

Proverbs 26:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

Analysis

Where no wood is, fire goes out; where there's no talebearer, strife ceases. The Hebrew 'nir gan' (whisperer/talebearer) and 'shahaq' (quiet/cease) creates clear cause-effect. Fire requires fuel; remove wood, fire dies. Strife requires gossip; remove gossip, strife ends. This verse identifies gossip as conflict's fuel. Want to end disputes? Stop gossiping. James 1:26 warns: 'If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.'

Historical Context

Proverbs repeatedly condemns gossip (11:13, 16:28, 18:8, 20:19). Ancient close communities made gossip especially destructive. Leviticus 19:16 commands: 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.' Modern social media exponentially amplifies gossip's reach. Ending strife often requires simply stopping gossip rather than complex conflict resolution. Remove fuel, fire dies.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What conflicts persist because you or others keep feeding them through gossip?
2. How can you stop being 'wood' that fuels fires of strife?
3. What discipline would eliminate gossip from your speech patterns?

Interlinear Text

Where no	wood	goeth out	is there the fire	¶בְּאֵין	אֵשׁ	תְּכַבֵּה	עֵץ	אֵין	בְּאֵין
H657	H6086	H3518	H784		H369				
so where there is no talebearer		ceaseth	the strife	מִדְבָּר	וְשָׁתָּה	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ
H5372		H8367	H4066						

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 22:10 (Parallel theme): Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

James 3:6 (Parallel theme): And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

Proverbs 16:28 (Parallel theme): A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

Proverbs 26:22 (Parallel theme): The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.