

## [Ecclesiastes 11:9-10](#)

(9) Be happy, young man, while you are young,  
and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.  
Follow the ways of your heart  
and whatever your eyes see,  
but know that for all these things  
God will bring you to judgment. (10) So then, banish anxiety from your  
heart  
and cast off the troubles of your body,  
for youth and vigor are meaningless.

*New International Version*

Do you know of someone who has done everything perfectly? Conversely, do you know of someone whose whole life is one big mistake? Have you ever made mistakes—maybe a lot of them? We have all done stupid things in our lives. Many of us would like to make all our mistakes somehow disappear—or maybe relive certain portions of our lives because of the huge mess we may have made of things.

But that is not possible. [God](#) gives us one shot at life, and we have to make the most of it. [Hebrews 9:27](#) says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." We have one life to live, and then God tallies up the score. He sees how much we have grown from the point at which we started. He sees if we have really changed from a selfish, egotistical, carnal person into an outgoing, loving, spiritual Christian.

Teenagers, however, have a problem: inexperience and lack of knowledge. They have not seen for themselves how bad [the world](#) really is. Frankly, many have an attitude against adults, especially their parents. They feel they

have all the disadvantages and none of the advantages; that everything is stacked against them; that they will never live up to their parents' expectations; that they are being judged for everything they do.

They often make excuses for doing things they know they should not do. They say, "I'm only 15," as if that justifies anything. They sometimes blame their friends and their influence when they do something wrong. They justify their actions by saying, "It doesn't hurt to try something once." Or, "It must be okay because everyone else is doing it, and it's not hurting them."

Newsflash! Though God does take youth, ignorance, and inexperience into consideration, He still holds a person responsible for everything he does. Age makes no difference. Just because a person is young, God will not excuse him from what he has done wrong or from the sometimes-dire consequences of his sins.

Notice that God does not say: "Okay, young people, I want you to sit in your rooms all day and study your Bibles and pray and fast and meditate. Maybe if you are good little monks, I'll let you take a walk outside for a few minutes—but then it's back to your dreary little room!"

No! He wants teens to have a good time! He says, "Be happy in your youth! Do whatever will bring you good cheer. Do what seems best! *But*—always remember that you're not only going to have to answer to your parents for what you have decided to do, but you'll have to explain to Me why you acted so rashly and stupidly that you had to go and [sin](#)."

Sometimes, young people think God's way of life is dull and boring, but it is definitely not. However, God is less interested in fun than in right and wrong. "Fun" is subjective to each person; one person's fun is another's bore! However, we cannot decide what is right and wrong; God has already decided that for us. So, even a pleasurable experience can be sinful, and that is why fun should not be the main reason we want to do something. The first thing we should determine is whether an activity is right or not.

God Himself wants the best for teenagers. As our ultimate parent, He has written some instructions down just for the youth. Teens can turn to them anytime and know exactly what God wants them to do. Of course, the whole

Bible is instruction for all of us, but the book of Proverbs is written especially for young people. Try reading a chapter of that book each day for a month, and notice how many times it says, "My son. . . ." That means the passage is addressed specifically to a younger person.

Young people, have fun—but be careful. Think about what you are doing. Try to remember that God is watching and act so as not to disappoint Him. Consider your parents and their feelings and their reputation. Try to think things through. Try to foresee the result of your actions. Then, if you are wise in your choices, you will never have to regret your mistakes. That is worth a lot!

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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