



Janice Stevenson pled guilty, was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison, and was ordered to pay \$42,204,155.48 in restitution. Though the situation and details might be different, you might be guilty, too.

James says (James 3:6 & 8), “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

Janice admitted on August 24, 2000, to stopping on the side of the road to smoke a cigarette. After lighting her cigarette, she tossed the still-burning match to the ground. “As a few leaves caught fire,” she said in her affidavit, “I decided it wasn’t a big deal” and left the area. Her little insignificant match started a fire that burned for 15 days and destroyed eighty thousand acres.

Is it too sharp of a stick to point at both you and me, saying that we have caused significant damage with our words? Worse yet, and like Janice, we have walked away knowing a fire has started.

Words matter! Apologies put out fires. Humble hearts restore charred lives. By our own strength, no one can bridle, control, or tame their tongue. Let Christ give you new words and new life.

Like David (Ps. 51:10), look up and ask for God to create in you a new and pure heart. Our tongues ignite flames with hot gossip or sparky sarcasm. We have spread the fire through grumblings and rumors. We’ve left our lies to smolder and burn, leaving people to burn.

EVALUATE YOUR CURRENT STANDING	
Unity with God brings:	Reasons we divide or fight:

We are designed to be \_\_\_\_\_

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

## PERSONAL STUDY

It is rewarding to invest time each day in God's Word.

### **Mo** Ephesians 2:1

Take a moment to think about, "You were dead in your sins." Do you find the bittersweet emotions filling your mind? You and your sins = dead. Today we see two big and powerful words; YOU WERE!!!

### **Tu** Ephesians 2:4-6

Does this scriptural reality describe how you feel about your life? Do you feel forgiven? Do you live as one who has been given a new life? What words of praise can you offer to your loving and merciful Father?

### **We** Ephesians 2:8-9

Our salvation is not based on our works but on a gift from God. These verses do not call us never to work but give priority and position to God's grace. What is the proper response to this great gift?

### **Th** Ephesians 2:10

We are designed to do more than show and sit in worship services. Do you know what good works you are supposed to do? Take time today to ask God to open up your eyes. Gratefully join Him in His work.

### **Fr** Ephesians 2:19-22

As the week comes to an end, recognize the life, purpose, and place God has for you. You are united with a diverse group of believers. Take time to encourage someone different than you.

### **Sa** Ephesians 2:19-22

You and other believers are the dwelling place of God. Seek to clean out the dirt, sin, and selfishness in your mind. Ask God to transform you into His holy home and unite you with fellow believers.

## STUDY & DISCUSS

- Read Ephesians 2. Take turns reading one verse at a time.
  - ◇ What verse stands out to you? Why?
- How does sin cause death?
- Verses 4 & 5 talk about being dead and alive.
  - ◇ What is the difference between being alive or dead?
  - ◇ Are you spiritually alive or dead?
  - ◇ How do you know?
- Paul uses additional contrasting ideas to help us see the value in Christ. Discuss how these concepts form your perspective of your relationship with God and other believers.
  - ◇ Citizen/Foreigner
  - ◇ Peace/divided
  - ◇ Far/near
- How do we balance the idea of the gift of God's grace not tied to our works and accomplishments (v. 8-9) with the teaching that our faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26)?
- Ephesians 2:19-22 shows three images of the church; a kingdom, a family, and a building that is both a temple and home. How does each image help us see the unique qualities of our relationship with God and one another?
  - ◇ Paul also shares two other images in Ephesians; a body (1:23) and a bride (5:23-32). What other qualities are we to learn from these images of the church?