

CAUTION FIRE!

By Serena DeGarmo

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things see how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. James 3:5-6



Remember—Only you can

PREVENT THE MADNESS!

Do you remember the old commercials with Smokey the Bear? Smokey's ad campaign warned visitors in forest parks to be careful with every spark of flame. Even one warm ember left unattended could set a forest ablaze endangering countless people and causing irreparable damage. His catch phrase, "Only you can prevent forest fires."

Funny how James says our tongue can do the same thing! Just a few careless words can spread like a fire and burn down an entire forest and cause irreparable damage to relationships.

Have you ever received a little tidbit of news that you had to share? Was there a little voice inside you saying, "I probably shouldn't say this... but oh well." Have you ever used a hushed tone when discussing things about another person? Or have you run to the phone to tell information about someone that you just had to get off your chest? Have you anxiously listened waiting for the juicy report on the other end of the phone?

Sadly, I have. To my shame, I have both delivered and received gossip. I have also been the topic of gossip. And I have learned- it hurts. I have had my reputation and character slandered with lies. I have been betrayed by people I once trusted. I have also learned that I don't want to be responsible for spreading the wildfire of destruction that we call gossip.

For women it is SO easy to fall into the trap of gossip. We are in fact talkers. Words just flow from our mouths with ease. Gossip can drip from our tongues before we even realize it. But the sobering fact is that Jesus himself warned us

when he said, "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12: 36-37).

Paul knew that we women were susceptible to this temptation. He had directions for young women who found themselves husbandless. He encouraged them to remarry and stay busy.

"As for younger widows... they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan" (1 Tim. 5:11-14).

Before you spread or receive news about another person consider this:

One day two girlfriends were walking around their neighborhood chatting as they went along. One said to the other, "Do you know what I just heard about Martha's husband?"

The other said, "Do you know if it's true?"

"Well, no," she replied. "I just heard about it and..."
The other woman interrupted, "Is it good?"

"No, I don't think it is, but here's the story..."

Her friend stopped her again, "Is it helpful?"

"Not really...but"

The wise friend said, "I don't want to hear it. You don't know if it's true. Plus, it's neither good nor helpful. Keep it to yourself."

That's a lesson we could all learn to stop the spread of fire.