CONTRARY HEARTS

For most people, speaking is one of the easiest actions in the world. The mouth opens, vocal cords vibrate, the lips and tongue form sounds, and, voilà: communication. Though easy to do, it’s much harder to control. When strong feelings come, it’s easy to give them expression through regrettable words and harsh tones.

This problem is not limited to non-Christians. As James aptly pointed out, “With [our tongues] we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:9, 10). Just because this is a common problem, that does not make it acceptable. It goes against the reality of nature: how can a spring of water yield both fresh water and bitter? How can a fig tree bear olives? (vv. 11, 12) They have to yield one or the other.

Contrary words—a mixture of blessing and cursing from the same tongue—gives evidence of a contrary heart, one that is still in need of deeper surrender, a deeper cleansing by the hand of God. Instead of focusing on the fruit of the problem (words), it is essential to yield to God the root of the problem (the heart).
Write out James 3:1–12 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out James 3:7–10. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/ phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in James 3:1–12. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What was a time recently when what you said really expressed what was on your heart?

What was a time someone said something to you that meant a lot to you?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam06-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

What other stories from the Bible can you think of where words played a notable role? What principles emerge from one or two of these stories that are worth remembering?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam06-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Ephesians 4:29
Proverbs 13:3
Proverbs 12:18
Ezekiel 36:25–27
Matthew 15:11
Luke 6:45

What other verses/promises come to mind with James 3:1–12?

Review your memorized verse from James 3:1–12.
What strikes you about how Jesus speaks? How is it different from how we speak sometimes? Try to be specific and find principles from the different passages mentioned in today’s study.

What is He saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Where do you see Jesus in James 3:1–12?
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/jam06-7
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Share a time that you were meaningfully and positively impacted by someone’s words.

Why do you think words affect us so much?

How does it affect our relationship with God when we have both “fresh water” and “salty” coming from our mouths?

When James says that we should not curse men and bless God at the same time, does this allow for people to grow from immaturity to maturity? Why or why not?

How does Jesus speak differently after this study?

How can we balance our understanding of the importance of the expressions of our heart and the importance of the condition of our heart itself?

How can we have an Ezekiel 36:26 experience?