

## INTERACTING WITH YOUR INTERNATIONAL FRIEND

### IN PREPARATION FOR MEETING STUDENT(S):

1. **Make sure your motive** is true, unconditional love.
2. **Read something about your guests' country** (if known) before your meeting, so that you can ask informed questions. If possible, have a map of the world or of his/her country so your new friends can explain where s/he lives and what his/her country is like.
3. **Pray** that God would prepare the hearts of those He has sent to you.

### DURING YOUR MEETING:

1. **Pray to overcome any nervousness.** If you relax, this will help them, especially if it's their first time to visit one on one with an American. They may be subdued in order to be certain they don't do anything to offend you. They also may be nervous. It helps if you smile!
2. **Take the time to learn their names** in their own language even if they have an American nickname. It is a compliment to them for you to take the time to learn their name. If necessary, write it down phonetically. Teach them your name and names of other family members. It may also be difficult to learn your name. Be patient. Tell them what you want to be called.
3. **Listen as well as talk.** Speak slowly (but not loudly!) and clearly as you assess the students' level of English. Try to draw them out. Sometimes the student will be so unsure of their English that they will answer in monosyllables or in very short phrases. This puts the burden of conversation on you and can be very tiresome! Assure the student that you want to help them with English and encourage them to converse. Naturally, you will not want to correct every error, but often it is unthreatening if you just repeat what they said using correct English. (e.g. "I want to know is, where is the shopping." "You want to know where you can go shopping?")
4. **Things to talk about** - family, parents, home country, schooling, major, ambitions, future plans, themselves. Be sure to let them ask questions, too.
5. **Avoid "U.S. is best" attitude.** Be realistic and willing to listen objectively to their reactions to American life, government, customs, etc. Keep cool: If they are critical of the U.S., they are not insulting you. Such discussion is their way of learning and of maintaining their own national ties.
6. **Other Topics:** They may ask personal things that are socially acceptable for their culture, but not for ours, such as your age, income, weight, family, parents, etc. In many cultures, these are socially polite questions. Don't be offended. Answer: "Okay", "Plenty", "Enough", "Fine". On the other hand, they may have reservations about answering questions that would seem very normal to us. Don't be bothered if they answer "Okay, plenty, enough, or fine!"
7. **Learn a phrase in their language,** e.g. Hello, how are you? Write it phonetically and practice it so that you can surprise them with it on your next meeting.

8. **When you serve food:** rice, chicken, vegetables, salad or stew is a safe menu. One consideration is no pork for Jews or Muslims. Some Hindus (or others) are vegetarians. For dessert, fruit or ice cream are good choices. When you pray before meals, it may be a new custom to some. Simply say, "We are Christians. It is our family custom to give thanks to God before we eat." They are usually grateful if you pray for them and their families separated from them back home.
9. **Make sure they understand.** Their "yes" is not always our "yes". They sometimes say yes to please you or not to trouble you further. Especially when offering them food, they may say "no" in politeness before giving their true feeling. It is best to offer several times.

## ABOUT YOUR CHRISTIAN WITNESS

1. **Your main witness** will be through your life. As you naturally live your Christian life, your student may ask questions that give you an opportunity to explain your faith, motives, and convictions. Be sensitive to wait for the right moments to share. **Don't try to force or manipulate the situation so you can talk about Christ.**
2. **It is important** that your friendship be unconditional. Even if your students do not show any spiritual interest, you are sowing seeds for the future.
3. **Your testimony** will be one of your most effective tools in your sharing. Let it come up naturally as part of your life's story.
4. **In spiritual discussion,** avoid arguments. You may win a point but lose their trust.
5. **Do not compare religions** unless you really know something about their religion. If they want to talk about their religion, listen respectfully and with genuine interest. Learn from them. This will give you a better hearing, as well.
6. **Be careful not to use Christian jargon** when explaining Christian concepts. For example, if you say "you must be born again" to a Hindu, he may agree, but have a very different understanding of what that means. Don't assume they know the concepts of sin, sacrifice, atonement, etc., or even the basic Bible stories.
7. **If you do make a mistake,** be quick to apologize.
8. **While it is usually not best** to invite students to church the first time you meet them, it can be a very natural thing later in your relationship. Some of the students are Christians. If the student accepts an invitation, explain what will happen ahead of time especially if there will be the Lord's Supper, or a collection taken. Make sure they know they don't have to participate in anything they feel uncomfortable with.

## OTHER WAYS TO REACH OUT TO YOUR STUDENT:

1. Take them cookies or homemade food.
2. Give them an opportunity to cook their own food for you.
3. Mail them clippings about their country.
4. Encourage them to call you when they are lonely or would like to visit you.
5. Write/email them and send pictures if you took some.
6. Send birthday and Christmas cards.
7. Pray for the students, their families, and their country.