

**# 319 12/05/05 Talking to your children after their guests go home**

I have been writing about being hospitable to our children's friends—even when we may not approve of their behavior, dress or manners. Last week, I stressed the importance of requiring certain standards of behavior while still making a guest feel welcome.

After the child has gone home, the way that you talk to your own child about his friend is vitally important. From that conversation, your own child will discover your true attitude about hospitality. Children are so intuitively able to spot insincerity that we must always be real and honest with them.

Paul, in his letter to the church at Rome, wrote, "Practice hospitality." Romans 12:13b. This simple phrase was within the context of a passage about how to put love into practice. In that same passage is the reminder that "love must be sincere." (v.9) Hospitality cannot be faked!

If your guest has behaved in a way that does not fit your family's standards, but is still within your moral standards, do not critique his behavior to your child! You will only force your child to defend his friend. If he defends him, he will close his mind to an honest evaluation of his friend's behavior.

Let us look at an example of what a ten-year-old boy might do so that we can see how to handle a situation. Suppose that you have taught your child that when he is a guest, he should eat some of what is served even if he does not like that particular food. Then, when your child's friend comes to your table, he says, "I don't like lasagna!"

After the child has gone home, do not criticize him for his manners. You can say, "I am sorry that I didn't know Bobby doesn't like lasagna. We could have had something different." If you use that approach, your child is free to silently evaluate or even discuss with you his friend's behavior.

Hopefully, your child will learn to be accepting of children with backgrounds different from his own. In the big picture, table manners are not nearly as important as treating someone kindly.

Next week, I will write about what to do when a child visiting in your home crosses moral boundaries.