

## Shhh

I talk a lot. And, sometimes I don't listen.

Often when others are going through something difficult, we think we have to say something. Unfortunately, although well-intentioned, it is often trite and unhelpful.

When a child's loved one dies, we tell them "there is another angel in heaven".

When a parent has a wayward son, we are quick to say, "they will come back".

When I lost all my belongings, many said, "you can't take it with you". Well, I would have liked to use it in the meantime! They also said, "it's only stuff". But, but it's my stuff!

Sometimes, rather than offering explanations or trite empty platitudes, looking into the eyes of the one who is mourning and simply, but honestly, just telling them that you love them is far better than any other words we could offer.

In the Bible, when the righteous man, Job is visited by his friends, we often notice how they were rebuked by God for their harsh words to their friend. While this is true, we need to notice that they did three things right.

First, they came to him when he was suffering. They practiced the "ministry of presence".

Second, they empathized and mourned with him: "they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads". As Romans 12:15 says, we should "Mourn with those who mourn."

Third, they spent seven days before they offered their advice. They commiserated with their friend in silence.

Then, they decided to open their mouths and start talking, blaming his troubles on his sin. This is when things quickly went south, and God condemned them. Job even called them, "miserable comforters". We can't take our words back. And, we really can't take emails, Facebook comments or texts back because they are recorded forever.

Proverbs 17:28 says, "Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent." And, James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak".

When someone is hurting, it is often more comforting to spend time with them, mourn with them, hold any suggestions, rethink if a comment could appear trite, and be slow to offer advice. This is a mark of a true friend.

*With insights from [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)*