

Hospitality

Serving an Honored Guest

In college, I had the opportunity to live together with a group of students in an intentional community. We shared our meals together and were mentored by a pair of wise house parents who taught us things we were not learning in our academic classes. Our house mom had a knack for making guests feel welcome. Everyone that came by felt loved and cared for. One evening someone asked her, "How do you entertain so well? Where did you learn it?" I will never forget her response. "I don't entertain," she said. "Entertaining is all about making the host look good. I try to be hospitable. Hospitality is about the guest." The distinction between entertaining and hospitality is a good one to teach young children. Hospitality is a spiritual practice designed to make guests feel welcome and loved while they are in your home. This practice makes it fun to serve an honored guest. The preparation is just as important as the event.

Designed for Ages 6+

Materials

Varied depending on the preferences of your guest

Time Investment: 30–60 minutes preparation, plus visiting time

How To

1. Take turns inviting an honored guest to your home either for a meal, snack, or family outing.
2. Before the guest arrives, one family member takes special care to find out some information about the guest. What is her favorite food? Favorite dessert? Favorite drink? Does the guest have any allergies, or is he on a special diet? What is your guest's favorite color? Does she like flowers or balloons?

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3. The family member who has found out the information about the honored guest shares it with the family and together the family makes a plan for how to make the guest feel welcome and loved. Can we serve the guest's favorite foods on plates in her favorite color? What would he like to do? The focus is on the guest's preferences, not the hosts'.

4. Invite the guest over and shower him or her with love and hospitality.

5. After the guest leaves, reflect on the visit. How did the guest feel? How did the family do as the hosts?

Notes

- One of the more challenging aspects of hospitality is being hospitable to someone who is, in some way, difficult to invite into your home. In the Bible, Jesus talks about inviting people who are outcasts and making them into honored guests. Encourage children to treat everyone who comes into your home as an honored guest.
- Be sure to remind children that good hospitality doesn't have to be expensive or fancy. It is also okay to have little touches that are not unique to your guest's preferences. Every single detail need not be a personal favorite of the guest.
- Choose guests for this activity who know your family well and have visited before. You might want to describe the activity to your guest ahead of time so he or she doesn't feel overwhelmed or put on the spot by the intentionality of the exercise.

Variations

- Have a “hospitality month” when honored guests are invited through-out the month.
- Incorporate hospitality into the practice of the sacred meal. (See chapter 6.)
- Invite several guests to one meal or dessert and discuss how the preferences of all the guests will be juggled and accommodated.