

African Proverb of the Month
January, 2000

Poo, ga di nne pedi mo sakeng.
Two bulls can't stay in the same kraal. (English)

Tswana (Botswana)

Background:

I live in Botswana where Setswana is spoken. I am, as much as possible, a student of Setswana proverbs. As we say, "Diane di a bua!" which means, "The proverbs they speak!"

Explanation:

Concerning this Tswana proverb: In an agricultural society like we have in most of the rural parts of Botswana, animals are the measure of wealth. Historically people have not trusted banks and choose instead to keep their wealth in the form of cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. Cattle are at the top of the list. There is an intimate relationship between a person and his or her cattle. In fact, it was traditionally the practice here to bury a person in the kraal so the person could be near the cattle.

While there is this strong tie to the cattle, it is common knowledge among the people that you cannot put two bulls into one kraal. They will fight each other unto death, causing the loss of the cattle and the destruction of the kraal. This proverb is used to point out that you can't have it both ways. A decision has to be made. While there may be two options, you must choose between them.

Bible Parallels:

This Tswana proverb has many biblical parallels. One is seen in Jesus' words in *Matthew 6* about serving two masters. "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (

Matthew

6:24). You must choose between the two. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have two bulls in the same kraal. You can have only one. So there can only be one Lord of your life.

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