

**Family Upreach, Inc.**  
Course V: *Christian Marriage Skills*  
"Learning to *Hang In There*"  
Lesson Eleven

# **The Christian Marriage**

## **LEARNING TO "HANG IN THERE"**

By  
Alan & Shirley Sowders, B.A., M.S.  
Brenda Frenzel, Buck Griffith,  
Hillery M. Motsinger, Ed.D., L.P.C.

**Unit 20 – Lesson 2**  
(NewLife Behavior English Edition)

**NewLife**   
B E H A V I O R  
*Ministries*

P. O. Box 270720, Corpus Christi, Texas 78427-0720

***"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature . . ."***  
(Second Corinthians 5:17)

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## RESPONSE SHEET

Dear Student,

We have found that thoughtful *written* responses greatly enhance the student's understanding of this course material. Therefore, we urge you to use this **Response Sheet** as an aid in the study of this lesson.



### STEP 1: BEFORE YOU START

Before you start, please write three or four sentences below on methods that help or you believe *will* help your marriage survive. Then, put this sheet out of sight until you finish the lesson.

### STEP 2: PREPARING TO STUDY

Read the Study Questions on Pages 11-12 (do not attempt to answer them now). Then read and study Pages 3-10 as you would a chapter in a book.

## LEARNING TO “HANG IN THERE”

In this lesson we will be studying ways to persevere in living a married life that is difficult and more problematic than under normal circumstances. Sometimes – due to military deployment, incarceration, distant long-term job assignments or even illness and rehabilitation – the husband or wife is removed from the home environment. You may feel more *single* than married. Not being able to physically be with your spouse presents a new set of problems. Since we both are trying to be Christians, we must rely on God’s Word for direction and guidance. We will also survive with the encouraging support of kindly family members and brothers and sisters in the Lord. We trust that this study will address some pressing needs that may be troubling for you.

Before continuing, please write three or four sentences some of the ways that have helped you “hang in there” on the **Response Sheet** (Page 2). Perhaps, you can add to suggestions offered in this study. Then put this sheet of paper out of sight until the end of the lesson. Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once, without looking up any of the scriptures. Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the **Study Questions** on Pages 11-12.

### I. Introduction

When you are with your spouse, it should be the high point of your day, week or month. It is looked forward to with great anticipation. The “in between” time is full of necessary daily activities and duties. Still, our minds manage to remind us quite often that . . . *we are not with our spouse as much as we probably envisioned on our wedding night*. Any length of separation, as basic as it is, can get us down and damage our relationship if we do not handle it wisely.

We must learn ways to “hang in there” and patiently wait until we are once again united.



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This lesson considers several major potential problem areas and offers some recommendations for your consideration. It is unlikely that *all* your problems will be covered but these should bring some relief. We are praying for you and your spouse.

## **II. Handling Uncertainty, Disappointment & Disillusionment**

A person in similar circumstances described the situation with these words . . .

“The future for us is awfully cloudy and uncertain. We can’t make plans like other married couples do, nor can we comfort each other as closely as others when doubts and fears crowd in. It would be so nice to hold and be held by each other and be assured that *we will get through this.*”

I am sure that these are some of *your* thoughts. Still, you are “alone” too much. What can be done about the uncertainties?

James tells us in his letter (James 4:14) of life’s uncertainty when he calls it a “vapor” that briefly appears and then vanishes. He emphasizes that no one can really be “sure” about tomorrow (the future).

In the uncertainty and brevity of life, Psalm 139:1-12 can bring great comfort to the Christian. This passage assures us that . . .

- a. The God that made me, *knows* me.
- b. God understands my thoughts and words even if I do not.
- c. “Has beset me behind and before” tells us that God is in charge of both our past and future.
- d. God knows when I stand or sit (suggesting He is in constant touch with me and aware of my circumstances).

Further comfort in your indefinite situation can be found in Proverbs 3:5-8 . . .

- It is difficult but I must trust in the Lord with *all my heart*.
- I must not depend or lean on the way that I see things.
- I must acknowledge Him in all my ways – allowing Him to be God, Father, Shepherd and Providential Provider.
- Doing this, God will direct my path like He did for Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-10).

*How can I best handle disappointment and disillusionment? At times I feel that “everything” and “everyone” is against me. This sets me up for disappointment and I can become hopeless and cynical. A “cynic” is a person that is inclined to believe that*

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*the motives for people's actions are insincere and selfish. Some even view God in this way.*

We need to read and apply Philippians 4:6-7 . . .

