

Ali's Head Start

By Sarah Cutler Chow

(Based on a true story)



"Bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" (Mosiah 18:8).

Ali smiled as she closed the last bright blue envelope. Her eighth birthday was next week! She had spent the whole morning making invitations for her birthday party.

"Ready to go?" Mom asked.

Ali nodded. They were taking an invitation to her friend Tiffany in the hospital.

"I think Tiffany will be glad to see you," Mom said as she and Ali climbed into the car. "Her mom told me they had to shave off some of her hair for the surgery."

Ali's eyes got wide. "But school is starting soon! How can she go to school with no hair?"

"They didn't shave off all her hair—just a little bit," Mom said. "And taking care of our bodies is much more important than how we look."

Ali ran her fingers through her own long hair. It almost reached her waist. "I feel sad for Tiffany."

"That's why we're going to visit her," Mom said. "It's part of bearing one another's burdens."

Ali scrunched up her eyebrows. "What does that mean?"

"It means helping others when they are going through a hard time," Mom said. "It's something you'll promise to do when you get baptized."

Ali smiled. Her baptism was coming up! "So I guess helping Tiffany feel better is one way I can practice doing that?" she said.

"Yeah," said Mom. "That's a great way to think of it."

When they got to the hospital, Ali followed Mom to Tiffany's room. They walked down a long hallway with brightly painted walls and open doors. Inside the rooms, Ali could see children resting in big white hospital beds. Some of them didn't have any hair.

Finally they got to Tiffany's room. Tiffany was happy to see Ali.

Ali saw that Tiffany had a bandage on the side of her head. “How are you feeling?” Ali asked.

“Pretty good,” Tiffany said. “The doctor says the surgery went great.”

“Yay! I’m so glad you’re OK,” Ali said.

Then Ali held out a bright blue birthday invitation. “When you’re feeling better, I hope you can come to my birthday party! And maybe you can even come to my baptism.”

Tiffany gave Ali a big hug. “Thank you!”

When it was time to go, Ali walked back down the hallway with Mom. Ali noticed a poster hanging on the wall. It had a picture of a girl holding a long ponytail of her hair. She was smiling. The top of the poster said, “Donate Your Hair for Wigs.”

“Mom,” Ali said. “Can I do that?” She pointed to the poster.

Mom turned to read it. “But Tiffany doesn’t need a wig.”

“I know,” said Ali. “But there are lots of kids at the hospital who do!”



Mom smiled. “I think that’s a great idea.”

On the morning of Ali’s birthday party, Mom took Ali to get her hair cut. After lots of combing and snipping, Ali looked in the mirror. Now her hair reached just to her chin. She felt happy inside when she imagined a girl sitting in a hospital bed, putting on a wig made with some of Ali’s hair.

“How do you feel?” Mom asked.

“So happy that I made up a joke,” said Ali. “Want to hear it?”

Mom nodded.

“I’m getting a *head start* on my baptism promises!” Ali said with a laugh. She couldn’t wait to keep helping others bear their burdens. ●

The author lives in California, USA.

What does it mean to “bear one another’s burdens”?

