

Proverbs 24:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.

Analysis

This verse uses affectionate imagery to describe honest speech. 'Every man shall kiss his lips' (שָׁפַתַּי יִשָּׂאק/yissaq sefatayim, he kisses the lips) employs the Hebrew idiom of kissing to express affection, honor, and approval. 'That giveth a right answer' (מְשִׁיב דְּבָרִים נְכוּחִים/meshiv devarim nekochim, one who returns upright/straight words) describes truthful, appropriate responses. Honest speech builds trust, resolves conflicts, and strengthens relationships. The 'kiss' metaphor appears elsewhere: 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other' (Psalm 85:10). Paul commanded: 'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another' (Ephesians 4:25). Truthful communication is the foundation of healthy community. Conversely, lies destroy relationships: 'A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it' (Proverbs 26:28).

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern culture, kissing expressed various relationships—family affection (Genesis 27:26-27; 45:15), romantic love (Song of Solomon 1:2), greeting (Romans 16:16), honor (1 Samuel 10:1), and reconciliation (Genesis 33:4). The kiss became cultural shorthand for genuine, warm relationship. Jesus contrasted genuine versus false kisses—Judas betrayed Him with a kiss (Luke 22:48). The 'holy kiss' in early church practice (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14) expressed Christian fellowship. This proverb's point is that honest speech creates the relational warmth represented by a kiss. Flattery and lies may seem diplomatic but

ultimately alienate; truth builds authentic connection. Church history shows that communities built on honesty and transparency thrive, while those tolerating deception fracture.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Do your words build trust and authentic connection, or do dishonesty and flattery undermine your relationships?
2. When have you experienced the 'kiss'—the warmth and respect—that comes from someone speaking difficult truth lovingly?
3. How can you cultivate a pattern of 'right answers'—truthful, appropriate, timely speech?

Interlinear Text

שְׁפֹתָיו יִשָּׁק	יִשָּׁק	יְמֵי שִׁיב	דְּבַר יָם	נְכִיחִים:
his lips	Every man shall kiss	that giveth	answer	a right
H8193	H5401	H7725	H1697	H5228

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 15:23 (Parallel theme): A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

Job 6:25 (Parallel theme): How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?

Proverbs 16:1 (Parallel theme): The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

