

Words can change the world

by Mark Pavilons

How can I help?

Four simple words, one simple request.

Could this question change the world?

Let's find out, shall we?

All human beings are born and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

United Nations Charter 1945

There are countless examples of how words, phrases, quotes and speeches have literally set the world on fire. Many of us will have our favourite line from history, or even a popular movie, that resonates with us. A well delivered message is impactful and yes, can really move mountains.

The right statement, speech or rallying cry, delivered with passion at just the right moment, changes everything. It has countless times over the course of human history, and will continue to do so.

From Jesus Christ, Thomas Jefferson and Winston Churchill, to Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, their words still ring loud and clear to this very day.

Song lyrics from Michael Jackson and one-liners from Robin Williams make us move and smile and bring us back down.

Words, whether they're spoken, written down or sung, can divide and unite the human race. Do you have to be an important political leader or activist to light the spark? Not at all.

Think about my opening line ? how can I help?

What if we all asked that question once a day? What if we all made an effort to actually help another person?

We are compassionate, caring souls. Some say that is our weakness, but I believe it's our greatest strength. We have the unique ability to come together and work hand in hand in face of adversity or tragedy. We can grieve together and work toward prevention. Together, we can find solutions to any problem.

In retail, you may have heard someone ask you how they can help you today. We often just skim over their request, perhaps feeling it's trite and contrived. Maybe. And how many of us say ?please? when ordering our coffee or bagel?

How can I help? I'll tell you.

First, we can all help by being more polite, compassionate, generous and easy going. There are more than enough reasons to get us wound up and excited every day, that cause our eyebrows to raise permanently. We don't need to add to our frustrations and stress levels.

At our house, we briefly toyed with the idea of having mental ?gates? through which our words travelled, from our brains and out of our mouths. These ?gates? would have to pass a test to determine if we should utter them. The test is: ?Is it true? ?Is it necessary? ?Is it kind?

This may seem to be a rather silly exercise, but if you think about it, doesn't it make perfect sense?

I have a great deal of faith and trust in my fellow humans. I like to give everyone the benefit of the doubt, believing we're all good and decent inside.

That goodness may be buried deep inside, overgrown by weeds and neglect, but it's there. It just takes a good deed or kind word to reveal the humanity.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...?

We are, more often than not, too busy to get totally immersed in society or the politics of the day. We expect that our elected officials and bureaucracy in place will take care of us, keep us safe and look after us in our old age. We trudge through our lives, pay our taxes, complain about it, and then we're shocked when something isn't covered by OHIP, or there's a surcharge on this or that.

I think some of the blame rests with us. There's plenty of information out there these days, all we have to do is look. Read a newspaper, scan the Internet, chat with friends at the coffee shop. I firmly believe that today, we have all the tools we need to eradicate ignorance and wipe out misinformation.

So there's really no excuse to wander through life, unaware of what's going on the world. We have to take it upon ourselves to become educated, proactive and involved.

It's funny, you know. We all agree just how important democracy is and yet we shy away from politics, debates and seriously talking

about the issues of the day.

We're in the midst of a municipal election, where we elect those who directly impact our community, right where we live. It's likely the most important level of government and yet, voter turnout remains lackluster.

We have a couple of upcoming all-candidates' meetings where those seeking office will sing for their supper. Go and listen to them! I'd like to remind everyone of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address where he stressed that our government is 'of the people, by the people, for the people ...'

And yet, where are 'the people'? Sometimes, they're conspicuous by their absence.

My office door has never been closed! Hopefully our political leaders practice the same policy.

Don't simply suffer or churn in silence. Reach out and ask. From me, you will always get a 'how can I help'?

I challenge everyone to do the same!