1. Do not be overly anxious. Anxiety is forbidden (First Peter 5:7).
2. Request what you desire of God (Colossians 3:17; 4:2). Romans 8:26 reminds us that God knows what we need and we do not but His Spirit makes intercession for us. So, prayer is a win-win situation.
3. The peace of God will “keep” your heart and mind through Christ Jesus (also, read: Isaiah 26:3; 48:18; John 16:33).

When great disappointment arises, we need to learn to trust God with “everything” (Philippians 4:6) and “in all thy ways” (Proverbs 3:6). Pour out your heart to God in prayer. Then, let God handle the situation for you (Philippians 4:13, 19). This was Paul’s experience in Second Corinthians 12:7-10 with his “thorn in the flesh.”

### **III. “Managing Time”**

How much time do you have in a day? Does anyone have more or less than 24 hours? It is in “how we use our time” that makes the difference. When either spouse is physically removed from the relationship and family, it affects every family member – spouse, parents, children, siblings, grandparents, grand-children, etc.



How can we best endure (and even learn to thrive in some areas) during this time apart?

1. One thing that must be faced is this - you can only live “one day at a time”. Have you thought about how ridiculous it is to think life can be lived faster? God does not give us *two* days at a time because we cannot handle it. In fact, we usually do

poorly with just one day at a time.

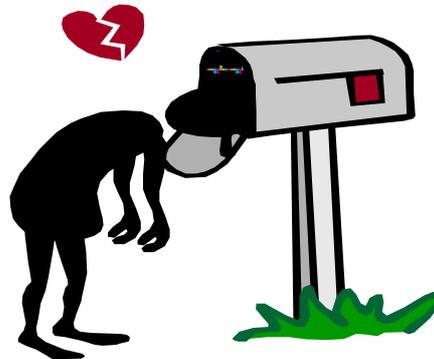
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- a. James 4:13-14 tells us that we cannot know “what will be on the morrow”. Also, read Proverbs 27:1 (*don't boast about tomorrow*).
  - b. We have to learn to be content with today and learn to live in “day-tight” compartments (Matthew 6:4).
  - c. The only one who can handle our future is the One in charge – our Father. We must learn to trust Him and look to Him for guidance.
2. Learn to make positive use of each day. Ephesians 2:10, 4:1 and 5:11-21 give us excellent guidance. Keep busy with positive alternatives (exercises, education, daily devotionals, correspondence, Christian movies/music, radio, etc.).
  3. A practical step for a Christian is to lean on the Lord and glean the lessons He wants you to learn through this trying experience (Read the following passages: Hebrews 12:3-11, Proverbs 3:11-12 and John 15:2). Romans 8:28 is a favorite memory verse.

#### **IV. Dealing with Loneliness**

Both marriage partners while separated will have times when loneliness plagues them. Making preparation for such times in advance is wise. It will help each of you handle it well and move forward. We offer the following suggestions for husbands and wives to combat loneliness.



First, here are some ideas for wives . . .

1. I will keep my marriage foremost in my thoughts, in my conversations with others around me and in my visits and letters to my husband. I am a married person ALL the time (not “part-time”).
2. I will keep myself busy – especially in mind.
  - a. I will visualize my next visit with my husband. I will plan what I want to say to him then. Thinking ahead improves my ability to communicate effectively.
  - b. I will keep a personal journal of my daily life. I will note observations, even those that are comical and unusual. I will list the lessons I learn day by day.

- c. I will keep my house and auto clean and in good repair. A clean car makes traveling more pleasant and satisfying.

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- d. I will exercise regularly to keep my body fit and trim.  
e. I will exercise my mind by reading articles that are challenging and thought-provoking on a variety of topics.  
f. I will make efforts to advance in my education, work and career.
3. I will spend quality time with other family members and friends. I will hold up *my* end of these conversations.
4. I will deepen my spiritual relationship with God, His Son and His Holy Spirit. I will also deepen my relationship with Christian brothers and sisters.
5. I will make efficient use of my time and talents for the betterment of myself and my family.
6. I understand that there is a difference between “being alone” and being *lonely*. Pining away is fruitless self-pity.

