

320 12/12/05 When a young guest crosses moral boundaries

Last week I wrote about talking to your child when a guest does not meet your family's behavior standards. It is important not to criticize the guest's behavior to your child. You must teach him to accept different manners, dress and cultural behaviors as a way to be hospitable.

If, however, the guest does something that is immoral, you must take action. You have a responsibility to uphold your family's value system. Joshua said, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15b. Guests should respect the family rules that come from serving the Lord.

Some immoral behaviors that should be forbidden are using God's name inappropriately, using vulgar language, making sexual remarks and innuendos, engaging in sexual behaviors, using alcohol or drugs, dressing indecently and being disrespectful to adults.

The last two behaviors mentioned, indecent dress and disrespect of adults, are gray areas. A young lady might be wearing a neckline lower than you would allow your daughter to wear, but is covered. A child might sound disrespectful because he has not been taught proper manners. Be sure a behavior is really immoral before you address it as such.

Let your own child know in advance what behaviors are forbidden, and that you will speak to any guest who engages in forbidden behaviors. Often, a child will tell his friend what is acceptable rather than face the embarrassment of having a parent intervene.

If something that a guest does is truly immoral, address it quickly, firmly and kindly. Speak to the child with an authoritative tone, but not in anger. Keep your voice low and soft.

Say something like, "Johnny, in our home, we do not use God's name as a slang word. That's one of our important rules. I realize you probably didn't know, which is why I am telling you now. I really enjoy having you visit our home and want you to enjoy being here. I'm sure you can keep from doing that again. Any questions? Now back to your game."

No big deal. Just a very simple explanation of what behaviors are acceptable in your home.