

The Set

“Ah, Mom, don't make me do this!” The words weren't actually verbalized, but the set of the shoulders spoke the message just as clearly. This young boy was completely not enthused. He was screaming with every bit of non-verbal communication he had, “don't make me!” His mother continued to walk, holding his sister's hand, while he lagged behind and set his shoulders to shout, “I'm coming, but not because I want to!”

How often have we done this ourselves? The set of our shoulders communicates rapidly and strongly. The runner at the starting blocks sets his shoulders, determined to win the race. The worn out woman sets her shoulders weakly, advertising there is no fight left in her. The shoulders of the gymnast announce her intention to give it all she has. The stubborn child sets her shoulders in defiance and rebellion against authority. The leader sets his shoulders in bold resolve for the contest around the corner.

You've seen it. You've done it. You're doing it right now. You're communicating by the set of your shoulders how you feel about what's just ahead. Everything from, “let's fight,” to “leave me alone,” has been communicated through the set of your shoulders. The little boy obviously didn't want to go. He wasn't going to make compliance with his mother's wishes easy. How often have we done the same? In opposition, setting our shoulders in stern single-mindedness. In acquiescence, setting our shoulders in capitulation. In rebellion, setting our shoulders in determined self-will.

How often have we done this with God? Has He seen our lagging body, disgustingly following, but only at a distance and without any enthusiasm or joy? Did He catch a glimpse of His own glory as we set our shoulders in trusting determination to “take that hill” for Jesus' sake? Has He been waiting and watching as we've alternately said, “yes” and lived out, “no?” Does fatherly-pride fill His being as we quench the flaming arrows of the great Enemy with our Commander's own armor? Will He see in us a set of the shoulder that announces to the world that “nothing is impossible with God,” or that “I can't face another battle?”

As any boy with a parent who genuinely cares about his growing up to be the man society needs and wants, the boy DID follow. In time, I imagine, he even forgot his determination to walk in rebellion when something more important or exciting pressed into his young life. That's an advantage and handicap of youth. Yet, his little shoulders were an example. They reminded me that I set my own shoulders for or against the work before me. Interestingly, unlike the youngster with the short attention span, I may choose to live in this rebellion, despite the damage to my own soul. I also have the option to live in joyful obedience to the Father who has no selfish motivation. He has a plan for me that includes more than I can imagine.

The football player who is now beginning spring training will set his shoulders against practice dummies determined to better himself over last season. He will push against the obstacles in front of him. He is determined to finish the contest victorious, despite all that stands in his way. I think I'd rather be like the football player than the dummy, though I sometimes *feel* more like the practice dummy. How will I set my shoulders? Will I set my shoulders for or against the plan God has for me? Will I allow my shoulders to set stooped in failure and rejection? Will I determinedly push through every obstacle and hardship? Each of us makes that choice for him or herself. “Please don't make me! Well, alright, then. Lead on, precious Father!”