or drink coffee during Large Group Time). Tell them this is especially important because you want them available to help kids find verses in their Bibles. Also, be sure that your leaders are prepared to meet with kids who indicate that they want to trust Christ as Savior.

2. Introduction

Start your Large Group Time by SIMPLY STARTING. Often leaders waste valuable time by telling the kids to “settle down” or “listen up.” If you want to introduce the lesson before you actually start teaching, do so in a positive, rather than a negative way.

Negative lesson starters:

- “OK, you’ve had your fun in Game Time, now you need to sit still and listen.” *(In other words — this WON’T be fun, so be prepared to be bored.)*
- “If you don’t sit still and listen, we won’t have time for games (or snacks or awards).” *(In other words — Large Group Time is something to suffer through so we can get to the good stuff.)*

Positive lesson starters:

- “I am SO excited to tell you about _____! The more I learn about _____ the more I’ve looked forward to telling you all about him/her/ them.” *(In other words, you’re excited! Wow! Kids watch adults closely; they notice our excitement. Shouldn’t they see us excited about God’s Word? However, beware of stretching the facts in an attempt to be funny or entertaining. Remember, your visitors may know nothing about the Bible ... they are learning from what you say.)*
- “How many of you have ever been in a situation where _____? Yeah? It was tough/exciting/scary/etc., wasn’t it? Tonight we’re going to talk about _____ and how God worked in his/her/their life through a situation that was a lot like that.” *(In other words, you’re interested in the kids as people and can relate their real-life experiences to Bible accounts. When asking a question to open a lesson, however, limit the responses and move on with the lesson in order to create some momentum and establish yourself – not the kids – as the main speaker of the lesson.)*



3. Conclusion

Make sure you close your lesson as clearly and decisively as you opened it. While it's tempting to "go on and on" in an effort to make sure you've covered everything, a clear and energetic closing – restating your lesson's main point and inviting kids to ask leaders any questions – is more memorable and effective.

Of course, presenting the gospel to children in any setting requires us to be clear in our approach and terminology. The *Awana Ministry Catalog* offers resources to help you – for example, *Explaining Salvation to Children* and *The Gift* on pages 10-11 of the 2007-2008 edition. (You can also view and order these items on the *Ministry Catalog Online* at www.awana.org/catalog.)

Of all the things you want to "get right" in your lesson, the gospel must be at the top of the list!