

Introduction

1. What do these images have in common? (**Show**) Horse w/bit. Ship w/rudder. Wild fire.
 - a. While thinking let me add 3 more: killer whale, fig tree, fresh water spring. (**Show**)
 - b. All of these illustrate one of the smallest muscles in our bodies, the tongue.
 - c. Apostle James takes each one and builds a powerful case teaching a powerful lesson.
2. **Principle: The truth about your tongue is the truth about you.** Let's turn to James 3:1-2.
 - a. Leaders must be spiritually mature (vv. 1-2).
 - i. *Perfect* does not mean sinless, but mature, complete, grown-up.
 - b. Maturity is best revealed by a controlled tongue (v. 2a).
 - i. If you can control your tongue you can control the rest of your body also.
 - ii. Self-control over this little muscle will extend to self-control over every muscle.
 - iii. So if we want to know those who are fit to teach others, just listen to how they talk.
 - iv. Send a tape recorder w/them 24/7 and then ask, *Is this who we want teaching us?*
 - v. Do we see? **The truth about someone's tongue is the truth about them.**
3. **Our tongue tells the truth on us.** (**Show**) Why is this true? (**Show Text/Title**)

I. THE BIT AND RUDDER (VV. 3-5A) ➡ ➡ THE TONGUE HAS POWER.**A. POWER TO CONTROL.**

1. (**Show**) the horse w/bit, bridle and reins. Describe horse's power (v. 3).
 - a. Take 550 lbs. (Olympic weightlifter) and set on back horse barely snort.
 - b. Horse can race quarter mile in 25 secs. Why calibrate engines in horse power.
 - c. Horse is half ton of raw power. Yet put bridle/bit 100 lb. woman turn in circles.¹
 - d. Tell about horseback riding at camp. Horse responds to pressure.²
2. (**Show**) the ship w/rudder. Describe the ships of James' day.
 - a. Small compared to ocean liners and warships, yet Paul on 276-passenger.
 - b. Large vessel, blown by powerful winds (or engines) yet steered by rudder.
3. Make James' point (v. 5a). **It makes great boasts.**
 - a. **Human tongue is physically small, but what tremendous effects it can boast of.**³
 - b. Utter speech inspire multitudes to action. Incite riot w/bitter, angry words.
 - c. Economist Alan Greenspan gave speech stock market surged w/billions spent.
 - d. One journalist asked, **How can a few words cause transaction of billions?**⁴
 - e. The answer is the power of the tongue. **Fire, run for your lives.** Empty church.
 - f. Never underestimate power of tongue. Do great good. Cause great damage.

B. POWER TO SHOW WHO IS IN CONTROL.

1. In v. 3 says **we put the bit into the horses' mouths.** Bit responds rider's will.
2. V. 4 says rudder goes wherever the pilot directs.
 - a. Rudder reflects desire of the captain whose hand is steering the wheel.

¹ **Why does the horse stop? Because the bits in the bridle hurt his tongue.** – Dr. A. T. Pierson

² **Woman wrangler instructed us by telling us to pull on reins or apply pressure with heels.**

³ J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English.* Macmillan Pub. Co.

⁴ **PBS journalist asked a panelist after Greenspan gave a short speech on state of U.S. economy in 12/2000.**

- b. Share point. One's tongue . . . reveal[s] one's true heart (M.S. Mills).
 - c. Tongue is...a tattletale that tells on heart & discloses real person.⁵
 - d. Jesus put it simply, Out of the . . . heart the mouth speaks.
3. Give some examples such as "Mr. Buttonshaun must've told a dirty one."

