



WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

'The Road to Hell Is Paved With Good Intentions'

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And now, *Words and Their Stories*, from VOA Learning English.

Roads are **paved** with different kinds of materials, such as concrete or asphalt. Older roads were paved with cobblestones. Some streets in Washington, DC still have the cobblestones from over a hundred years ago. They were meant for horses and **carriages**. So, they can be difficult to walk on.

Today we talk about roads paved with a very different material – intentions. Intentions are things we mean to do or things we want to do. They are not things we have done.

So, sometimes we say: The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

This is a proverb -- a short, well-known saying containing a wise thought. The wise thought with this proverb is promises and plans must be put into action, or else they are useless.

Some people talk a lot about doing things, but they don't actually do them.

This proverb means that we intend to do something good but, in the end, we do not do it. And the road to hell (a bad place) is paved with all those promises that we did not keep.

Now, let's hear it used in an example.

There is a community event to raise money for a new **playground**. Many people promised their time and skills to raise the money, including a woman named Tara. But Tara did not show up at the event.

Let's listen...

A: Hey, have you seen Tara?

B: No, I haven't, and I've been here all day. What was she supposed to do for the event?

A: She promised to bring her famous bread for the event. She said she could raise around \$500 for the new playground. Well, that was her intention anyway.

B: You know what they say: The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Tara always promises and then doesn't deliver.

A: I wish I had known that before organizing this event.

Sometimes, we would say that talk is cheap, or actions speak louder than words. These are both common expressions to use when someone promises to do something but fails to come through or when they simply talk about doing something.

We also use the road to hell is paved with good intentions to describe another situation. It is not enough to intend to behave well or treat others well. For it to count, you must actually do it.

And that's all the time we have for this *Words and Their Stories*.

Until next time ... I'm Anna Matteo.

Anna Matteo wrote this lesson for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

pave – *v.* to make a hard surface on (as with concrete or asphalt)

carriage – *n.* a vehicle with wheels used for carrying people

playground – *n.* a piece of land used for and usually equipped with facilities for recreation especially by children

