



One of the most distressing crises is a fire out of control. The pain of seeing the destruction can be almost unbearable. Personal belongings going up in smoke. The beauty of nature destroyed. Even loss of life itself. In this passage James compares the destructive power of the tongue to that of a forest fire.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read and meditate on [Malachi 3:13-16](#) and [James 3:1-12](#). Jot down 1 or 2 new thoughts that seem important. Why are they important?
2. Thinking about [Malachi 3:13-15](#), what are the effects of speaking negatively about God? Who does it affect more? God, us or both? How or how not?
3. What can you do to give God more praise? Be specific.
4. James compares the tongue (the words we speak) to a bit and a rudder in [James 3:3-4](#). Why do you think the tongue has such control over our lives?
5. James also compares the tongue to a fire and to a world of evil in [verses 5-6](#). What is the point of these two comparisons? Has your tongue done any damage lately?
6. [James 1:7-8](#) emphasize what a challenge it is to control the tongue. What makes this so difficult?
7. Think about all the ways that the tongue can poison people, relationships, and organizations. Name them.
8. In [verses 9-12](#), James uses a series of analogies from nature (springs, trees, vines). How do they highlight the inconsistencies of the tongue?
9. What in these two texts gives you added strength and motivation to be more careful with your words?

MOVING FORWARD

Ask God to help you be more self-controlled about the way you speak to others and being more affirmative to them.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed His name.” [Malachi 3:16](#)