

The word "FUN" in the Bible

Introduction

This study is based on information obtained by an electronic Bible program. It involved compiling the search results for the word "fun" in eleven different translations (one only in the New Testament). Some translations used the word only a few times (or not at all); others used it many times.

The translations used, and the frequency that the word "fun" occurred, is shown in the following table:

Abbreviation	Name of Translation	Word Frequency
ESV	English Standard Version	0
KJV	King James Version	0
NAB	New American Bible	0
NAS	New American Standard Bible	0
NRS	New Revised Standard Version	0
NIV	New International Version	1
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible	several
GW	God's Word	many
NCV	New Century Version	many
NLT	NLT - New Living Translation	many
MSG	The Message (New Testament only)	many

The abbreviations given above will be used when the specific translation is mentioned in the following outline.

Note that the translations that have the greatest number of occurrences are those that translate concept-for-concept, rather than word-for-word. The more literal translations tend to use other words, such as: mocking, pleasure, enjoyment, etc.

Initial evaluation of the results

Altogether, there were 142 verses that contained the word "fun." By examining how the verses were translated in the more literal translations, it was determined that 125 of them were in reference to mocking - "making fun" of something (past or present tense). This included all the references found in the NIV and NJB. Since most (if not all) of these 125 verses have a negative connotation, they were not examined any further.

After removing these 125 verses, there were 17 verses left. These are the ones that are used in the following outline. The translations that use the word "fun" in those verses are listed after each entry.

Note that, in two of the verses that are listed, the concept of "fun" is *implied* by the context. (These are Ezekiel 33:30 and Matthew 27:27.) Though used by the translation to convey the meaning, it is not a direct translation from a specific Hebrew or Greek word.

The outline

"Fun"

A. Often associated with sin and evil.

1. In reference to sinful conduct - hurting people or animals.
 - a. Injuring animals, for fun - Genesis 49:6. (NCV)
 - b. Ambushing innocent people, just for fun - Proverbs 1:11. (NCV, GW)
 - c. The soldiers gathered together "for some fun" (*implied*) - to mistreat Jesus - Matthew 27:27. (MSG)
2. In reference to sinful conduct - enjoying folly and stupidity (as opposed to wisdom and godliness).
 - a. People who think wrongdoing is fun (they are fools) - Proverbs 10:23. (NLT, MSG)
 - b. People who think stupidity is fun (they are senseless people) - Proverbs 15:21. (GW)
 - c. People who poke fun at [= scorn] wise words (they are fools) - Proverbs 23:9. (MSG)
 - d. People who listen to the Word of the Lord "for fun" (*implied*) - i.e., with no intention of doing what it says - Ezekiel 33:30. (NLT)
 - e. [Most of the 125 verses not examined (which focus on "mocking") would fit into this category of "sin and evil."]
3. In reference to the *consequences* of sinful conduct - "not fun" for the individual *or* for those around them.
 - a. Having a fool for a child is not fun - Proverbs 17:21. (MSG)
 - b. Being a staggering drunk (and all the related consequences) is not fun [= unwise] - Proverbs 20:1. (MSG - probably a poor translation of the passage)

B. As a *lifestyle*, it is evil.

1. It results in spiritual "fruitlessness" and eternal judgment.
 - a. "The seed that fell among the thorns" represents people who allow themselves to become preoccupied with fun (and various other things in life) - because of this, they are spiritually fruitless - Luke 8:14. (MSG)
 - b. For people who treat life as "fun and games," the future (eternity) will be horrible for them - Luke 6:25. (MSG)
2. We must abandon such a lifestyle if we want to follow God.
 - a. If we want God's grace (favor), we must quit the "fun and games" and humble ourselves in his presence - James 4:9. (MSG)
 - b. The prophet Jeremiah delighted more in God's words, than the fun [= merriment] of revelers (equivalent to the modern concept of "partying," the implication being that such a lifestyle is sinful) - Jeremiah 15:17. (NCV, GW)

C. An *honest* perspective about "fun."

1. It can be good at times, but even then, it has *no lasting value*.
 - a. The author of Ecclesiastes (probably Solomon) tested fun [= pleasure], to see if it had any meaning - Ecclesiastes 2:1. (NCV)
 - b. Results? It has no lasting value - Ecclesiastes 2:2. (NCV)
 - c. Yet there is some value in fun [= pleasure], when it accompanies the hard work that is also a part of life - Ecclesiastes 8:15. (NLT)
2. In contrast, some things that are "not fun" can result in *great value* (an example).
 - a. Discipline is not fun, though later it yields positive benefits - Hebrews 12:11. (MSG)

Concluding remarks

More often than not, the word "fun" is associated with sin and folly. (This is true, whether one examines the word "fun," or any other similar concept that may be found in the Bible.) As such, it is a reflection of values or perspectives that are incompatible with the values or perspective of someone who strives for godliness, wisdom, and ways to express love for God and neighbor. Though some types of "fun" may be legitimate, the follower of Jesus has a greater focus on things that have *lasting* value, than on things that result in *a few fleeting* moments of entertainment.

If a person is *unsaved* (not a follower of Jesus), there is no lasting value in "fun" - or in anything else, for that matter. Preoccupation with "fun" will be a cause for severe judgment. (This also applies to the unsaved person who *claims* to follow Jesus, but who continues to live by the world's values.)

If a person is *saved* (a follower of Jesus), he may find himself being pulled toward the world's lifestyle and its focus on "fun." But eventually, God's way will prevail in his life. Though he may see some value in "fun" or pleasure, *it will not be his preoccupation*. It is *not* the focus of his life. It will *not* crowd out his obligations, or the things that God says have higher priority in life. (Even "harmless fun" and "good fun" become evil, when they crowd out these things.)

Contrary to the world's opinion, a person who follows Jesus knows that "fun" does not always translate into "good." (With the world's definition of "fun," it *rarely* does, unless you have a distorted concept of "good" - see Isaiah 5:20.) Even when he *does* do something "fun," his choice of activity will be influenced by his values, and it will often have little in common with what the *world* calls "fun."