

**Transforming Daily**  
***“ . . . how great a forest a little fire kindles . . . ”***  
*James 3:5*

If there were just a single spiritual discipline (unfortunately there are many) for me to work on and develop it would be the way I use my words. James refers to it as the tongue. He isn't referring to the tongue literally. He is referring to it metaphorically when he says that the misuse of the tongue is destructive. What James is literally referring to are the words we use that are produced by our thoughts which originate from our attitude. He likens the power of the use of the tongue to a bridle in a horse's mouth or a rudder on a ship, and of course how it is used to spark a huge, devastating fire.

There are many famous quotes like, "I never had to apologize for anything I didn't say." Or, "Go ahead and argue when you're mad and it will be the greatest speech you regret." Or how about, "If lips would keep from slips five things must be observed, of whom you speak, to whom you speak, of how, and when, and where." I'm not sure if these are the exact quotes or who the quotes are originally attributed to, but you get the point. There is a reason that our parents taught us to "count to ten" before we responded with some witty retort, or spontaneous remark. The result has a high probability of offense when we don't.

I admire people who can engage their minds before they open their mouths (my wife, Dawn, and my brother, Lloyd, are like that). That used to be one of my dad's frequent instructions to me when I was a child, "Son, engage your brain before you open your mouth." Another one of his pointed reminders was, "The whole world knows you're stupid, open your mouth and confirm it." (My dad wasn't saved until after I was married and had my own children). However, as harsh as his admonishment sounds, he wasn't that far off from how a similar statement is recorded in the Bible. Written in Proverbs 17:28 is, "Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive."

Are you wondering why people are avoiding you? Perhaps you're puzzled by the way those around you treat you or react to you before you even open your mouth? Do you hear your voice more than anyone else's? Observe those around you; do they seem intimidated or reluctant to engage in conversation with you? They probably feel "once burnt, twice shy." I personally know this feeling all too well. It's a hard pill to swallow, but it's easier to take it if you drink it down with the Living Water. I'm convinced that it is a lifetime effort to spiritually discipline our tongues, and remember how great a forest a little fire kindles.