

# Proverbs 10:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

## Analysis

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**It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.** This proverb contrasts the fool's attitude toward evil with the wise person's pursuit of wisdom. The Hebrew *kis'choq* (כִּשׁוֹק, "as sport/laughter") indicates the fool finds amusement and pleasure in wickedness. The word *zimmah* (זִמָּה, "mischief") denotes planned wickedness, schemes, or lewd conduct—not mere pranks but deliberate evil with moral corruption.

The fool (*kesil*, לְסִיל) in Proverbs is not intellectually deficient but morally perverse, rejecting wisdom and fearing God. This fool treats sin as entertainment, delighting in what should produce shame and grief. The contrast clause, *ve'chen chokmah le'ish tevunah* (וְכֵן חִכּוּמָה לְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה), "and so is wisdom to a man of understanding"), shows the wise person finds equal pleasure in wisdom that the fool finds in wickedness.

This proverb exposes the heart's orientation: what we find entertaining reveals our spiritual condition. The person who laughs at sin, enjoys crude humor, delights in others' downfall, or finds wickedness amusing demonstrates a fool's heart. Conversely, those who delight in God's wisdom, find joy in righteousness, and pursue understanding demonstrate the transformed heart. This verse warns against the progressive desensitization to evil that occurs when sin becomes entertainment rather than something to be grieved and fled.

## Historical Context

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The Book of Proverbs, traditionally attributed to Solomon (Proverbs 1:1), was compiled during the United Monarchy period (approximately 970-930 BC) and later edited during Hezekiah's reign (Proverbs 25:1, approximately 715-686 BC). This wisdom literature served to train young Israelite men, particularly those preparing for leadership roles, in godly living and sound judgment.

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature from Egypt (Instructions of Amenemope, Ptahhotep) and Mesopotamia (Counsels of Wisdom, Akkadian Proverbs) shares formal similarities with Proverbs, but Israel's wisdom is distinctly theocentric, grounded in "the fear of the LORD" (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). While other cultures valued wisdom for practical success, Israel connected wisdom inseparably to covenant relationship with Yahweh.

The contrast between the fool who delights in evil and the wise person who pursues understanding reflects Israel's covenantal worldview. Deuteronomy commands Israel to "choose life" by loving God and obeying His commandments (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). The fool who finds sport in mischief has rejected this choice, treating God's moral law as irrelevant to personal pleasure. The New Testament echoes this warning: those who "take pleasure in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:12) demonstrate hearts hardened against God. The entertainment and comedy culture of first-century Rome, with its crude theater and gladiatorial games, provided vivid examples of societies finding sport in wickedness.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. What does our entertainment consumption—media, humor, activities—reveal about the orientation of our hearts?
2. How have we become desensitized to treating sin as amusing or entertaining rather than grievous?
3. In what ways does contemporary culture normalize finding pleasure in wickedness, mischief, or others' downfall?
4. How can we cultivate hearts that find equal or greater delight in wisdom, righteousness, and godliness?
5. What practical steps can we take to guard against the progressive hardening that comes from treating evil as entertainment?

## Interlinear Text

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לֹא יָשֶׁן כִּי חִכָּתְּה זַמְּנָה כַּשְׁחָתְּה וְקָרְבָּנָה  
It is as sport to a fool to do mischief hath wisdom but a man  
H7814 H3684 H6213 H2154 H2451 H376

תִּבְזֹבֵחַ:  
of understanding  
H8394

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 15:21** (Parallel theme): Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

**Proverbs 14:9** (Parallel theme): Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

**Proverbs 2:14** (Parallel theme): Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;

**Ecclesiastes 11:9** (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart,

and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

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