

Proverbs 19:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.

Analysis

The Hebrew text is difficult, but most interpretations understand 'desire' (ta'avah) as referring to covenant faithfulness or loyal love (chesed). A person's true value lies in their kindness and reliability, not their wealth. The poor man who maintains integrity surpasses the wealthy liar in true worth. This inverts worldly values that prioritize wealth over character. God judges by the heart; humans should as well. The verse condemns both deceit and the temptation to compromise honesty for financial gain. In God's economy, truthfulness and kindness reflect His character and have eternal value, while lies—regardless of accompanying wealth—merit only judgment.

Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures prized reputation above wealth, yet were still tempted to value riches over character. This proverb confronts that tension by asserting character's supremacy.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Do you value people based on their character or their economic status?
2. Are you ever tempted to compromise truthfulness for financial advantage?

Interlinear Text

תִּשְׁאַל מִן־אָדָם
The desire of a man
H8378

אֲדֹנָיו יְהִי־מְלֹאת־חֶסֶד
is his kindness
H120

חֶסֶד־אֲדֹנָיו יְהִי־מְלֹאת
is better
H2617

יְהִי־מְלֹאת־חֶסֶד־אֲדֹנָיו יְהִי־מְלֹאת
and a poor man
H2896

לְשָׁמֶן מֵאַלְמָנָה
than
H7326

לְשָׁמֶן מֵאַלְמָנָה
a liar
H376

לְשָׁמֶן מֵאַלְמָנָה
H3577

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 19:1 (Parallel theme): Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

2 Corinthians 8:12 (Parallel theme): For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

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