

# Men with Broad Shoulders<sup>i</sup>

by John Hawkins

*God loves men with broad shoulders. That's why He keeps loading them down with responsibilities and then double-dog-dares us to bear the weight in our own strength. — John Hawkins*

*Christian existence is a strangely relaxed kind of strenuousness, precisely because the Christian gospel is what it is. — C.F.D. Moule*

*in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. — II Corinthians 11:27-28*

*For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. — Colossians 1:29*

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” — Matthew 11:28-30*

*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. — I Corinthians 15:10*

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Masculine and feminine traits are often hard to distinguish from each other in the Bible. For example, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul likens himself to the readers as a nursing mother and an encouraging father.<sup>ii</sup> The portrait of a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 contains some descriptions traditionally attributed to men. Gender is clearly set and distinguished in scripture; however, traits of masculinity and femininity are at times interchangeable and contextual.

The Bible shows us that God calls men to assume and fulfill challenging, stretching responsibilities. He indeed calls women to the same. Having mentored and led many men throughout my lifetime, I've pondered how assuming and fulfilling responsibilities affect men.

As a result of these decades of observing other men and myself assume and fulfill responsibilities, I believe that God loves men with broad shoulders. And through the years, He keeps loading our shoulders with many heavy responsibilities. Then He double-dog-dares us to bear the weight in our own strength.

Paul speaks of bearing challenging responsibilities when after listing extreme difficulties, he speaks of the daily pressures he also faces.<sup>iii</sup> For every man, there are days, weeks, months, years and sometimes decades that seem endlessly filled with difficulties and pressures. These are all brought by God and used by Him to forge us into the men He'd have us be.

As men are faithful with responsibilities in their marriages, families, careers, communities and churches, God uses it to build

- Confidence
- Humility and dependence upon God

- A mindset of service to others
- A mindset of living for God’s glory and honor
- Our overall trustworthiness

God also uses it to

- Push us away from passivity
- Push us away from stoic self-will, doing it on our own, in our own strength

Paul speaks in Colossians 1:29 of himself toiling and struggling with (or *fueled by*) God’s energy that God works in him. This is the picture of what assuming and fulfilling responsibilities should look like - our total effort in which we dependently look to God for the energy needed.

Matthew 11:28-30 says that God gives us rest as we come to Christ with our burdens. Initially, rest from the deadening burden of works-based self-salvation. And ongoingly, rest amid the responsibilities He gives us as we follow Him. As C.F.D. Moule put it, “Christian existence is a strangely relaxed kind of strenuousness, precisely because the Christian gospel is what it is.” The Gospel calls all men to receive all we need in life and eternity from Him. And in response, the Gospel calls us to give all we have and are back to Him in sacrificial service.

In our moments of clarity, it is that kind of man that we long to be. Men who receive all and by His grace give all. Men faithfully assuming and fulfilling our commitments in all spheres of influence, by His grace and for His glory. So my prayer tonight for myself and those I’ve mentored is that God will forge us into men with *broad shoulders of heart, mind, soul and will*. All by His grace. All for His glory. All for the benefit and blessing of those we love and serve.

### Take it to the Lord

1. Read through this meditation again, asking God to open your eyes, mind, heart and soul to His message for you today.
2. As He speaks to you, listen. Ask Him to guide you to what you should do with what He says and for the grace to do so.
3. End your time with some form of worship—prayer, praise, thanksgiving or surrender.

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<sup>i</sup> From *Longings Toward a God-Centered Life: Meditations on Great Thoughts and Passages* by John Hawkins. The purpose of publishing these meditations is to share perspectives for leaders and followers on biblical understanding for daily living. The meditations are derived from John’s reflections on quotes from Christian leaders and from God’s Word.

<sup>ii</sup> I Thessalonians 2:7 and 2:11

<sup>iii</sup> II Corinthians 11:27-28