



A Community Teaching Moment

Situation: Different Levels of Behavior at a Community Fellowship Meal/Buffer

Infant: An infant can't care for their own needs therefore will be dependent on parents, adults or older children to assemble what they might need. The older more experienced people will choose more wisely than birth to 3 year olds could do, though they will likely take into account what foods they know are particularly liked or disliked i.e. not all dessert! The key for an infant is to hold still long enough **to receive** the needed care that they don't like or think they don't need; in this case, appropriate guidance about how to choose foods wisely. This is also true for older children and adults who have not yet mastered this ability to receive guidance as needed.

Child response: A child is learning to care for their **own needs** in an age appropriate way that is like a child to do but has not yet understood the need to also care for others. We have talked about "expanding your box" in terms of a growing understanding that other people's needs and wants are also important to consider as you do your own. This skill should be increasingly apparent as they move toward their early teens. A child (or adult who functions like a child) may be very focused on obtaining the food they particularly desire. Though gentle humor about desiring something special can be fun, it may progress toward an attitude of competition and fighting to obtain the best or largest portion for themselves, rather than cooperation and consideration for others. They may likely still need to accept guidance from their elders to choose a well-balanced meal, need to be reminded that it is considerate to realize that taking more than one or two portions at the initial serving can mean that others will not have opportunity for them.

Adult/parent response: An adult or parent recognizes their own needs and has expanded their "box" of awareness to include attention/consideration to the needs of others; for parents, particularly their own children. Choice and quantity of foods taken will reflect this awareness and thoughtful consideration of others. They will likely also consider when they may need to model or teach their children how one needs to care for **one's own needs as well as others**.

1) A person acting in an adult maturity level will make wise choices as to type and quantity of food taken in a community setting for their own benefit and the benefit of others.

2) A parent maturity level individual will do the same as well as help children to make wise choices, teaching as they see necessary.

Elder response: An elder has raised their own children and is **now looking toward the needs, growth and maturity of the entire community**, seeing what may be needed especially for those who didn't have a parent that was able to instruct them wisely. Sharing meals is a time honored way of growing fellowship but we must also remember that a desirable food was also the occasion for the first sin, and remember how powerfully an appetite can affect behavioral choices.

1) same as 1 and 2 choices of an adult or parent

2) **plus** may use this situation to share with entire community of all ages to teach those who never had the advantage of such opportunities to learn.

'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This [is] the first commandment. "And the second, like [it, is] this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
Mark 12:30-31 NKJV