



What will I do?

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I'm a nerd. I know that comes as a shock to most of you that know me, but it's true and it's OK. As the years continue to slip by, I have accepted it and have moved on with my life. One of my "nerdly" pleasures is a somewhat excessive, probably bordering on atypical, love of quotes. I tend to remember quotes as guides and as sources of inspiration; especially when they relate to current issues in my life.

I find that a good quote is often able to put into words things that I cannot. At the very least, it can capture thoughts, beliefs and emotions in a way that is far more impactful than I would ever be able to describe on my own. Whereas someone as inarticulate as me may say, "Our children are our future", a visionary like Walt Disney would be far more eloquent and tell you, "Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children."

One quote that has, unfortunately, lost a great deal of luster is, "What would (insert name here) do?" It's a question that has been asked in a lot of different contexts over the years; some serious, some funny, many ridiculous. There have been too many names inserted in the blank and it has become overused. Does anyone remember the short-lived reality show *What Would Ryan Lochte Do?* After the recent drama at the Olympics, I'm not sure I want to know the answer to that question. There is now a website that "measures your ability to predict what some famous people and fictional characters would do in a particular situation, based on what they've done in the past." Seriously? How many times can an idea or phrase be diluted, adjusted or transformed before it loses all of its original meaning? But, as I said before, times and issues change and the impact of a particular quote can change accordingly. It happened to me this summer while I was reading to my son. He started kindergarten this week and our last baby is, all too quickly, no longer a baby.

I was lying next to him at bedtime, reading his favorite story, and that stale, overplayed quote popped in my mind. I don't know why. I don't know what made me think of it at that particular moment, but it was there nonetheless. It was then I realized it really doesn't matter what (insert name here) would do. It matters what I will do.

As my children begin school this fall, the question I ask myself cannot be, "What would (insert name here) do?" The single, most important question must be, "What will I do?" What will I do to ensure they have every opportunity for success? Will I help them with their homework? Will I read to them a little each day? Will I make sure they get enough sleep at night? Will I keep them safe, secure and cherished without fail? Will I accept the incredible, life changing responsibility of guiding and nurturing them as they grow? What will I do?

Parenting is not easy and the fact that I'm staring down the barrel of my fortieth birthday doesn't help. I've quickly learned that there is a big difference between the energy levels of a forty year old Dad and his five year old son and eight year old daughter. But, I keep reflecting back on that quote and that simple question. What will I do? What will I do when my little girl asks me to dance with her after a long day of work? What will I do when my son wants to play soccer just a little longer?

Several thousand children began a new school year in Norwalk this week. My children are blessed to be a part of the Norwalk City School District and I know they will be surrounded by wonderful people that will care for them every day, but I am their Dad and it begins with me. (OK. It begins with me and my beautiful wife - trying to stay out of trouble here). If you are lucky enough to have child that began a new school year recently, please find a quiet moment of reflection to consider what that fresh start means.

Think of the challenges ahead. Think of the opportunities. Think about your child's hopes and dreams. Think of the beautiful heart, mind and spirit embodied within your little one and ask yourself the same, simple, all important question.