II. **FIRE AND WILD ANIMALS (VV. 5B-8) ➡ ➡ THE TONGUE IS UNTAMED.**

A. It Is A Wild Fire.

1. Vv. 5b-6a describe the tongue as a fire. If I lit this match produce very small flame.
 - a. That little flame has the potential to burn down this whole building.
 - b. A small flame if gets out of control can literally become a wild fire.
 - c. It can burn and consume everything in path wreaking havoc & destruction.
2. Wild fire is a perfect example of a runaway tongue. Can do enormous damage.
3. Notice in v. 6 James gives us the strongest statement on the danger of tongue.
 - a. world of unrighteousness - sinful world system (all that is evil, vile, ungodly)
 - i. Since tongue connected heart is very expression of world's wickedness.
 - ii. It can utter every evil thought/motive. Put every evil deed into words.
 - b. staining the whole body - a filthy, defiled tongue stains the whole person
 - i. 1 day asked ladies if check oil. Turned comment into offcolor remark.
 - ii. Shocked woman talk like that - stranger. 1 comment stained whole life.
 - c. sets on fire the whole course of life = wheel of our genesis (i.e. life or existance)
 - i. Point: The tongue sets on fire the realm of human existance.
 - ii. Relationships can be set ablaze by the tongue.
 - (a) Slander can stir a community. Nation aroused by propaganda.
 - (b) National hatred can stir international conflict shedding rivers blood.
 - (c) False teaching can undermine solid living.
 - (d) Careless sharing of other's faults can destroy a reputation.
 - d. set on fire by Hell - Hell is Satan's place prepared for him and demons
 - i. Present participle means continually set on fire by Hell. Describe unsaved.
 - ii. Tongue is tool of Satan. [Wild] tongue has direct pipeline to Hell.⁶
 - iii. Unsaved in control sin nature fulfill Satan's purposes to pollute/corrupt/destroy.

B. It Cannot Be Tamed by Human Beings, vv. 7-8

1. (**Show**) Shamu and talk about killer whale. Sea world jumping rope. Ball.
 - a. Shamu is killer whale. In ocean attack little seal that barks/clap fins.
 - b. Voraciously chomp to bits and turn the sea red with its blood.
 - c. Still, that animal can be tamed so trainers can rub its nose.
2. Yet, no human being can tame the tongue (v. 8).

⁵John MacArthur, *James*.

⁶R. Kent Hughes, *James*.

- a. *I have never seen a man or woman who in their own power could tame the tongue. . . . People who have been delivered from alcohol or gambling or hard drugs find their most difficult opponent to be the tongue.*⁷
- b. Tell about Don Monroe who admitted this. 1st to say not me but the Lord.

III. THE SPRING & TREE (VV. 9-12) ⇒ ⇒ THE TONGUE IS INCONSISTENT.

A. THE SPRING AND TREE ILLUSTRATE CONSISTENCY.

1. Water purification was unknown. All knew full well immutability sweet/bitter.
2. A water supply was well-known. Well either has sweet/good or bitter/bad.
3. Trees are consistent too. *You will know them by their fruits* (Matt. 7:16).

B. CONSISTENCY IS THE MARK OF MATURITY.

1. Yet, believer whose heart made pure can have an inconsistent tongue.
 - a. *bless* = *blessed be He* (Hebrew custom after each mention of God's name).
 - b. *curse* - Same people who bless God go out and curse someone angry with.
2. *Likeness of God* = bear his image and are redeemable. Express ill-will deny G's luv.
 - a. To express ill-will of someone or abuse someone by angry/unloving words.
 - b. Tony used to say, *You jerk. You idiot.* I'd quote James 3:9-10. He loved that.
 - c. Then one day let loose in our apartment on one of best friends. Never recovered.
3. Do we have an inconsistent tongue that reveals an immature heart?
 - a. Do we appear holy/good at church, but sarcastic w/family and critical of others?
 - b. I had a pastor friend last 2 times met badmouthed another pastor. Clearly jealous.
 - c. Do we enjoy listening to others talk about others and pass along ourselves?

How To Change Your Tongue

- ☑ A Clean Tongue Can Only Come From A Cleansed Heart (John 15:3).
 - ◆ *Have you been cleansed by Jesus?*
- ☑ A Careful Tongue Can Only Come From A Prayerful Heart (Psalm 19:14).
 - ◆ *Do you pray for control of your tongue?*
- ☑ A Helpful Tongue Can Only Come From A Humble Heart (James 3:13).
 - ◆ *Do you cultivate a submissive spirit?*

⁷Ibid.