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I'm a fan of college football. Most of the teams have reported back to begin practice, and we are days away from the first games! But as intense as every Saturday promises to be, do you realize that most of the games are being won and lost right now, before they are even played? Who shows up in shape? Who has been watching extra films? Who is most focused and determined in practice right now?

People who study successful men and women point out how intentional they are with their time and work. Every action today is done with tomorrow's challenge in mind -- a challenge they will be most prepared to meet. We would do well to follow their example, for there will come a time when we will all have to "be ready." The challenge will begin, and the time for preparation will be over. We will win or lose by how prepared we are for the moment. We know that moment is coming. We need to ask ourselves what we are doing right now to get ready for it. Just as football games are won or lost in practice, spiritual victories are won and lost in our preparation. The moment is coming, and what we are doing right now will determine how well we do.

Jumping back to college thoughts, do you realize if this year's entering college class had been more alert back in 1991 when most of them were born, they would now be experiencing a severe case of déjà vu. The headlines that year railed about government interventions, bailouts, bad loans, unemployment and greater regulation of the finance industry. The Tonight Show changed hosts for the first time in decades, and the nation asked "was Iraq worth a war?"

For them, the Green Giant has always been Shrek -- not the big guy picking vegetables. They have never used a card catalog to find a book. They have never had to "shake down" an oral thermometer, or hand change the channels on a television set. Most are unfamiliar with a rotary dial telephone, and chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream has always been a flavor choice.

Each new generation has its perspective shaped by its own experiences. I encourage you to take this opportunity to pray for all those young men and women attending college this year and what they will experience -- that they will remain strong in their faith while in school and that those who don't know Christ will encounter a faithful Christian witness while in college.