

Proverbs 29:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

Analysis

One who flatters his neighbor 'spreadeth a net for his feet.' The Hebrew 'chalaq' (flatter/make smooth) is deceptive speech. Flattery appears kind but is actually a trap ('reshet'—net). Flatterers manipulate through false praise to gain advantage or lead victims into foolish decisions. Reformed theology condemns flattery as form of lying. Genuine friends speak truth, even when difficult (27:6). Flatterers prioritize selfish gain over neighbor's welfare. This verse warns us both to avoid flattering others and to recognize when we're being flattered.

Historical Context

Ancient courts were filled with flatterers seeking royal favor. Absalom used flattery to steal hearts from David (2 Samuel 15:2-6). Flattery was recognized as dangerous manipulation disguised as friendship.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Do you flatter others to gain advantage, or do you speak honest, edifying truth?
2. Can you recognize when others are flattering you rather than genuinely commending you?
3. How can you cultivate relationships characterized by honest encouragement rather than manipulative flattery?

Interlinear Text

אִישׁ	מְחַלְחֵל	עַל	רֵעֵהוּ	כְּ	פֹרֶשֶׁת	עַל
A man	that flattereth	H5921	his neighbour	a net	spreadeth	H5921
H1397	H2505		H7453	H7568	H6566	

לְפָנָיו:
for his feet
H6471

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 5:9 (Parallel theme): For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

Psalms 12:2 (Parallel theme): They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

Job 17:5 (Parallel theme): He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail.

Hosea 5:1 (Parallel theme): Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

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

Proverbs 7:5 (Parallel theme): That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

Proverbs 7:21 (Parallel theme): With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

Proverbs 1:17 (Parallel theme): Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

Proverbs 26:28 (Parallel theme): A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

Romans 16:18 (Parallel theme): For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

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