

August 1st, 2022

## **If It Is To Be It Is Up To Me**

—*Buckley Huffstetler*

Earlier this year I visited my grandfather's bench in the Litchfield Cemetery with my mom. We like to go once and awhile to check in with my grandfather, who we called "Coach". During this visit I reminded my mom of a phrase Coach used to say that I really liked. He had two big ones actually, one being "Organization is happiness or OIH" and the other being "If it is to be it is up to me." The first one I find pretty hard to follow as I am a bit disorganized, something I'm sure some of you have noticed. However the second one I have found has really stuck with me. If it is to be, it is up to me. Ten two letter words. Essentially the phrase means reaping and sowing your acts and your own destiny, to put it into camp terms. So I reminded my mom of his phrase. I said "Mom I think it would be awesome to have *if it is to be, it is up to me* tattooed right here on my forearm. It could be a great reminder." My Mom, giving me a horrified look said, "maybe we should rethink that..."

Whether or not I get this tattoo is irrelevant today. Instead I want to focus on the phrase itself through a couple stories. The first one takes place here at camp. Picture a young 13 year old Buckley, I haven't grown too much since then so it shouldn't be that hard. This summer I was on Kilkenny with many of my close friends. It was awesome! We hiked, laughed and struggled together. However what was specifically awesome was using the lighter. Like many of you, I'm sure, I thought the lighter was awesome. Using it to create massive fires at the campsites, or cooking dinner was all very cool to me. At home all I had were boring old matches. This device was just something else. One night after cooking a counselor told me to hang onto the lighter until the next meal as we had already packed up and were ready to head out. Needless to say I

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put the lighter in my bag and totally forgot about it. When we got back to camp I was unpacking and found it once again.

Here it was, right in my hand at my bunk, all mine if I wanted it. And I did. And I took it. As the summer went by I had it in my bag, and come the last day It rode in my car with me all the way home. I got home and wow, I had a lighter! So I did what any 13 year old would and used it to light the candles in my house for dinner a handful of times. After a week or so with it I realized, one, what did I ever expect to do with this thing, and two, I realized I had this feeling in my stomach. Guilt. How could I go back to camp and say I embraced all of our values, all of our teachings here, when I had done something so clearly against all of them. Namely if its not yours DO NOT TOUCH IT! So here I was having a moral dilemma. Do I give it back? Do I Keep it? What is the right thing to do? At this moment I thought about my grandfather's phrase seriously for the first time. If it is to be, it is up to me. If I wanted the guilt gone, If I wanted to be a good person, If I was to show my face at camp, I had to give it back. It was up to me. So the following summer I came back, and the lighter did too. I went up to the trip room and I returned it. I put it back, and as I did I felt a weight lifted from me. I wanted to be a good person, and by doing this I felt I had regained that. I had the ability in my hands to do the right thing, it was up to me, and boy did it feel good to give it back.

My second story is one that has bettered my life to this day. When I was eight my parents sat me down and asked me a question. "Do you want a brother?" Once again, as with every question you're asked, you have the choice of how to answer. A brother? "Hmmm " I thought. Without much more thought than that sounding awesome I said yes. Yes I do want a brother. This choice brought along a series of actions that changed my life. Time passed, and soon a baby was adopted into my house. His name is Nick. I suspect a couple of you may know him. I had a new

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responsibility. This **thing** was now **my family**. By saying yes I now had a little brother, a life long best friend. I sometimes envy how 7 year old me could have been so smart. How he could have decided something so big so easily. And how he was able to bring one of the most important things into my life with just one three letter word. A life changing decision decided in an instant. Oh to be a little kid. Decisions seem so easy.

However, thinking about it now it is apparent that some decisions should be easy, even if they seem hard. Most of the time, deep down we know what we want. We know what to do. The hard part is when it comes down to doing it. There will always be doubts in anything you do. There is a lot of pressure, after all, in deciding the outcome of something by yourself. What if I'm wrong? If I make the wrong choice? If I Can't do it? What if it's too late? It is simply easier to say no. To put it off, to let someone else decide for us. It's easy to let things sit and stay the same. But nothing worthwhile comes from this. Nothing. "Dread it...run from it...destiny arrives all the same" as Thanos once said. So why would we not want a hand in what our destiny means? We all should.

This past semester in school I wrote a paper about fate vs. free will. I was curious about the concept of fate, if we have a fate does any given choice we have really matter? Won't it all just lead to the same spot? At the end of my project I came across an article by Krishna Savani about the concept of negotiating with fate. That as humans we can believe in fate, but it does not mean our decisions are meaningless. Instead each decision we make is a negotiation with fate. As we pass through life, we negotiate where it will take us. And by the end of our lives it is all these small negotiations and decisions that define how we have lived, and give us our fate.

So to circle back if it is to be, it is up to me, means saying yes. It means trying something new. It means making the right choice, or atleast the one you feel deep down is the one you

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should. There are a million choices we can make in a summer at camp. Whether there is an activity you haven't tried, a friend you want to make, a long walk you're scared to do, or a person you have to apologize to, the choice is in your hands. Just say yes. Say yes to trying, and make the decision to do what you know is right. Of course there are many things to say no to. As Mr. Michael described in his chapel talk, there are situations where saying no and stopping something from happening is the right decision. Of course. Those are also up to each of you. But to the good opportunities and chances we get I say this. There is no time like the present to shape your fate. It is up to you and only you. So please please remember, with anything you are torn over in these last weeks, nothing is final. You decide how far you go, and where you will head. Even the smallest choices can have a more profound outcome than you think. My brother is an example of how wonderfully a choice can turn out. If it is to be, it is up to you. And mom, if you're listening, we'll see about that tattoo.