Help Prevent Forest Fires
James 3:5

Introduction:
A. Terrible forest fires: Yellowstone, California.
B. Worse forest fires are set and fanned by the tongue.
   1. An unbridled tongue. (Jas. 1:27).
   2. An unruly tongue. (Jas. 3:8).
   3. A double tongue. (James 3:9-12)
   4. A judgmental tongue. (Jas. 4:11).
C. Closely examine fires set and spread by tongue:

Discussion:

I. The Damage Done by Fires Set by the Tongue.
   A. To personal reputations.
      1. Identifies one with fools (Prov. 10:18,19; 14:16; 18:6, 7; 20:3; 29:11)
   B. To personal relationships.
      1. Domestic. (Prov. 21:9, 19; 27:15)
      2. Fraternal. (Prov. 16:28; 17:9).
   C. To spiritual matters.
      1. Damages effectiveness of gospel. (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:14,23-26).
         a. Discourages weak and struggling Christians.
         b. Damages work and reputations of elders, preachers, teachers, etc.
      2. Damages fellowship with God and brethren. (1 Pet. 3:8-12).

II. The Source of Fires Set by the Tongue.
   A. Hell. (V. 6).
   B. Heart. (Matt. 12:34,35).
      1. Hypocritical heart overflows:Double-tongue (1 Tim. 3:8), flattering words (Jude 16).
      2. Selfish heart overflows: Grumbling, complaining, contentions (Jude 16; cf. Rom. 2:9; Jas. 3:14,16).

III. The Real Tragedy of Fires Set by the Tongue.
   A. Will account for every idle word. (Matt. 12:36).
   B. Will be condemned or justified by words. (Matt. 12:37).

Conclusion:
A. Must neither ignite, fan nor fuel such fires with the tongue.
B. Can help put out those already started.
   1. By refusing to spread the fire. (Prov. 26:20-21)
   2. By dealing firmly with those who do spread it. (cf. Prov. 25:23 KJV, Tit. 3:10).