

# The Power of Words

7/2020 Mark Beard

**Text: Proverbs 15:1, 4, 18, 28**

Syndicated columnist Sidney Harris tells of going with a friend to a newspaper stand. The friend bought a newspaper. The vendor was abrupt, gruff, and the friend responded in kindness. Harris was perplexed and said, “Is he always so unkind?” “Yes.” “Do you always reply like that?” “Yes.” “Why?” “I can’t determine how he will act, but I can determine how I will react.” <https://bible.org/illustration/proverbs-151>

Rudeness in our society has become common place. There are many reasons. One of the primary reasons is the rise of narcissism in our society. Narcissism is one of the more popular labels given today to people who are self-absorbed, egotistical or want to be the esteemed above others. Nevertheless, as a psychotherapist, I can tell you that many people may fit that description without being narcissistic. Annoying yes, but narcissism indicates a little bit more.

A narcissistic individual is all of those things (self-absorbed, egotistical, think they are unique and special) PLUS they have an overdeveloped sense of entitlement mixed with a lack of empathy. This is what makes a narcissist so problematic. When someone believes they’re right about everything and acts as if they are the center of the universe and you mix the belief that they’re entitled to say or do whatever they want, AND they lack empathy, they do not care if they hurt you, then you most likely have a “narcissist.” – Mark Beard, M.A., LPC [www.markbeard.org](http://www.markbeard.org)

Our society has changed with the rise of social media, talk shows on every channel and station and our society becoming more narcissistic. This is one reason rage has become the norm. Hateful words are echoed in social media post after post. Rudeness is tolerated. Being harsh and uncaring has somehow become admired by some as if it is a virtue to be emulated.

As we look at a few excerpts from Proverbs 15 we see the Word of God offers us a different perspective and contrasts the **differences** that a godly perspective can make.

**I. Gentle Words Increase Peace, but Harsh Words Provoke Anger (V.1)**

**A.**

**B.**

**II. Soothing Words Build Up, but Harsh Words Tear Down (V.4).**

**A.**

**B.**

**III. Angry People Stir Up Conflict, but the Controlled and Patient Person Inspires Calm (V.18).**

**A.**

**B.**

**IV. A Righteous Heart Leads A Person to Think Before Speaking, but an Evil Heart Blurts-Out Foolish Words (V.28).**

**A.**

**B.**

## CONCLUSION

Mary Poppins said it best. “Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.” To find such simple and powerful wisdom in a Hollywood picture these days is rare. The power to heal is in the medicine, but the power to get you to take it is in the sugar.

One application of this deals with the power of kind words. “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1) and “pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24). In the case of this last verse, sugar actually ends up being the medicine! We cannot underestimate the effect that a few kind words can have on a person at any given time.

I read about a male hairdresser who scheduled an appointment for a lady one evening who wanted her hair done up for a big event. During the session, he made friendly conversation with her and was very amiable and affirming, remarking on her beauty. She thanked him and went on her way. A couple of days after this, the hairdresser got a handwritten letter from this woman, who told him that the big event she was planning to attend was her own suicide-funeral. She was going to take her life and wanted to look all done-up for the event, but spending an evening with him and hearing how kind he was changed her mind.

There are tons of stories just like this, and some of you have a few of your own. In our journey to understand the power our words have in this world, let us also strive to speak more kindly and lovingly to the people we encounter every day, knowing that for some, our words are like medicine.

<https://tonyevans.org/a-spoonful-of-sugar/>

The scripture never indicates that we should be weak or timid. That being said, God has not called us harshness just to be heard. The scripture simply gives us a different perspective as it contrasts the **differences** that a godly perspective can make.

Study notes:

*Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.* – Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 18:21, Ecclesiastes 5:2, Proverbs 16:24, Ephesians 4:29

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/toxic-relationships/201709/how-spot-narcissistic-abuse>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/02/narcissism>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/201401/why-is-narcissism-increasing-among-young-americans>

Here are 26 quotes on the power of words.

1. "Be mindful when it comes to your words. A string of some that don't mean much to you, may stick with someone else for a lifetime." -Rachel Wolchin
2. "Be careful with your words. Once they are said, they can be only forgiven, not forgotten." - Unknown
3. "Words are free. It's how you use them that may cost you." -KushandWizdom
4. "Raise your words, not your voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder." -Rumi
5. "...But the human tongue is a beast that few can master. It strains constantly to break out of its cage, and if it is not tamed, it will run wild and cause you grief." -Unknown
6. "The secret of being boring is to say everything." -Voltaire
7. "One kind word can change someone's entire day." -Unknown
8. "Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs." -Pearl Strachan Hurd
9. "Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate, and to humble." -Yehuda Berg
10. "My task, which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you see." -Joseph Conrad
11. "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." -Mother Teresa
12. "The tongue has no bones, but is strong enough to break a heart. So be careful with your words." - Unknown
13. "Be careful what you say. You can say something hurtful in ten seconds, but ten years later, the wounds are still there." -Joel Osteen
14. "All I need is a sheet of paper and something to write with, and then I can turn the world upside down." -Friedrich Nietzsche
15. "Don't mix bad words with your bad mood. You'll have many opportunities to change a mood, but you'll never get the opportunity to replace the words you spoke." -Unknown
16. "Don't ever diminish the power of words. Words move hearts and hearts move limbs." -Hamza Yusuf
17. "Words are seeds that do more than blow around. They land in our hearts and not the ground. Be careful what you plant and careful what you say. You might have to eat what you planted one day." - Unknown
18. "Words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality." -Edgar Allan Poe
19. "A broken bone can heal, but the wound a word opens can fester forever." -Jessamyn West
20. "Good words are worth much, and cost little." -George Herbert
21. "Your words have power. Speak words that are kind, loving, positive, uplifting, encouraging, and life-giving." -Unknown

22. "Kind words are a creative force, a power that concurs in the building up of all that is good, and energy that showers blessings upon the world." -Lawrence G. Lovasik
23. "No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world." -John Keating
24. "The best word shakers were the ones who understood the true power of words. They were the ones who could climb the highest." -Markus Zusak
25. "Speech has power. Words do not fade. What starts out as a sound, ends in a deed." -Abraham Joshua Herschel
26. "If we understood the power of our thoughts, we would guard them more closely. If we understood the awesome power of our words, we would prefer silence to almost anything negative. In our thoughts and words, we create our own weaknesses and our own strengths. Our limitations and joys begin in our hearts. We can always replace negative with positive." -