

APPLES OF GOLD



Ruth Eardley, a GP in Market Harborough, reminds us of the power of our words.



SCAN FOR MORE

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver
Proverbs 25:11

My mother is a tough cookie. So it was a bit of a shock to visit her in hospital and find her in tears. It was 1983, and I was six months from finals. I was already floating around the wards with a well-thumbed British National Formulary (BNF) in one pocket and a pager in the other. (We wore white coats then and the BNF was a lot slimmer. Weren't we all?) Some medical students had taken to wearing their stethoscopes around their necks in homage to their favourite consultant. Some of us, with qualification just around the corner, were perhaps thinking more of ourselves than we ought. We were going to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, maybe even raise the dead (if our CPR training paid off). We were DOCTORS. Well, nearly.

But it was a doctor who had made my mum cry. A consultant at that. A cardiologist who wore his stethoscope around his neck.

Mum was forty-seven, a bit young to be on a coronary care unit with a dodgy ECG. Then again, with her family history of ischaemic heart disease, maybe she was lucky. One cousin had died at 39, another on the squash court at 50. At least she was alive! Today she would be greeted at the hospital by a team in scrubs, eager to

salvage her left ventricle and perform the miracle of PCI.¹ Back then, she was given a beta-blocker and a hospital dinner (fish and chips, as it happened). And statins were not on the menu till the late 1980s.

I hugged my mum and sat down. She told me about the ward round. 'He spoke to the students, not me. He said it would infarct again. And again. I had hoped to live longer. To see grandchildren. To do more with my life. I've done so little so far.'

This story is forty years old. My mum later read, '*It is finished*', (John 19:30) and came to learn that, even though she wanted to do more for God, the Lord Jesus Christ had already accomplished all that was necessary for her life and her eternity.

I read, '*reckless words pierce like a sword*', (Proverbs 12:18) and learned how vulnerable we are when we are poorly.

One of the nurses might have read, '*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver*', (Proverbs 25:11) because she came up to Mum after the consultant had left and said, 'He's not God, you know'.

And so it proved. That was forty years ago. So we're having a party for mum soon. She's 87 now. All welcome! ●

reference

1. Percutaneous coronary intervention (a coronary angioplasty with a stent)