

Ecclesiastes 4:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

Analysis

Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? The Hebrew *yishkevu* (יִשְׁכְּבוּ, lie down) describes sleeping, not sexual activity—this verse addresses companionship's practical benefits, not marriage specifically. *Cham lahem* (חֹם לָהֶם, warmth to them) versus *le-echad eikh yecham* (לְאֶחָד אֵיךְ יִחַם, how can one be warm?).

Ancient Near Eastern homes lacked modern heating—cold nights required shared body warmth for survival. Two people sleeping together conserve heat; one person alone suffers cold. This concrete example illustrates the broader principle from verses 9-12: companionship provides practical advantages isolation cannot match. Two are better than one (v.9), one helps the other when fallen (v.10), shared warmth sustains both (v.11), and united strength resists attack (v.12).

While applicable to marriage, the verse's primary application is broader—human beings need community for survival and flourishing. God created Adam declaring 'It is not good that the man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18). The church functions as Christ's body where members need each other (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Isolated individualism violates created purpose.

Historical Context

Ancient Palestinian climate features cold winter nights, especially in hill country where temperatures drop significantly. Houses were simple structures with

minimal insulation. Families and travelers commonly shared sleeping spaces for warmth and security. The image would have been immediately recognizable to original readers—everyone had experienced cold nights where shared warmth made the difference between comfort and misery. Nomadic peoples traveling through deserts understood that solitary travelers faced greater danger from exposure than groups. Early Christian communities practiced hospitality extensively, providing lodging for traveling believers (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2), embodying this verse's principle.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life are you suffering 'cold' (loneliness, discouragement, vulnerability) that companionship could alleviate?
2. How does this verse challenge contemporary Western individualism that prizes self-sufficiency over interdependent community?

Interlinear Text

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|-------|---------|----------------|--------|---------------------|----|-----------------|-----------|
| גַּם | אִם | יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְ | שְׁנֵי | יֵם | וְ | לֵהֶם | וְלֹאֶחֶד |
| Again | H518 | lie together | if two | then they have heat | H0 | but how can one | |
| H1571 | | H7901 | H8147 | H2552 | | H259 | |
| אֵין | יָרֵם: | | | | | | |
| H349 | be warm | | | | | | |
| | H3179 | | | | | | |