Written Word Power

**My child, be attentive to my words. Keep them within your heart.**

**For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. *(Proverbs 4:20-22)***

**One businessman asked another, “Is your advertising getting results?” “It sure is,” replied his colleague. “Last week we advertised for a night watchman. The next night we were robbed.” *(Paul Harwitz, in The Wall Street Journal)***

**Rachel Carson’s book Silent Spring inspired measures to curb the use of the insecticide DDT. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 86)***

**The most successful, and “hottest”, story I ever wrote was when I was a high school sophomore in Canton, Georgia about 75 years ago. Our English teacher asked our class to write an essay on the deplorable condition of the courthouse. The best story, we were informed, would be published in the local newspaper. I used every superlative I knew to describe the ancient structure, and my essay won. The day the paper came out with my essay on the front page, most people in town were at a basketball game. Then word got out that the courthouse was on fire. Many people left the game to watch the fire as it turned the old courthouse into a pile of ashes. I wasn’t accused of arson. But I was not asked to write about any other buildings in town. *(Edna Hawkins, in Reminisce magazine)***

**During finals week at New York Medical College in Valhalla, the library was full of students cramming for exams. While searching for a carrel in which to study, I passed one fellow asleep at a desk. His head rested beside the book he had been reading, titled Anesthesiology. *(Gregory Chiarella, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Cursive boosts the brain: Writing in cursive promotes learning better than typing on a keyboard, a new study shows. Scientists at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology used electroencephalogram brain sensors to look at the brain activity of 36 students when they were writing by hand and when they were using a computer keyboard. “We showed that when writing by hand, brain connectivity patterns are far more elaborate than when typewriting on a keyboard,” co-author Audrey van der Meer tells The Times (U.K.). In particular, the patterns of connectivity were more complex in the parts of the brain that form memories and encode new information. “Our findings suggest that visual and movement information obtained through precisely controlled hand movements when using a pen contribute extensively to the brain’s connectivity patterns that promote learning.” Van der Meer and her colleagues say the study should encourage schools to assign children written, not typed, homework and classwork at least through middle school – and that university students should consider taking lecture notes by hand, rather than on a laptop. *(The Week magazine, February 16, 2024)***

**My mother had tried every diet advertised with no success. Then I noticed that Mom wasn’t eating, and on top of that she was exercising like crazy. Asking her what new program had inspired her, she tossed me an envelope to open. The letter inside read: “You are cordially invited to your 20th class reunion.” *(Wendy Cogdell, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Write injuries in dust, benefits in marble. *(Benjamin Franklin) 19926***

**Bill Gates, founder of computer-software giant Microsoft, extols the virtues of the written word: People cannot become truly knowledgeable without being excellent readers. While multi-media systems can use video and sound to deliver information in compelling ways, text is still one of the best ways to convey details. I try to make time for reading each night. In addition to the usual newspapers and magazines, I make it a priority to read at least one newsweekly from cover to cover. If I were to read only what intrigues me – say, the science and business sections – then I would finish the magazine the same person I was when I started. So I read it all. *(The Guardian)***

**The great military expedition of George Armstrong Custer entered the Black Hills in 1874, and gold was discovered by the party. A Chicago newspaper carried the news, and the rush for gold was on. *(The World Almanac of the USA, p. 283)***

**Some people rob you with a six-gun and some with a fountain pen. *(Woody Guthrie, in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)***

**My husband and I own a small business. With the wedding of our daughter, Cindy, just months away, money was tight. One weekend, Cindy prepared and sent our invoices to our customers. Almost at once, checks started pouring in. Even delinquent accounts seemed to be paying up. We were happy but mystified. Then we took a close look at one of the invoices. At the bottom, our daughter had typed: “Please pay soon so my parents can pay for my wedding.” *(Bonnie Butzlaff, in Reader’s Digest)***

In 1950, only 17% of North Americans worked in information jobs, that is, jobs that work with words. Today that figure is up to 60%. The number one occupation, since 1979, a “clerical worker” – a worker with words. The most frequent use of the computer is as a word processor. *(Glendon Harris, in LectionAid)*

**Keeping a journal is like taking good care of one’s heart. *(Ted Kooser, poet)***

**Legible handwriting is important to Luke Mundt, a fourth-grader from Calvary Baptist Christian School in Watertown, Wisconsin, and to Alexandria Kathryn Skaw, an eight-grader from St. Paul’s Catholic School of Bloomer, Wisconsin. The two took top honors in the nation for their grade levels in the 2010 Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest. They won trophies and $1,000 for their schools. *(American Profile magazine)***

**Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War under Abraham Lincoln, was well known for a highly inflammable temper. The pressures of war kept his nerves frayed and his tongue sharp. Once, when he complained to Lincoln about a certain general, Lincoln told him to write the man a letter. “Tell him off,” Lincoln advised. Stanton, bolstered by the President’s support, promptly wrote a scathing letter in which he tore the man to shreds. He showed the letter to the President. “Good,” said Lincoln, “--first rate. You certainly gave it to him.” As Stanton started to leave, Lincoln asked, “What are you going to do with it now?” “Mail it, of course,” said Stanton. “Nonsense,” snorted the President, “you don’t want to send that letter. Put it in the stove! That’s what I do when I have written a letter while I’m angry. You’ve had a good time writing that letter. Now write another.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Literacy is more than decoding words and stringing together sentences. It is even more than comprehending those sentences, forming them into a meaningful narrative and reaching personal conclusions. Literacy is understanding the variety of forces that mold our lives. It is seeing these not as impersonal and unapproachable influences, but as factors we can understand and alter, if not fully control. We have power over our economic, political and social situations. We can change our lives and our communities. We can choose our goals and work toward achieving them. All of these forces are intricately tied to the power of the written word. *(Eliza Sporn, in College Hill Independent)***

