

Not for Everyone
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Prov 1:4 – 5a

(BHS)

(NKJV)

לתת לפְּתָאִים עֲרֻמָּה
לְנֶעַר דַּעַת וּמְזֻמָּה:
יִשְׁמַע חָכָם וַיֹּסֶף לְקַח

To give prudence to the **simple**,
To the **young** man knowledge and discretion—
A **wise** man will hear and increase learning

Here is the list of the kinds of people that the book of Proverbs is for.

When you get right down to it, there are only three: the *peta'yim*, the *na'ar*, and the wise.

The *peta'yim* are the simple. The word is based on “open.” These are the open-minded. Another way of putting is that their heads are empty. Simple, naïve. Waltke glosses, “gullible.” They are open to anything. Easily swayed. Easily impressed. “The *peta'yim* believes everything, but the prudent looks where he is going” (Prov 14:15).

What the simpleton chiefly needs is a good education. The unfurnished mind must be filled up with knowledge. “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the *peta'yim*” (Psa 19:7b). “The unfolding of thy words gives light; it imparts understanding to the *peta'yim*” (Psa 119:130). “When a scoffer is punished, the *peta'yim* becomes wise” (Prov 21:11).

Do you know anyone like this? Someone who believes anything? Who is not aware of how things work in life? Who more than anything else needs good teaching? The book of Proverbs is written for such a one.

The *na'ar* is the youth. The *na'ar* is old enough to have made a commitment to the path of life but hasn't yet. The *na'ar* is unmotivated. It is time for them to grow up and identify with the wise. The *na'ar* does not need more knowledge. What they need is discipline. They need a swift kick in the pants.

“Train up a *na'ar* in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6). “Folly is bound up in the heart of a *na'ar*, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (Prov 22:15). “Do not withhold discipline from a *na'ar*; if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. If you beat him with the rod you will save his life from Sheol” (Prov 23:13 – 14).

Do you know anyone like this? Who won't commit to anything? Who won't get off the fence? Who more than anything else needs to be pushed and disciplined? The book of Proverbs is written for such a one.

And the book of Proverbs is also for the wise. They will read and become wiser still. The wise value wisdom and will listen and internalize good teaching. “Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man and he will increase in learning” (Prov 9:8 – 9).

Are you wise? Do you love discipline? Do you cherish criticism and reproof? Are you humble and do not trust in your own insight? Then the book of Proverbs will be of benefit to you.

Now, at first one may imagine that of all people, fools would benefit the most by reading Proverbs. But that is not so. In Prov 1:7, fools (*'evilim*) “despise wisdom and instruction.” The book of Proverbs is *not* for them. They won't learn. They won't grow. Solomon would be wasting his time by inviting them to read.

“The wise of heart will heed commandments, but a prating *'evil* will come to ruin” (Prov 10:8). “The way of an *'evil* is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (Prov 12:15). “Crush an *'evil* in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him” (Prov 27:22). The fool does not cherish reproof. The fool hates to be disciplined. They will not repent. Do you know anyone like that?

The simple have nothing to share, but can be taught. The fool runs at the mouth, but will not listen to counsel. The wise both heeds and offers wise counsel.

Jesus invites you to his school to learn wisdom from him. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29). The gospel is for those who need instruction. The gospel is for those who need motivation. And the gospel is for the wise.

But fools would rather build their lives on sand (Matt 7:26).

Which category are you?