

THE PROVERBIAL WORD

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Whilst the wisdom of a proverb remains constant, its examples change. This is true not only of the centuries-old saw, but even those coined within our lifetimes. "The opera isn't over till the fat lady sings" began life in the press box of a rodeo at Austin, Texas in 1975 as "The rodeo isn't over till the bull riders ride". "Once a whore, always a whore", first quoted in 1613, spawned "Once a knave always a knave" in 1622, "Once a bishop..." in 1655, "Once a thief..." in 1706, and so it continued through Raymond Chandler's 1953 version "Once a patsy, always a patsy".

There are only a handful of proverbs that use the word WORD. The following appear in the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (1992):

Actions speak louder than WORDS
 Fine WORDS butter no parsnips
 One picture is worth ten thousand WORDS
 Hard WORDS break no bones
 A WORD to the wise is enough
 An Englishman's WORD is his bond
 Many a true WORD is spoken in jest

To augment these, I have reworked a number of other proverbs from the same source, substituting WORD (or WORDS) for some other word or words. Often these make a strange sort of sense. Can you restore the traditional wording?

1. It is the WORD that kills
2. WORDS can do no wrong
3. Keep a thing seven years and you'll always find a WORD for it
4. Old WORDS never die
5. Better be out of the world than out of WORDS
6. One WORD drives out another
7. WORDS in, garbage out
8. WORDS never come singly
9. WORDS will never cease
10. Where WORDS are, there is honey
11. New WORDS, new laws
12. There is luck in odd WORDS
13. All things are possible with WORDS
14. A WORD in the hand is worth two in the bush
15. He who lives by the WORD dies by the WORD
16. One man's WORD is another man's poison
17. The WORD is mightier than the sword

18. All WORDS and no play makes Jack a dull boy
19. Great oaks from little WORDS grow
20. The best things in life are WORDS
21. WORDS are deceptive
22. There's nowt so queer as WORDS
23. Everybody loves a WORD
24. It takes three WORDS to make "a gentle man"
25. 'Patience' is a WORD
26. 'Tomorrow' is another WORD
27. WORDS make the man
28. A man is known by the WORDS he keeps
29. There's no WORD like 'home'
30. There's a WORD for everything
31. WORDS are odious
32. You can't make 'a silk purse' out of a WORD
33. When there's a WORD there's a way
34. God made the country and man made the WORD

Finally, a few proverbs can be converted to advertisements for **Word Ways**.

35. WORD WAYS is cheap
36. WORD WAYS lends enchantment to the WORD
37. The Devil can quote WORD WAYS for his own ends
38. WORD WAYS **was** not built in a day
39. WORD WAYS, to the wise, is enough
40. What WORD WAYS says today, the rest of England says tomorrow
41. WORD WAYS is the mother of invention
42. WORD WAYS is stranger than fiction
43. Many a true word is spoken in WORD WAYS
44. The best things come in WORD WAYS
45. WORD WAYS makes the heart grow fonder
46. Variety is the spice of WORD WAYS
47. WORD WAYS broadens the mind
48. A word to the wise is "WORD WAYS"
49. As the day lengthens, so WORD WAYS strengthens
50. Faith can move WORD WAYS