

Looking Ahead

The prudent understand where they are going, but fools deceive themselves.

Proverbs 14:8

Bill Walsh, the former head coach of the San Francisco 49ers, was thought eccentric because of how extensively he planned his plays in advance of each game. Most coaches would wait to see how the game unfolded, then respond with plays that seemed appropriate. Walsh wanted the game to respond to him. Walsh won several Super Bowls with his “eccentric” proactive approach. He was a coach who looked into the future.

Looking ahead is the process of creating the future before it happens. People who learn to do it “understand where they are going.” Like Bill Walsh, it involves deciding your actions in advance so that your life will respond to you. What are the benefits of such a proactive pursuit?

Looking ahead gives direction. It’s like using a highlighter on a roadmap to indicate where you are, where you are going, and how you are going to get there. The highlighted roadmap not only provides information for where you are going; it also suggests where you are not going.

Looking ahead helps us to create rather than react. With each step along our journey, we are faced with a choice either to create or to react. Many people spend their entire days reacting. Like goalies in hockey, with pucks flying at us all day, we react. We react to news, cars in traffic, people, events, challenges, and obstacles. A better way involves making choices and following plans.

Looking ahead saves time. “One hour of planning saves three hours of execution.” Planning yields a savings return. We only have twenty-four hours in a day and 365 days in a year. If we

don't use them wisely by looking ahead, we will forever forfeit those gifts.

Looking ahead reduces crisis. Our daily lives have two controlling influences: plans and pressures. When we look ahead and choose to plan, we take charge and control of our days. If we fail to look ahead, we will spend our days in crisis mode. We will fall into a trap of panic planning—planning on the fly with no time to effectively map out a strategy.

Looking ahead maximizes energy. Failing to look ahead, we dissipate our energy on less important matters, improper agendas, and lost crusades. We waste our time on the trivial many. But preparation often energizes us!

Be wise. Look ahead. It's eccentric but well worth the effort.