

“Wouldn’t Be Prudent”

by Bryan Gibson

Prudent: 1) “...exercising sound judgment in practical matters...cautious or discreet in conduct; circumspect; not rash...” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*); 2) “using good judgment to consider consequences and to act accordingly” (*Encarta Online Dictionary*). **Synonyms:** careful, cautious, discreet, wise, farsighted. **Antonyms** (opposites): reckless, foolish, simple, shortsighted.

I never thought much about prudence until it became sort of a buzz word under President George H. W. Bush’s administration. “Not gonna do it, wouldn’t be prudent”—you may recall comedians using that line when they impersonated President Bush.

God talked about prudence, though, a long time before President Bush did, and it’s what He says that really piques my interest. Using His word, let’s look at some things it wouldn’t be prudent for me to do.

Wouldn’t be prudent to lose my cool, pop off, or fly off the handle, even when folks insult me. “Fools show their anger at once, but the prudent ignore an insult” (Proverbs 12:16, NRSV).

Wouldn’t be prudent to just talk all the time. “A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness” (Proverbs 12:23). Wouldn’t be prudent, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the increased likelihood of sin. “In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19).

Wouldn’t be prudent, especially in religious matters, to believe everything I hear—to direct my steps by what I think may be right, although I haven’t really checked to make sure. “The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps” (Proverbs 14:15). “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits...” (1 John 4:1). What *would* be prudent is to make certain that what I teach and practice is the truth. “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit” (Proverbs 14:8). “Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17).

Wouldn’t be prudent to close my ears to rebuke and correction, because I’ll just keep making the same mistakes over and over again. “A fool despises his father’s instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent” (Proverbs 15:5). “He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding” (Proverbs 15:32).

Wouldn’t be prudent to ignore spiritual red flags—places, people, situations that might endanger my soul. “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3).

Wouldn’t be prudent for me to take prudence too far, to be so careful that I never get anything done. “He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap” (Ecclesiastes 11:4).