

## THE AMAZING POWER OF PLEASANT WORDS

By Rick Boxx

My wife, Kathy, makes it a habit to stop people wearing a military or police uniform and thank them for their service. Lately, she has begun doing the same thing with waiters and waitresses. I have noticed many restaurant employees seem to be feeling overwhelmed lately, resulting in more opportunities for Kathy to utilize her gift of encouragement.

After she thanks a server for their service, Kathy usually finds something about them to praise and encourage. By the time we leave, Kathy has a new friend, and her new friend has been encouraged and filled with joy.

Have you ever done something like that? Or have you been the beneficiary of someone else's kindness verbalized in a similar way? Can you imagine what could happen if this philosophy of seeking to uplift people verbally were adopted and encouraged by companies and organizations around the globe, that it were to become the rule rather than the exception?

The contemporary marketplace is filled with workplaces that are greatly understaffed; the workers there constantly feel high levels of stress. Discouragement, frustration, anger and anxiety are the most common emotions in many work settings. The prevailing philosophy, sadly, seems to be, "If you can't say something bad, don't say anything at all."

But this does not have to be the case where we work. Today would be a good day for each of us to take the initiative to pass along some pleasant words and encouragement to others. We might not be able to change the environment of the marketplace in general, but we can make a difference where we work and spend many of our waking hours. Here are some things the Old Testament book of Proverbs says about the amazing power of pleasant words:

**The pain many people are experiencing is not only physical.** From the outside, many people seem to be doing well. When asked, "How are you doing?" they may even respond, "I'm fine." But often, deep inside they are carrying deep pain and nursing considerable emotional hurts. "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

**Kind words can carry almost medicinal value.** What we say can sometimes do greater good than we could imagine. "An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up" (Proverbs 12:25). "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).

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**Food nourishes us physically;** encouraging words can nourish emotionally. Perhaps more than ever, people in the workplace are starving for affirmation, encouragement, and genuine understanding. “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment” (Proverbs 10:20-21).

**Our words can be as valuable as our work.** In the workplace we typically are evaluated based on the visible and tangible quality of the work we perform. But the impact of the words we express to one another can be of immeasurable value and importance. “From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things, as surely as the work of his hands rewards him” (Proverbs 12:14).

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a time when someone’s kind words served to lift your spirits when they were at a particularly low point? What was that experience like for you?
2. Have you ever tried to offer words of encouragement to someone else spontaneously? How easy – or difficult – is that for you to do? Why do you think that is?
3. What difference do you think it would make if workplaces strived to provide a more positive environment, including the use of words that are genuinely affirming and encouraging? What about where you work in particular?
4. How could you try to set an example of speaking words that affirm and uplift people, whether at work, in a restaurant, or somewhere else over the course of an ordinary day? Can you think of a specific individual who could benefit from such encouragement?

#### NOTE:

*If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:  
Proverbs 10:32, 12:18, 15:1,4, 16:21, 17:27, 18:20, 20:15, 22:11*

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