

The Naïve

**To give prudence to the naïve,
To the youth knowledge and discre-
tion.**

—Proverbs 1:4

Found in the opening verses of the book of Proverbs, this verse indicates the purpose of the entire book. But who are the naïve? What is the meaning of prudence? What is discretion? (Those are not words you hear every day.)

The root meaning of the Hebrew word for *naïve* means: *to be spacious* or *to be wide open*. It carries the idea of being ‘open-minded’ yet in a negative sense.

A wise instructor once quipped, “It is good to be open-minded, but not so open-minded that your brain falls out.” That was a clever way of saying, “Don’t be naïve!” The mind of the naïve is opened wide to accept any thought offered by anyone.

He can be fooled easily but will also follow after wise teaching. He is just as likely to follow a fool or an evil man as he would be to follow a wise and discerning leader.

Consider the naïve when he encounters two individuals arguing over a question. The naïve is so open-minded, he can openly acknowledge both lines of reason-

ing. It is not that he cannot make up his mind, or that he acknowledges merit in each line of reasoning. He actually believes both opposing arguments. He lacks the ability to discern one from the other.

The book of Proverbs is offered to the naïve for the purpose of producing *prudence* and also *discretion*.

The Hebrew term translated ‘prudence’ in this verse is generally used in a negative sense. It carries the idea of *craftiness*. When used in a positive sense, it gives the idea of being *shrewd* or *sensible*.

The Hebrew term translated discretion literally means *to consider* or *plan*.

The Book of Proverbs is specifically devoted to those who are naïve. Its purpose is to bring about maturity by teaching the open-minded person to be *crafty* in his thinking, to stop and think and evaluate situations in life. It is intended to help the young person learn to be *sensible*. It promotes *careful thinking* and *planning* in life so that evil does not destroy.

Young people...parents...what are you waiting for???

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