

## Taking Words to Heart

*“Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.” Ecclesiastes 7:21-22.*

It's difficult not to take the words of others to heart. Words carry an incredible amount of weight to them. Mental wounds can be healed with words and reopened with words. But out of all the words that can be spoken, it's especially difficult not to take insults to heart. When we overhear someone speaking poorly of us (whether a servant or peer or supervisor), we take it to heart, assuming they meant what they said and that they continue to mean what they said long after they've said it.

This is because we take snapshots of the lives of others and apply them to their entirety. When someone, say, gives a fond movie review or talks poorly of a restaurant, we assume that they continue to think the same thing years down the road. We don't take into account that people change their minds – that people say things they don't mean and mean things they don't say. Maybe at one time they liked the movie but have since changed their minds. Or maybe they had a bad experience at a restaurant but have since been back and enjoyed it. People change – they say things they don't mean, mean things they don't say and sometimes mean one thing one day and something different another day.

That's the point of Solomon's words. People change. All of us do. We say things in the afternoon and by evening we might disagree with our afternoon selves. In Solomon's case, he had many servants, and there had to have been many times where his servants were stressed out and tired and pushed to their limits just like any one of us. And during those moments, they spoke ill of their masters. Solomon warns us not to take it to heart. Why? Because we've all been there. We've all spoken ill of those over us when we were fed up. And as soon as we cooled down, we weren't as fed up. We don't feel the same way. We've said things we didn't truly mean and mean things we didn't truly say. So instead of taking to heart everything we hear, we should be patient and understanding that sometimes people are quick to speak words they don't mean. And the reason we know this is because we've all done it.