

# The Mystery Box

By Andy Smith

**A** bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it!

*James 3:1-4 (The Message)*

The Mystery Shoebox is a fun game children are invited to play during a worship service. The rules of the game are simple. One child takes home an empty shoebox each week. The task is to place in the shoebox *any small item* from their home (pending parent's approval of course!). The following Sunday during the worship service, the box is presented to one of the volunteer leaders. The box is opened and the mystery item is discovered! The leader now has a few minutes to give a message to the kids (and the entire congregation) relating the specific item to our everyday lives. The goal for the children in this game is to stump their leaders. The Mystery Shoebox is a favorite of everyone, except the volunteer leaders! One Sunday, the box was opened and Mr. David Simpson pulled out a tube of toothpaste...

Mr. Simpson smiled as his mind raced for some profound thoughts about God's Kingdom on earth. He asked each child sitting at his feet to stick out one finger. He proceeded to squeeze a dab of toothpaste on each little finger and said, *"Toothpaste is like our tongues. We squeeze out all kinds of words with them."* When he finished his thought, he held out the crumpled tube of toothpaste and asked each child to put their toothpaste back in the tube. When the message was over, Mr. Simpson held an empty tube with a messy blob of toothpaste running down his hand. He concluded, *"Once it's out of the tube, it's impossible to ever put it back!"*

James, the brother of Jesus, would have loved Mr. Simpson's message, *"This is scary: You can tame a tiger, but you can't tame a tongue—it's never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!"* (James 3:7-10)

The tongue is small, yet mighty. Words can bring great encouragement and joy, or they can bring great discouragement and pain. Either way, once words are out, they never can be put back. James offers a clear warning to all of us...think before you squeeze!

*A Dog Named Tongue* is a simple story with a powerful message. All dog lovers will enjoy this light-hearted parable about a lovable dog Named Tongue that continually gets into all kinds of mischief. Mr. Simpson would love it.... Questions for Thought:

1. Can you remember a time in your life when someone spoke words to you...that left you encouraged and joyful?
2. Can you remember a time in your life when someone spoke words to you...that left you discouraged and in pain?

## **A Dog Named Tongue**

### **A Sew Powerful Parable by Dana Buck**

A horse is mastered and controlled  
By a single, simple bit  
A rudder, modest in its size  
Can steer a mighty ship

A tiny spark carelessly flown  
May devastate a forest  
One voice that sings a song off key  
Can spoil a merry chorus

Examples of a principle  
Something none can fully tame  
And spelled out very clearly  
In the Bible (book of James)

But for now a story beckons  
Yes, a tale has just begun  
About a boy named Ronald Allmen  
And his hound dog name of Tongue

It seemed that Ron had been with Tongue  
Ever since he could remember  
When he got him as a Christmas gift  
Some long ago December

His name was plainly obvious  
More than any name before  
'Cause his tongue was pink and lolling  
And hung half way to the floor

When Tongue was just a pup  
Ron quickly had him fetching sticks

Rolling over, playing dead  
And lots of other fancy tricks

He could shake and he could speak  
He could beg and he could lay  
He could hunt and he could seek  
Or he could sit and he could stay

Yet no matter how committed  
To his discipline he clung  
Ron soon was to discover  
He couldn't fully train his tongue

For his dog, born with a nature  
That unstructured time exposes  
Spent one sunny afternoon  
Digging up Ron's Mother's roses

And as Ron took up a shovel  
To replace his Mother's plants  
Tongue wandered to the house  
And chewed his father's favorite pants!

As his Father's angry cries  
Through the windows loudly rung  
Ron tried to strategize  
How he could reason with his Tongue

So escorting his dog  
Out to the shed for a discussion  
Ron patiently explained  
Each bad behavioral concussion

Ron laid it out in spades  
So Tongue would get it in his head  
And the dog seemed to agree  
With every word that Ronald said

Tongue received obediently  
All his master's admonition

Making sorry sad dog eyes  
And softly whining his contrition

Till Ron was satisfied  
That Tongue had finally got the message  
And had purged the mischievousness  
From his behavior, every vestige

Well, for many peaceful days  
No masticated pants or shoes  
All the roses stayed in place  
Nothing gnawed, uprooted, chewed

So Ron's diligence relaxed  
Tongue was different now, assuredly  
But in truth he'd just been lulled  
Into a false sense of security

He learned the facts the hard way  
About letting down your guard  
When there arose a great commotion  
Next door, in Mrs. Murphy's yard

It was much too nice a day  
For canine chaos to commence  
But it seems Tongue's dug a hole  
And made his way under the fence

And the point of his adventure?  
Why the peace was trampled flat?  
It was tongue's pursuit of Gossip  
(Who was Mrs. Murphy's cat)

Gossip liked to walk the fence  
Where he teased and where he taunted  
Till soon it reached a point where  
Gossip's all Tongue really wanted

Obsessed now with his quarry  
And forgetting all his training

The dog began to dig  
With every haunch and muscle straining

And Gossip, from his perch  
Saw that he'd overplayed his hand  
As Tongue dug like a gopher  
Moving quantities of sand

When tongue's nose and head emerged  
Gossip beat a fast retreat  
Just as quick the dog was under  
Barking, scrambling to his feet

The chase was wild and epic  
Circling thrice around the lawn  
Then it moved into the flowers  
Every petal quickly gone

Then up onto the patio  
These two combatants flew  
Sending chairs and tables flying  
Knocking down the bar-b-que

Gossip ran with all his might  
That cat could make a sprinter jealous  
With a leap that had him landing  
Halfway up the garden trellis

His pursuer never flinched  
And with his speed both gift and gratis  
Tongue then also made a leap  
And busted right on through the lattice

Their race detached the drainpipe  
Spilled the trash cans, split the screen  
It was the craziest pursuit  
This neighborhood had ever seen

Until finally Gossip slowed  
He'd run as far as he was able

And Tongue now had him trapped against  
The upset picnic table

His triumph was at hand  
If Tongue were able he would holler  
He was just about to pounce  
When someone grabbed him by the collar

For Ron had jumped the fence  
Had seen this mad adventure's toll  
As Mrs. Murphy shouted loudly  
"Get your Tongue under control!"

Apologizing now  
Ron lifts his dog, secures his paws  
And promises to help with  
All the damage he has caused

In the days and weeks that pass  
Ron really feels he's found his niche  
Employing love and discipline  
(And also one real sturdy leash)

He works and trains his dog  
But not believing for one minute  
That he can ever fully conquer  
The basic nature that's within it

So, in one corner of the yard  
Ron has built a sturdy pen  
It's his job to see that Tongue  
Will never run amok again

For now he knows the carnage  
All the things that can be wrecked  
When carelessly you go your way  
And leave your tongue unchecked

And what of Mrs. Murphy's cat?  
Has that feline learned a lesson?

Seen the error of his ways  
No more divisive moves or messin'

If that cat has changed or not  
Well, believe me, it's a toss up  
And the moral of our story?  
Don't let your tongue chase after Gossip