**Here are some ideas for husbands . . .**

- Complete as much education as possible.
- Learn any trades that will be beneficial. Or, upgrade any trade depended on for a living. If you are not presently “computer literate”, see if you can find help to *get up to speed*.
- Become an avid reader of good literature on a regular basis. This will give you a good practical education on a wide variety of subjects.
- Write letters to your wife. Put down thoughts you may not have time (or forget) to discuss the next time you are together (or what you “should have” said the last time). Write to others also – even those outside your immediate family.
- Keep a journal of your daily experiences and observations. Consider making part of it a “prayer journal” – keeping up with your daily conversations with God.
- Keep your mind on creative pursuits such as hobbies or crafts. Learn from others who are doing things that interest you.
- Read and study God’s Word on a daily basis. Grow spiritually. Ask God for wisdom to more fully discern and obey His will.
- Find one other person that you can trust. Build strong friendships that will last far beyond the present circumstances. These can be helpful when your family is reunited in the future.

**V. Fighting Off Feelings of Bitterness –  
The “I Didn’t Sign Up for This” Syndrome**



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Keeping one's *emotional* state in proper order is high priority business. Bitterness is resentment or ill will caused by pain or sorrow. It may be an improper response to *any* adversity occurring in our lives. We are indebted to Bill Gothard for some of the following thoughts . . .

1. Causes of bitterness –
  - a. Excusing my guilt by blaming others.
  - b. Attempting to get revenge. Sometimes we will say, "I'll teach you a thing or two" but it only fans the flames of bitterness.



- c. Resorting to worldly or temporal values. As a Christian, my value system is keyed to the *eternal* (Colossians 3:2). I may set too high a value on money, reputation, possessions, physical relationships, or future dreams.
    - d. Taking up offenses (Proverbs 16:28; 26:22). When we get a bad report on someone, we feel bad toward that person who is reported against without really knowing them.
2. To overcome bitterness –
  - a. Clear your own heart of personal guilt (Matthew 7:5).
    - 1) Humble yourself in genuine repentance (James 4:9-10).
    - 2) Identify the basic offense committed against another.
    - 3) Relive the offense through the feelings of the one you hurt. This helps you understand *the other side*.
    - 4) Ask forgiveness of each one offended. Each should be personally approached and asked to forgive.
    - 5) Express gratitude for forgiveness personally. Later, follow it up with a short note of appreciation.
  - b. See "God's hand" in your offender. Did you know that God may be working

through offenses He allows in your life?" Read Second Samuel 16:11 and Luke 23:34.

- c. Thank God for the offenses (First Thessalonians 5:18). This is the initial act of obedience of our will.
- d. Ask God to forgive you for being led by temporal values and a lack of genuine love (First Corinthians 6:7-8).
- e. Fully forgive your offender (Ephesians 4:2). Remember that the things causing bitterness are temporal – not eternal.

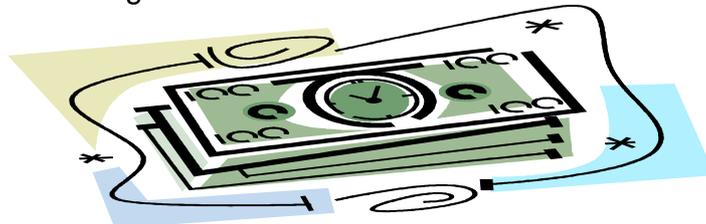
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- 1) Release yourself from shattered expectations and broken promises.
- 2) Cast off the burden of the hurts and losses your offender has caused you. Holding onto them and nurturing them only renews and gives life to bitterness.
- f. Restore love by voluntarily investing “treasure” in the life of your offender (Matthew 5:40; 6:21).
  - 1) Invest time in praying for your offender.
  - 2) Invest words of encouragement properly thought out and presented (Proverbs 12:25; 15:23; 25:11).
  - 3) Think how that person has benefited your life. An occasional offense ought not to outweigh the good.
  - 4) Invest in meeting a need that the offender has. It may require effort, thoughtfulness, or even a gift.
  - 5) You may invest trust by correcting any false reports that may be circulating about the offender.
  - 6) Invest by showing genuine interest in the offender’s welfare.

## **VI. Making the Dollars Stretch**

The spouse left at home often has difficulty in that his or her partner is unable to contribute financially. Having to earn a living to support self and family can be a huge burden. Making the dollars from a single paycheck cover all the needs of the family and household is a real challenge.



