

YOUR HOSPITALITY COUNTS

One of the greatest ways to show the love of Christ to an international student is to invite them into your home. International students are very interested in learning about American culture, customs, and family life. They are also, in many cases, intensely lonely because their own families are half a world away. To help make the visit with your international friend most enjoyable, please take a moment to read the following suggestions for hosting your new international friend.

PRAY!

Before meeting your guest, ask God for sensitivity to his feelings and needs.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Be sensitively aware that the ways of doing and perceiving things in your visitor's culture may be different from yours. Even within the same culture, when a man and woman marry, they discover how differently they see matters, misunderstand communications and motives, and have different expectations. So how much more is gracious acceptance, a positive trusting attitude, and clarification of communications needed between cultures. Most international guests are exceptionally courteous and agreeable. So we need to more carefully observe their feelings and ask for their preferences. But don't worry or fear involvement, because your unimposing hospitality, consistent love, and warm smile will communicate cross-culturally to overcome most misunderstandings and fears your guest may have.

SIMPLE HOSPITALITY

Be simple, creative, and relaxed in your hospitality. Don't feel that you need to fix a fancy dinner or think up some entertainment for him. Internationals simply enjoy conversation, getting to know you, learning about American family life, talking and playing with your children, sharing in your usual or previously planned family activities, and visiting new places.

PETS

Many internationals are uneasy or even fearful around pets. A dog should be kept in another room until you can be sure of the reaction of your guest.

ATTITUDE OF A LEARNER

Attitudes show, and will either win or alienate the potential friend. Treat your guest as an equal. Avoid condescending attitudes. Write down and learn to pronounce his name correctly, using the name he prefers, not a nickname coined by Americans to avoid the difficulty of pronouncing it correctly.

ETHNOCENTRISM

Avoid the "U.S. is best" attitude. Be realistic and willing to listen objectively to his reactions to American life, government, customs, etc. Most visitors are highly gracious, and would not mention any critical comment. But if one does, he is not insulting you, but only wants to discuss, learn and maintain his own national ties. Enjoy learning about his culture and opinions for your own benefit.

CONVERSATION

Conversation is entertainment for your guest. For internationals this is a natural and primary source of enjoyment. If possible, look up his country in an almanac, atlas, or encyclopedia so you can ask informed questions about his country. Ask him about family life, education, etc., in his nation. Speak slowly and distinctly, but not overly loud. Avoid slang, idioms, and contractions.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

Respect his natural reserve and don't pry too personally. But don't be surprised if he asks you "personal" questions. In most countries where families and communities are very close, such questions are acceptable. It shows that your relationship has advanced beyond initial formalities and inhibitions.

MEAL TIME

At the table, relax! Most other countries are unaccustomed to hurried meals. In some it is not customary to talk much while eating. That need not inhibit you from carrying the conversation, but realize that his silence does not necessarily mean that your guest is uneasy. In some cultures it is impolite to accept a second serving until it has been offered several times. Discern whether his refusal is a courtesy, or whether he really does not want any more to eat.

SMOKING

Many international students smoke cigarettes. If you don't want them to smoke in your home and/or car, please let them know that your home is smoke free and that you would appreciate it if they could step outside if they want to smoke.

CONTINUE NORMAL ROUTINES

Don't hesitate to follow your usual routine of giving thanks to God before your meal, or continuing a brief customary Bible reading. Just explain, "It is our family custom to . . ." But avoid using this time to "preach" to a captive audience. Please don't manipulate your conversation to speak about Christ in a way that makes your guest feel uncomfortable. Many internationals will raise questions on their own about your beliefs when they sense that you care for them. You may earn the right to share your faith by building a strong friendship with them, which takes time and usually more than one visit. As you courteously listen to his beliefs, he is more likely to respect yours. Ask the Lord to give you discernment in the high adventure of being a witness to Jesus, whether that be to plough the heart-soil, plant the gospel-seed, or harvest the soul-fruit.

(Adapted from Mr. and Mrs. Tim Held)

WELCOMING AN INTERNATIONAL GUEST INTO YOUR HOME



For more information about ISI,
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FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT



Sharing Christ's Love With International Students