

Proverbs 25:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:

Analysis

Debate your case with your neighbor privately; don't reveal another's secret. The Hebrew 'riyb' (dispute/plead) and 'galah sowd' (reveal secret/expose confidence) commands private resolution before public exposure. If offended, confront privately first. Don't gossip or expose secrets during disputes. This wisdom protects both parties' reputations while seeking resolution. Jesus taught identically: 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone' (Matthew 18:15).

Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures made reputation protection crucial. Publicly exposing someone's faults or secrets before attempting private resolution violated social ethics. This wisdom persists: Matthew 18:15-17 prescribes graduated conflict resolution - private confrontation first, witnesses second, church involvement third, public separation last. Always pursue private resolution before public exposure.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What conflicts have you made public without first attempting private resolution?
2. How can you protect others' reputations while still addressing legitimate grievances?
3. What secrets or confidences are you tempted to reveal in disputes, and how would wisdom restrain you?

Interlinear Text

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| הַיִּבְרָה | הַיִּב | אֶת | רֵעֶךָ | וְסוֹד | אֶחָד | אֶל |
| Debate | thy cause | H854 | with thy neighbour | not a secret | to another | H408 |
| H7378 | H7379 | | H7453 | H5475 | H312 | |
| וְתִגְלֶה: | | | | | | |
| himself and discover | | | | | | |
| H1540 | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 11:13 (Parallel theme): A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Proverbs 20:19 (Parallel theme): He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.