

Taking Things “Personally”

Dub McClish

You may have heard the following story. A preacher preached on profanity, knowing of at least one brother who would be there who was a notorious offender. After plainly denouncing the sin of an evil tongue, he hoped to see some sign of penitence in the offender. Instead, as the man shook the preacher's hand upon leaving, he congratulated the preacher on such a powerful sermon to those who needed it. Obviously, he didn't take it personally. Conversely, at times people take things personally when they shouldn't. Sometimes, I've scolded all of my children when only one of them had been misbehaving. Often one of the innocent ones will object, “But I wasn't doing anything.” My reply is, “If you weren't doing anything, I wasn't talking to you.”

These two anecdotes serve to illustrate a common problem that preachers encounter as we make practical application of God's Word in our preaching and teaching. Learning the secret of when to take a sermon or a point of a sermon personally is most important. I have seen brothers and sisters become upset at a preacher for preaching against forsaking the assembly. Under ordinary circumstances they would not be absent, but illness had prevented their coming for a Sunday or two. They took the message personally when it really didn't describe them at all, and they assumed the preaching was done especially for their benefit.

Some time ago we were in the midst of a Bible school attendance drive. We urged every family to make every effort to be here that Sunday, postponing unnecessary out-of-town visits, and such like. When I expressed some “cheers” for those who really tried and some “jeers” for those who didn't, some took it personally who shouldn't have and vice versa. The “jeers” were not for those who had some compelling reason to be away, such as family sickness, but for those who just ignored the whole effort to build up our Bible school attendance.

I suggest you do the following as I preach:

1. Listen to all that is said.
2. If you are innocent, I wasn't talking to you — don't take it personally.
3. If you are guilty, I was talking to you — do take it personally.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the August 12, 1976, edition of *Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.]

Attribution: From *thescipturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner and administrator.