

Proverbs 25:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

Analysis

Singing songs to a heavy heart is like taking away garments in cold or vinegar on soda. The Hebrew 'shir shiyr' (sing songs) to 'lev ra' (evil/sad heart) creates dissonance. The imagery: removing warmth when cold, adding acid to alkali (creating harsh reaction). Inappropriate cheerfulness to someone grieving is insensitive. Wisdom requires matching response to situation. Romans 12:15 commands: 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' Empathy, not forced cheerfulness, comforts the suffering.

Historical Context

Job's friends initially demonstrated wisdom: 'They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great' (Job 2:13). Their folly began when they offered theological explanations instead of empathetic presence. Jesus wept with those who mourned (John 11:35). Ecclesiastes 3:4 recognizes 'a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.'

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. When have you offered inappropriate cheerfulness to someone needing empathy?
2. How can you develop sensitivity to match your response to others' emotional states?
3. What does true comfort look like for those carrying heavy hearts?

Interlinear Text

עַל	חַ מֶּמֶץ	קָרָה	בִּי וּמִ	בְּגָדוֹ	מִן עֲדָה
	and as vinegar	in cold	weather	a garment	As he that taketh away
H5921	H2558	H7135	H3117	H899	H5710
כָּעֵ:	לֵב	עַל	בְּ שִׁירֵי	וְשִׁיר	נִתֵּר
to an heavy	heart		songs	so is he that singeth	upon nitre
H7451	H3820	H5921	H7892	H7891	H5427

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:15 (Parallel theme): Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 (Parallel theme): A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

Isaiah 58:7 (Parallel theme): Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?