**By one of those curious twists of fate that help make big ideas work, the printing press was beginning to spread through Europe precisely at this time. Without it Luther’s Reformation never would have caught fire. But there’s a good chance Luther would have. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 35)***

**A Cure for “Mean World Syndrome”: Although news stories about disturbing events can be worth your attention, good news benefits your mental health, concludes a British experiment. More than 300 participants read stories about cruelty or violence, which, not surprisingly dampened their moods. Those who went on to read lighthearted anecdotes felt better, but those who read stories about acts of kindness reported a greater belief in the overall goodness of humanity. These results suggest that even if you’re exposed to a daily barrage of bad news, hearing about the kindness of others makes you happier and protects you against what some researchers call mean world syndrome, an anxious outlook caused by an over-stimulation of the world’s dangers*. (Samantha Rideout, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Remember the sovereign rule: don’t say it; write it. Of the 10 million great stories that have been told to admiring friends, especially by Irishmen in their pubs, literature consists of 5000 that were written down. If it’s not written, it doesn’t exist. *(James A. Michener, in The Novel)***

**Mozart died while composing a mass for the dead. His family was too poor to pay musicians, so there was no music at his funeral. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 28)***

**A fashion-forward 7-year-old got Old Navy to upgrade its style. Kamryn Gardner from Bentonville, Arkansas, was irked that the pockets on her pants -- unlike those on her brothers' -- were sewn shut, depriving her of a place to keep interesting rocks. Having learned about persuasive letter writing at school, she picked up her pen and got to work. "Dear Old Navy," she wrote, "Would you consider making girls jeans with front pockets that are not fake." To her surprise, Old Navy sent her some shorts and jeans -- all with pockets -- and a note thanking her for her ideas. "They're really cute," Kamryn said of her new clothes. "But mostly, I just really like the pockets." *(The Week magazine, April 23, 2021)***

**The onion is a member of the lily family. The same goes for asparagus and garlic. In a telegram to the War Department during the Civil War, Union General Ulysses S. Grant advised, “I will not move my army without onions.” The onions were soon delivered. *(Kathy Wolfe, in Tidbits)***

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**I hope we never live to see the day when a thing is as bad as some of our newspapers make it. *(Will Rogers, American humorist)***

**America’s greatest humorist left a chilling legacy. Will Rogers, killed in a plane crash in 1935, had partially completed his last newspaper column before he began the fatal flight. The last word Rogers had typed was “death.” *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 34)***

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**A taxpayer received a second notice that his tax payment was overdue. The next day he went to City Hall, made out a check and apologized for overlooking the first notice. “I’ll tell you a little secret,” said the tax collector with a smile. “We don’t send out first notices. We’ve found that second notices are much more effective.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Those familiar with advertising made much of a Hathaway Shirt campaign. Four of every five shirts sold nationwide were white. Then on October 18, 1952, Hathaway ran a spread that read: “Never wear a white shirt before sundown.” Sales ratio changed immediately. Over next 15 years, only two of every five shirts sold were white. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Two blind men stationed themselves at opposite ends of a park. One had a sign which simply said, “Blind.” The other, whose collections each day were much larger, had a sign which read, “It is spring and I’m blind.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**The Statue of Liberty was built at the expense of the French people as a present to the people of America, but when finished, America was unable to receive it. It required $100,000 to erect a pedestal for the statue. Joseph Pulitzer wrote an editorial, appealing, not to the millionaires, but to the masses, to adorn the threshold of America with “Liberty Enlightening the World.” Thousands contributed their bit. Much of the money came from people of foreign birth. Within five months the sum had been raised. On October 28, 1886, the statue was dedicated. *(Delia Sellers, in Abundant Living magazine)***

**Command Performance: For years, the family campaigned to get my father to stop smoking. But, try as he might, he was never able to quit for long. Soon after I gave birth to his first grandchild, I had a monogrammed bib made for my daughter to wear when she saw her doting grandfather. It read: “Dear Grandpa, I love you, and I want you to dance at my wedding. Please stop smoking.” He hasn’t smoked since. *(Dawnette C. Thompson, in Reader’s Digest)***

**It Figures! I usually buy T-shirts as souvenirs. A friend was visiting me one day and we were looking at my collection. “Where’s the one you got in New Orleans?” he asked. “You know, the one that says ‘Life is short. Eat dessert first.’” “I had to give that one away,” I admitted. “It got too tight.” *(Shirley Mayeda, in Reader’s Digest)***

**He wrote in a doctor’s hand – the hand which from the beginning of time has been so disastrous to the pharmacist and so profitable to the undertaker. *(Mark Twain)***

**While shopping for a typewriter in a department store, I found display models with sheets of paper inviting: “Take me for a test type!” I tried several, then came to one on which an earlier shopper had typed: “This machine is ten dollars cheaper next door!” *(Maureen K. Conley, in Reader’s Digest)***

**“Boy, am I scared,” Mike said to George. “I got a letter from a guy who said he’d break my legs if I didn’t stop seeing his wife.” “Well,” replied George, “I guess you’ll just have to steer clear of her.” “Easy for you to say.” “You like her that much?” George asked. “It’s not that,” declared Mike. “He didn’t sign his name.” *(Alex Thien, in Milwaukee Journal)***

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