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ADAPT TO CHANGE ... OR FAIL

During the past several weeks, I've been thinking about life and how certain moments change people. Recently, I finished reading "Quiet Strength," a book written by Tony Dungy, the head football coach of the Indianapolis Colts. Early in the book, Dungy told stories about playing in the NFL during the late 1970s for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

One of Dungy's mentors, who he refers to many times in the book, was the Steelers Hall of Fame coach Chuck Noll. One of Noll's sayings was, "Those who fail to adapt to change are preparing to fail."

This isn't the first time I've heard this saying. I played football for more than 10 years, and I heard many of these types of motivational sayings. However, this one hit home the most for me because of recent changes in my life.

To begin with, my first child was born in July. Also, I turned 29 recently. My 30th birthday is getting closer each day, and I haven't met some of the goals I've set for myself. Suddenly, it hit me: Am I nearing the half-way point in my life and not accomplishing the goals I set for myself?

One goal I set for myself in college – 10 years ago – was that I'd be a head superintendent by the time I was 30. Now, with that magic number about 200 days away, I wonder where I'll be? Ten years ago, 30 was a long way off, and I figured it wouldn't be an issue. Now, with the big 3-0 looming, it's a thought that lingers in the back of my mind. I think about the quote from Noll: Do I need to change and adapt, or should I just stay the course?

There might be many assistants who have these same thoughts: Is it time to consider alternative occupations? Do I need to learn different skills? Has my well run dry for opportunities? These are all valid questions that run through assistants' minds as they approach a certain age and level of experience in life if they haven't accomplished their goals yet. Family, income and career goals are areas I think about – and

worry about – as time passes.

I'm fortunate to be married to a woman who I love with a passion and with whom I hope to grow old. Our three-week-old son is amazing. We're so blessed. My wife's parents and my mother grow older along with the rest of us. As we watch them take care of our grandparents who are in their mid-80s, we ask if we'll follow that road, too? We love our parents and family very much and would do anything necessary to help them. However, that's one more concern about the future I have to consider. Are you in the same boat?

Another question you might ask yourself when you reach a certain threshold is, "Am I achieving my career goals and doing all I can for my family?" With rising fuel and energy costs, a difficult housing market, insurance rates at an all-time high, Social Security in shambles and the largest budget deficit in U.S. history, you might think, "How do I prepare for the future?" That sounds daunting, but it raises concerns for me and my family and how I help prepare us for the future.

With a child, you no longer think of yourself first. My wife and I think of all the hopes and dreams we have for each

other as a family, professionally and in our Christian faiths. But, now that we have our son Aiden, we want to give him every opportunity and experience we never thought imaginable. There's nothing I wouldn't do for him ... and I'm sure you feel that way about your children. Which brings me back to that same question, "Am I doing all that I can to help my family?"

When answering the question, you have to ask: Is what I'm doing making a difference? Am I doing what's best for my family? Am I adapting to change? For me, the answer is yes. Does golf maintenance solve the problems of the world? Maybe not, but it provides millions of people worldwide enjoyment. Also, I'm working in a career that satisfies me and makes me happy, which, in turn, makes me a better husband and father. That's a good thing.

As my deadline approaches to reach my goal, I'm going to have to make some changes. I'm going to have to recognize the field is changing. It's taking longer to become a superintendent. As a result, I'm going to have to adapt my goal. The big 4-0 seems like a long way away.

Like Dungy and Noll, I'm going to do my best to change with the new demands of our profession. Anyway, it's time for that 3:00 a.m. feeding for the baby before work. Good morning, Aiden. **GCI**

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