

WORDS THAT STICK

*Want to leave a lasting impression?
Say something out loud.*

Have any spare change in your pocket? What do you think you could do with it? Could you scrape together enough for a lunch item off the dollar menu? Buy something amazing at a garage sale?

Name a town?

In a small town in Kentucky, USA, the very first postmaster didn't think much of his own handwriting. He figured that if a town had a number as its name, then it'd be easier to read and understand that name on an envelope even if somebody had bad handwriting.

He reached into his pocket, counted the loose change (88 cents), and Eighty Eight, Kentucky, was born. The town name stuck and has been used ever since.¹

It's funny how such random and seemingly small decisions can cause such lasting consequences. A lot of life is like that. Especially with the words we use.



MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

When it comes to seemingly small decisions that can have lasting consequences, the words we use to communicate with the people in our lives rank plenty high. A few words spoken, texted, or written can completely lift or ruin a day—or a much longer period of time.

“The voice that bears profound testimony, utters fervent prayer, and sings the hymns of Zion *can be* the same voice that berates and criticizes, embarrasses and demeans, inflicts pain and destroys the spirit of oneself and of others in the process,” taught Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.²

Words are important! Choosing not to use profanity is noble and righteous, yet it’s only one aspect we need to think about when it comes to our choice of language.

As stated in *For the Strength of Youth*: “Choose not to insult others or put them down, even in joking. Avoid gossip of any kind, and avoid speaking in anger. When you are tempted to say harsh or hurtful things, leave them unsaid” ([2011], 20).

Often, our words can stick even if we don’t intend them to. Did you ever know somebody who

had a nickname he didn’t like? How do you think he got that nickname in the first place?

USING YOUR SUPERPOWERS FOR GOOD

Of course, words don’t have to tear people down any more than a hammer has to tear down buildings rather than build them up. Words can be a powerful and lasting tool for good. As *For the Strength of Youth* says, “Good language that uplifts, encourages, and compliments others invites the Spirit to be with you” (20).

Think of it this way. Just as gossip can be damaging, saying nice things about people can make their lives sweeter. “Have you met the new kid yet? He’s cool!” Now *those* are a few words worth spreading around.

Then there’s the guy trudging down the hallway between classes at your school. His bad day is written all over his face. Time for a few words to the rescue. “Hey, Collin, I like your shirt!” You can always find something nice to say. Options abound when it comes to using words to save the day.

And what about posting compliments and other nice comments through social media? Social media posts are supposed to live forever, right? So why not post something like, “Mindy, you’re incredible! You always know how to make me

smile.” Maybe months or years down the road Mindy will find herself in a rough spot and take comfort in reading those words again.

Elder Holland taught, “Our words, like our deeds, should be filled with faith and hope and charity, the three great Christian imperatives so desperately needed in the world today. With such words, spoken under the influence of the Spirit, tears can be dried, hearts can be healed, lives can be elevated, hope can return, confidence can prevail.”³

The kind and encouraging words you speak in a single moment could help a soul forever.

WORD WISE 101

There’s no shortage of quirky town names out there, from Santa Claus, Indiana, USA, to Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha! in Quebec, Canada. There’s also no shortage of words burning in the minds and hearts of people everywhere—both words that lift them up and words that bring them down.

Yes, words are powerful and have a shelf life that’s usually out of our hands.

Solution? Let all of your words be awesome. **NE**

NOTES

1. See nytimes.com/1988/08/05/us/eighty-eight-journal-a-date-that-will-live-in-kentucky.html.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Tongue of Angels,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 16.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Tongue of Angels,” 18.