

## **African Proverbs & Old African Sayings**

**However long the night, the dawn will break.**

**A dog knows the places he is thrown food.**

**Blind belief is dangerous. - Luyia , Western Kenya**

**Bad dancing does not brake an engagement. - Luyia , Western Kenya**

**A messenger cannot be beaten . - Luyia proverbs , Western Kenya**

**A Dog that steals sells its body. - Luyia proverbs , Western Kenya**

**A Champion bull starts from birth. - Luyia.Western Kenya**

**The pillar of the world is hope. - Kanuri proverb, Nigeria**

**A tree not taller than an ant cannot shade you. - Kanuri proverb, Nigeria**

**He who marries a real beauty is seeking trouble. - Accra proverb, Ghana**

**The young can't teach traditions to the old. - Yoruba proverb**

**There is no medicine against old age. - Accra proverb, Ghana**

**That man's a fool whose sheep flees twice. - Oji proverb**

**When your mouth stumbles, it's worse than feet. - Oji proverb**

**Hold a true friend with both hands. - Kanuri proverb, Nigeria**

**The pillar of the world is hope. - Kanuri proverb, Nigeria**

**One does not love if one does not accept from others. - Kanuri proverb, Nigeria**

**Rising early makes the road short. - Wolof proverb, Senegal**

**It is better to walk than curse the road. - Wolof proverb, Senegal**

**If there is cause to love someone, the cause to love has just begun. - Wolof proverb, Senegal**

**The teeth of a man serve as a fence. - Wolof proverb, Senegal**

**We add wisdom to knowledge. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**A hyena cannot smell its own stench. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**Do not follow a person who is running away. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**We should put out fire while it is still small. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**Water can not be forced uphill. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**The eye is a coward. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**We should talk while we are still alive. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**Even a friend can not rescue one from old age. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**You can not take away someone's luck. - Kalenjin (Kenya)**

**There is no bad patience. - (Knappert, p. 46, Swahili).**

**A low-class man will just talk; deeds are the hallmark of a gentleman. - (Knappert, p. 84, Swahili)**

**God is our neighbour when our brother is absent. - (Knappert, p. 33, Swahili)**

**A donkey knows no gratitude. - (Knappert, p. 138, Swahili)**

**The climber of ladders will descend [the ambitious person will be brought back down]. - (Knappert, p. 93, Swahili)**

**The good looks of a moron do not stay that way for long. - Ethiopia (Ayele, p. 23, Amharic)**

**The haughty blind person picks a fight with his guide. - Ethiopia**

**The best of mankind is a farmer; the best food is fruit. - Ethiopia**

**Do not vacillate or you will be left in between doing something, having something and being nothing. - Ethiopia**

**It is foolhardy to climb two trees at once just because one has two feet. - Ethiopia**

**Though the lion and the antelope happen to live in the same forest, the antelope still has time to grow up. - Cape Coast, Ghana**

**When you are at home, your troubles can never defeat you. - Cape Coast, Ghana**

**A stranger does not skin a sheep that is paid as a fine at a chief's court. - Cape Coast, Ghana**

**The orphan does not rejoice after a heavy breakfast. - Cape Coast, Ghana**

**The chicken is never declared in the court of hawks. - Cape Coast, Ghana**

**He flees from the roaring lion to the crouching lion. Sechuana**

**A crime eats its own child. Sechuana**

**A sorcerer has no distinctive colour. Sechuana**

**He has not married a woman; for she is [the equal of] a man. Sechuana**

**People know each other better on a journey. Plaatje**

**Let rats shoot arrows at each other. Sudan**

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**Do not tell the man carrying you that he stinks. Sierra Leone**

**You suffer from smoke produced by the firewood you fetched  
yourself. Luhya, Kenya**

**A man who dictates separates himself from others. Somalia**

**Be on the alert, like the red ant that moves with its claws wide  
open. Uganda**

**Instruction in youth is like engraving in stones. Berber, North  
Africa**

**To be happy in one's home is better than to be a chief. Yoruba,  
Nigeria**

**The elephant never gets tired of carrying its tusks. Vai, Liberia**

**By coming and going, a bird weaves its nest. Ashanti, Ghana**

**You are sitting in peace (unharmd): as the nose of a cow that  
feeds among thorn trees and shows no scars. Luganda, Uganda**

**The rainmaker who doesn't know what he's doing will be found out  
by the lack of clouds. Luganda, Uganda**

**One who is crazy for meat hunts buffalo. Luganda, Uganda**

**One person is thin porridge or gruel; two or three people are a  
handful of stiff cooked corn meal. - Kuria, Kenya/Tanzania and  
Ngoreme, Tanzania**

**God's rain falls even on the . - Fipa, Tanzania**

**That which is good is never finished. - Sukuma, Tanzania**

**One who sees something good must narrate it. - Ganda, Uganda**

**To be praised is to be lost. - Kikuyu, Kenya**

**The one chased away with a club comes back, but the one chased away with kihooto [reason] does not. - Kikuyu, Kenya**

**He who refuses to obey cannot command. - Kikuyu, Kenya**

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**If one is roasting two potatoes, one of them is bound to get charred. - Kikuyu, Kenya.**

**Goodness gets a seat. - Igala, Nigeria. (Pachocinski, p. 224; explanation: good people will be shown favors and will live longer).**

**The frog does not run in the daytime for nothing. - Igbo, Nigeria**

**Do they prepare leather [for a battle shield] the day they fight? - Zar, Nigeria**

**The crows, the idle person grumbles. - Yoruba, Nigeria**

**When cutting, look at the age of the machete. - Fulfulde, Nigeria**

**He who loves money must labor. (Mauritania)**

**Poverty is slavery (Somalia)**

**One cannot both feast and become rich. (Ashanti tribe)**

**There is no one who became rich because he broke a holiday, no one became fat because he broke a fast. Ethiopia**

**Knowledge is better than riches. Cameroon**

**Money is sharper than the sword. Ashanti tribe**

**One cannot count on riches. Somalia**

**The poor man and the rich man do not play together. Ashanti tribe**

**A man's wealth may be superior to him. Cameroon**

**With wealth one wins a woman. Uganda**

**The rich are always complaining. Zululand**

**Where the rooster crows there is a village. -Schambala proverb**

**Before the chicken carefully observe the character of your guest.  
Mandingo proverb**

**The ivator is alone, but those who eat are many. -Schambala  
proverb**

**Dogs do not actually prefer bones to meat, it is just that no one ever  
gives them meat. Akan proverb, West Africa**

**A real family eats the same cornmeal. -Bayombe proverb**

**If your cornfield is far from your house, the birds will eat your  
corn. Pigmy proverb**

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tribe**

**Add legs to the snake after you have finished drawing it.**

**Wherever man goes to dwell his character goes with him.**

**Whatever accomplishment you boast of in the world, there is  
someone better than you.**

**When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt  
you.**

**Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped.**

**Only a fool tests the depth of the water with both feet.**

**Until the lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always  
glorify the hunter.**

**Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.**

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