

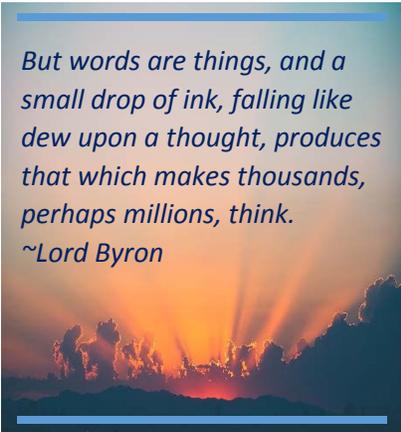
Weekly Wisdom
~Stephen Sarchet

It's funny the things that somehow stay with us. Life swirls around us, we move along on autopilot from task to task, place to place. People pass through the landscape of our day and we utter quick greetings without thought, speaking the words with no more meaning and with no more intent than a simple greeting. Asking "How's it going?" when we see each other in the hallway or at the store. We don't mean it literally, of course, and so it goes until something or someone captures our attention above the din of the background noise. I had a moment like that not long ago. As I sat watching something on TV the other night (I don't even remember what it was now), someone said, "I'll call you later". Just a normal salutation, no more important than anything else we say, but the moment must have been ordained, because the words clung to me with the weight of both loss and hope.

Four words spoken effortlessly, countless times a day; "I'll call you later". It occurred to me that these must be among both the most hopeful and the most painful words anyone ever said. I can't really explain it. I don't know why on that particular day, at that particular moment, why the thought should have stuck to me the way it did. I don't even remember who said it. But as Maya Angelou promised, I do remember the emotion the words invoked as I heard them, though.

My head filled with competing visions. I could see in that instant a mother or father too far from their children, who look forward to the phone calls and whose spirits delight in the too infrequent stories of their children's lives. In the very same moment I felt the weighty disappointment of waiting and hoping for a call that doesn't come. The power of our words, or the lack of them, is incredible to me sometimes. I'm nearly always taken completely off guard when the words, the context of time and place, and the emotions they stir reach me and make me take notice.

It's happened before. Sometimes the emotion passes away quietly, swept aside by life's distractions.



*But words are things, and a
small drop of ink, falling like
dew upon a thought, produces
that which makes thousands,
perhaps millions, think.*

~Lord Byron

Sometimes the words and emotions linger as I allow the scenes play out and tell their story in my mind's theater. At least once or twice, I've been moved to write down what the words have made me feel or shown me. It's a little like casting a line and trying catch butterflies on a lure, but when I do catch them and get them down, I find the words aren't trophies. They're me at my best (I hope).

Maybe this all sounds like an admonition to call your Mom and Dad, but I think it's more than that. For me it is really about catching a glimpse of the power our words can and do have. Through our words, we have the power to heal, to hurt, to promise, and to disappoint. I think that's what the story tellers, song writers, and poets have known all along. We are at our best when we reach each

other. We are at our best when our stories, our words, find their inspiration and arouse the hearts and minds of others. The only word I know for it is magic.