

I'm Glad I Listened

During the middle of a busy day in my neurology clinic, I was running behind schedule. Fortunately, one visit went quickly. I felt a sense of relief as I stood up to leave, but my patient began to tell me something unrelated to our visit. Despite my impatience, I felt that I should sit back down and listen.

He told me that recently his wife had started feeling ill. “She knew what was happening,” he said, “but she didn’t tell me because she was scared to go to the hospital.”

Within several days, she was spending all of her time in bed. She became

confused and didn’t make sense when she talked. My patient had serious health problems himself, and soon their conditions both deteriorated. They could no longer care for each other. When my patient’s sister-in-law visited them, she was alarmed. She called for two ambulances to take them to the hospital. Doctors soon discovered that his wife had advanced breast cancer.

“I never spoke with my wife again,” the man said.

His wife suffered a heart attack and was put on life support. My patient described being wheeled from his own

hospital room to the intensive care unit to see his wife one last time. Then he told the doctors to withdraw life support.

The man stopped speaking. Apparently he had said all that he wanted to say. I told him how sorry I felt. He shook my hand and left. I’m glad I sat back down to listen. I’m glad I didn’t leave when I intended to! How would he have felt if I had rushed out of the room right when he was about to share his burden?

I don’t know why my patient shared his story with me that day, but I know why I listened. Alma taught that those who desire to be baptized and to follow Jesus Christ should be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, . . . mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

My patient was bearing a burden, and in a small way, I could help him bear it. He was mourning, and I mourned with him. He stood in need of comfort, so I comforted him. In this simple way, I tried to honor my promise to be more like my Savior. ■

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