From a few “How-To” books, we have gleaned several suggestions that may prove useful. One author noted that most of us have financial problems due to “impulse” buying. However, it is a weakness that we can control with God’s help.

Here are a few helpful hints . . .

1. When you go shopping, use *cash*. If you must keep one of those *plastic* cards, it should be used only in an emergency (a real emergency).
2. When shopping, make a list of items needed and take only the cash you plan to spend.
3. Do not take others with you. They may encourage you to purchase items you do not really want or need.
4. If in doubt, DON'T buy!

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5. Set a ceiling. If an item is more than \$\_\_\_\_\_ [*you fill in the amount right for you*], do not buy it at this time. Go home to think and pray about it overnight.
6. Do not buy anything – no matter how terrific a bargain it is – if . . .
  - a. You cannot afford it.
  - b. You do not need it.
  - c. You need something else worse.
7. Beware of “SALES”. *SALES* encourage “impulse” buying like the restaurant sign – *Eat All You Want* – encourages gluttony at the buffet.
8. If doing “extensive” shopping (fall clothing, Christmas, furnishing a home) . . .
  - a. Make preliminary shopping surveys before buying any item.
  - b. Browse through several stores.
  - c. Take notes, ask questions, compare items and prices.
  - d. The following day, evaluate what you have seen.  
This requires time but it does save money!

## V. Summary

At some time most couples will experience a time (or times) of separation. Not being with our spouse can get us down. We must learn creative ways to “hang in there”. We cannot manage to stay so “busy” that we forget the reality of our separation. It helps to know that fellow Christians are praying for us.



Life is filled with uncertainties. However, followers of Christ find that some of life’s greatest lessons have been learned in times of trial and tribulation. With confidence in our Lord, we can even find strange sources of humor and joy (Philippians 4:4-11). This is puzzling to our unbelieving friends. My life and my relationships do not “have” to be destroyed by current circumstances. I can even emerge *stronger than before!*

This does not happen by accident, however. It is the result of specific steps that I (and my spouse) take with faith, courage and trust in God. This is true if we are talking about “Managing Time” or “Dealing with Loneliness”. This is

true if talking about handling the “*I Didn’t Sign Up for This*” syndrome or struggling to “Make the Dollars Stretch”.

I (and my spouse) have plenty to do fighting off Satan’s attempts to destroy us. I rejoice that each of us have things to do rather than “sitting back and *hoping*” that our marriage survives. And, when this *bump in the road* is over (some “bumps” are bigger than others), we will love, cherish, respect and treasure each other more than we ever did before!

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## STUDY QUESTIONS

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. “Hanging in there” requires that we
  - (a) learn and patiently wait
  - (b) get more rope
  - (c) ignore reality
  - (d) blame our situation on others
  
2. James 4:14 says life is uncertain. I need to
  - (a) count sheep
  - (b) keep busier
  - (c) discover my divine purpose
  - (d) buy more lottery tickets
  
3. I must
  - (a) not depend on myself
  - (b) trust in God’s Word
  - (c) allow God to direct my life
  - (d) all of these
  
4. This earth is not heaven so I must remember that
  - (a) mistakes will be made
  - (b) I make mistakes
  - (c) God is still in control
  - (d) all of these
  
5. Recognizing the situation I am in, I should
  - (a) live one day at a time
  - (b) grow bitter

- (c) give up
- (d) pout

6. Even though I'm alone, I do not have to be lonely. I can
- (a) communicate with my spouse/family
  - (b) plan for the future
  - (c) prepare for my next visit
  - (d) all of these
7. I become bitter when I
- (a) excuse my guilt by blaming others
  - (b) count my blessings
  - (c) maintain a good sense of humor
  - (d) none of these
8. God may have placed me here to
- (a) seek a better life
  - (b) open my eyes
  - (c) keep me alive for another purpose
  - (d) all of these
9. I can restore love in my marriage by
- (a) staying apart longer
  - (b) complaining
  - (c) giving meaningful encouragement
  - (d) making a list of the shortcomings of others.
10. Money is always a problem because
- (a) I've been robbed
  - (b) I'm an unwise steward
  - (c) inflation
  - (d) my credit card company charges too much interest

## REFLECTION

Write a few sentences on new ideas learned about *hanging in there as partners in the Christian marriage*.

## **APPLYING THE LESSON**

Finally, to get the most from your study list one or more ideas that you want to use to change your behavior. Also, list questions you want to ask your instructor or studymate.