



Daily Verse and Comment

Proverbs 15:21

(21) Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment,
But a man of understanding walks uprightly.

New King James Version

Solomon suggests that we tend to fool ourselves when our main goal is to have fun. We think having fun by doing foolish things brings us [joy](#), but the wise know that folly cannot bring joy. It is oxymoronic, a contradiction of terms. We only think that because we have trained our minds to equate "having fun" and "feeling pleasure," which we confuse with joy. Pleasure and joy are not absolutely synonymous because true joy—the kind of joy that is a fruit of God's Spirit ([Galatians 5:22](#)) and that [God](#) wants us to have in abundance ([Romans 15:13](#))—is a product of [goodness](#).

This idea is expressed in the proverb's second half: "a man of understanding walks uprightly." Those who truly understand what life is all about live a godly life, and they receive the joy that the undiscerning madly seek through foolish pleasure. [Proverbs 29:18](#) cautions that, without vision or revelation, people "cast off restraint." This proverb is saying a similar thing. Without discernment of what is good and right, we tend to pursue folly and reap the bitterness it eventually produces.

When young, we often lack the [wisdom](#) to distinguish mere foolish fun from real joy. Sometimes such wisdom has to come with age and experience—the hard knocks that result from bad decisions. However, if a person can grasp the difference while young, it will save a whole lot of misunderstanding and misery.

If a young person takes the time to consider the consequences ([Deuteronomy 32:29](#)), and if he is honest, it will begin to dawn on him or her that the "wild

life" hurts. Doing foolish, careless, or rebellious things causes trouble. For one, when caught and the hammer comes down in the form of restriction or even imprisonment, it impinges on freedom. At other times, depending on the type of foolishness, a youth may have to pay a heavy financial penalty in fines or compensation. Young women sometimes have to "pay" with a trashed reputation or an unwanted pregnancy—and both sexes pay with sexual diseases. College-bound kids sometimes have to forfeit scholarships and even admission when their transgressions come to light, often ruining career possibilities forever. These painful lessons should teach that *sin does not pay*. Doing the wrong things will bring down some form of penalty.

Conversely, people who have not lived foolishly have little to no baggage and few regrets. They can talk openly about their past without deceit or embarrassment. They do not have to carry their indiscretions around like a black mountain chained across their shoulders. The godly pleasures that they learned to appreciate are not tainted by guilt. Among their peers, they demonstrate sterling examples of virtuous conduct, and in time, they also provide them to their children. Spiritually, when God calls them into His Family, they have far less to overcome, and to them, God's way of life is familiar and a joy to practice.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Wisdom for the Young \(Part Four\)](#)

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