

Proverbs 18:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Analysis

This verse contrasts shallow acquaintances with true friendship: 'A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' The first phrase likely means: one who has many companions may come to ruin (some manuscripts read 'may be broken to pieces'), suggesting that numerous shallow friendships can be harmful. The contrast presents 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother'—a loyal, committed friend whose bond exceeds even family ties. This rare friendship demonstrates covenant loyalty (ahev—love characterized by commitment). Ultimately, Christ is the friend who sticks closer than a brother (John 15:13-15), laying down His life for friends.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture valued kinship bonds as primary social structure. For friendship to exceed brotherhood was remarkable, indicating covenant-level commitment. David and Jonathan exemplified such friendship (1 Samuel 18:1-4, 20:17). The verse warns against confusing numerous acquaintances with genuine friendship while celebrating the rare treasure of true, loyal friends.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Do you have a friend who 'sticks closer than a brother,' and are you that kind of friend to anyone?
2. How can you move beyond superficial acquaintances to cultivate deeper, more loyal friendships?

Interlinear Text

אִישׁ	יְעִים	לְהִתְרַעַע	וְיִשׁ	אֶהְיֶה
A man	that hath friends	must shew himself friendly	and there is	a friend
H376	H7453	H7489	H3426	H157
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יְדִבֵּק	מֵאָח:			
that sticketh closer	than a brother			
H1695	H251			

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:17 (Parallel theme): A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 27:9 (Parallel theme): Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

2 Samuel 1:26 (Parallel theme): I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

2 Samuel 21:7 (Parallel theme): But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

2 Samuel 16:17 (Parallel theme): And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?