

Serving During Surgery

Last week I was well-served by an outstanding medical team.

Over a dozen people at the Billings Clinic pooled their training and talents to repair a small hernia in my abdomen. From beginning to end, they cared for me with the utmost in professional skill and personal attention.

As a result, I'm mending quickly, with no infection, little residual pain, and an even greater respect for the men and women who serve in our medical community.

As Corlette drove me to the hospital at 5:30 am, I prayed that the Lord would not only make the surgery successful but also give me grace to bless the people who would soon be caring for me. In particular, I asked him to enable me to live out the SERVE principle with each person I encountered that day.

- Smile
- Explore and empathize (show interest and compassion)
- Reconcile
- Value (express appreciation and admiration)
- Encourage (put wind under their wings)

From the receptionist to the surgeon, I made it a point to greet each member of the team with a big smile and a cheerful "Good morning!" Everyone smiled warmly in return. Sometimes I had time to add, "Thank you for getting up so early today to take care of me," which usually triggered a chuckle and opened the way for conversation.

Exploring people's lives takes so little effort and yet it's so rewarding. "How long have you worked at the Clinic?" "What do you like most about your job?" "How many patients do you serve in a day?" "Why did you choose to be a surgical nurse?" "How do you feel after a successful operation?" "How can I make your job easier today?"

It's amazing how much you can learn about people by showing just a little interest in their lives.

I love to tease, so when the technicians and nurses asked their long lists of standard questions, I looked for opportunities to catch them off guard. "Have you had anything to drink this morning?" "No, but someone promised me a coffee IV." "Have you had any problems with choking lately?" "No, I haven't done anything to provoke my wife that badly for months."

Medical workers have trained long and hard for their careers, so they appreciate it when someone values their expertise. Whenever time permitted I asked members of the team to explain various processes and equipment. They seemed to genuinely enjoy sharing their knowledge, which gave me more opportunities to learn about their work and express admiration for what they do.

Of course there is no substitute for saying thank you over and over again. To the aide who wheeled me from room to room. To the nurse who inserted an IV so painlessly. To the anesthesiologist who explained every step in my sedation. To the surgeon who

opened and closed me so flawlessly. And, most of all, to my lovely wife, who was watching over me throughout the process and has thoroughly pampered me ever since.

All of these people served me with exceptional care, and I'm glad God gave me the opportunity to encourage them just a little bit in return.

You can do the same with the many people you encounter during the holidays. Whether you're visiting your doctor or enjoying a family dinner, a company party, or a shopping trip to the mall, you can personally and warmly engage every person you meet.

Memorize the SERVE acrostic. It's so simple. And just before you walk through the door to any engagement, pray, "God help me to serve every person I meet, to show a genuine interest in their lives, to value who they are and what they do, and to be used by you to encourage them in a way that puts wind under their wings."

- Ken Sande

Reflection Questions:

- Who is one of the most encouraging persons you know? What is it that makes him or her so pleasant to be around? What qualities can you imitate to encourage the people you meet in the days ahead?
- Why are many people in need of special encouragement during the holidays? How could God use you to bless them?
- How can you turn a casual conversation into an opportunity to talk about the real meaning of Christmas?
- Memorize the SERVE principle and practice it in every social setting. You'll be surprised how quickly it becomes a relationship-building habit.

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