

## “Philosophical Ponderings” Series

**“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”**

*“Soren Kierkegaard”*

These words from Soren Kierkegaard seems to have special meaning considering the daily events recorded on our social media and news resources. All of us, leaders and followers, who spend more time looking at how good it was in the past lose sight of planning for the future. He is right in that we do learn from and understand the whys when we relive the past. The philosopher’s observation that it (life) must be lived going forward coincides with the words recorded in Luke 9:62. Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Dwelling on what events or commentary that occurred in the past can lead to failing to live forward with a positive state of mind. Getting distracted in the present by looking back can cause grief going forward. I know this from my own experience plowing on the level lands in the panhandle of Texas. Unlike hillsides, creek bottoms, and land that is far from level, I drove a tractor and plowed on flat land, but my Dad liked to tell me about when he learned to plow as a young child.

He told me that plowing behind a draft animal is demanding work. Farmers were required to control the plow with one hand and guide the animal with the other hand. He must have a fixed point as a guide for plowing a straight furrow. Looking back will cause him to lose sight of the fixed point and to lose control of the plow and the crooked furrow will be there for all to see until next year’s plowing. That farmer will be the recipient of many jokes during the coming year. Straight furrows the next year will be essential.

A modern metaphor is the person who turns to look into the back seat while driving a car. The driver twists sideways, loses sight of the highway, and tends to pull the wheel in the direction their eyes are pointed. Such a driver is dangerous mostly without even realizing the risk is high. Driving requires the person to follow the criteria for plowing a straight row and driving within the appropriate lines on roads and highways. But this metaphor goes far beyond plowing and driving and should become a life lesson.

We should be slow to condemn those who offered excuses for their lack of following established criteria. Who among us has not done the same? We should also note that some of the giants of the faith first offered excuses before they finally accepted God’s call. Paul was concerned about his inability to speak well. Despite that view of his personal liabilities, I will close this TALK with some forward-thinking wisdom from Paul the Apostle in New Testament scripture:

*No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.* Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.* Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)

From each of these biblical examples, we learn to live into the future and not dwell on the past.

*Peace Always*

*Ted*