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Hanging on Through Tough Times

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

As you walk along the road in your journey toward spiritual intimacy, you are going to come across some ruts, chuck holes and boulders in your path. The enemy is going to make quite sure you encounter a lot of rough places. And why shouldn't he? Satan's agenda is to make you give up...to quit...not just the journey, but your entire marriage. And, oh, is he sneaky!

That is why God says, *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2). Picture yourselves walking along the road together. One of you is carrying a heavy bucket. The other picks up a sturdy stick and runs it through the bucket handle. You can each carry the bucket now by holding the ends of the stick. That's **how** to carry *each other's burdens*. When two hearts carry the same load, the burden is only half as heavy!

How beautifully this is depicted in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly [easily] broken.* Yes, there will be stones in the road, and you are going to

stumble over some of them. But you are called to stick together, and help each other over or through the rough spots. You will be strong enough to hold each other up if you have been growing together in spiritual intimacy. The *cord of three strands* — you, your mate, and your God — is **strong enough** to hold you up.

**A cord of three strands
will not break.**

Have you discovered any stones in your road? Big, aren't they? At times they are overwhelming. If you haven't stumbled across any yet, believe us, you will.

We've stumbled over our share. We remember one that almost completely blocked the road about ten years ago. It was the boulder of *financial disaster*. A business we bought turned out to have two sets of books: the real ones and the ones we saw. Even though we purchased it through a reputable business broker, we "got took." We were about to levy suit against the seller for the \$50,000 of debt she had placed upon us, when she declared bankruptcy and skipped the country. We were stuck with a huge debt service and no income from the business to meet it.

For four years, we worked and scraped to meet our debts, adding second and third mortgages to

our home which we eventually lost. We faced foreclosure, but sold it just in time for barely enough to pay off the mortgages. Finally, we were forced to declare bankruptcy. What a horrifying and humiliating experience to find ourselves labeled "not credit worthy."

Can you imagine how overwhelming those stones and chuck holes seemed during those years? How easy it would have been to blame each other for our problems? Funny thing about obstacles though — they can either **barricade** you apart or **shove** the two of you together. It depends on which side of the obstacle you are each standing. We found that the trick was for both of us to stand on the **same side**. Then the barricade was between us and the rest of the world. And as long as that was true, we were safe.

The third strand is God.

Always keep in mind this great truth: there are **three** of you walking together on this road, not just two. And when you get too weary to take another step, there's a Third Person, Jesus Christ Himself, Who is strong enough to hold both of you up until you can face the next step together. *A cord of three strands [really] is not quickly or easily broken.*

Hanging On (cont')

The above excerpt is merely a small section of Chapter 11 entitled (what else?) SPIRITUAL INTIMACY. *Hanging On Through the Tough Times* is only one ingredient of Spiritual Intimacy (there are seven in all). It's a very **important** ingredient, however. The ability as a couple to hang tough through the turmoils and disappointments of life is a character trait you don't see too much of nowadays.

Maybe you're feeling like Mr. and Mrs. Midas right now, with everything you touch turning to gold. We've been there. Enjoy it! It won't last forever. We don't say this to be morose or to scare you. Tough times are simply a part of living. They're not the "most horrible thing that ever happened." Be aware they will come to you like they come to everyone else, and then maybe they won't throw you for a loop...or at least not as large a loop.

Or perhaps you're feeling like it's too late, one of life's boulders has rolled over you and crushed you. We've been there too. It's hard to see things in perspective looking out from under a

rock, until you realize you are **standing on a Rock** -- the Rock of Ages. And Jesus the Rock is big enough to shatter any trouble that threatens to crush you. Remember, a cord of two strands can break when stretched too far, but *a cord of three strands is not easily broken.*

Songs of hope are depression busters.

If you're facing tough times right now, we'd like to encourage you with some words from our favorite songs. Songs of hope and encouragement are **doubt and depression busters**. We need to boost our spirits with them. That's why God gives them to Christian artists to pass on to us. In Annie Herring's *The Master's Hand*, she reminds us that we are going to experience hard things while walking in the light. But when we hold the Master's hand, they "won't fill me [us] with fear." And even when we are "weak and frail and sometimes fail to see His hand, **He's holding on to me.**"*

Harvest sings a great song of encouragement called *I Am Your Father*. "No matter how dark it seems, I will forever be guiding

each step of your way." When you struggle and think there's "no reason, no way to win, **I am your Father.**" Strong words of hope and faith, are they not?*

The song *Holding Out Hope to You* is another faith booster. It's a great reminder that Jesus holds out hope to you even when "the world breaks your heart in two. When your life is consumed by your fear and your doubt, I'll be holding out **hope** to you."***

We encourage you to listen to songs like these (sometimes we have listened to them over and over again -- 10 or 20 times). They'll help you remember that "cord of three strands" when life tends to rub out memory of it. Hold on to Jesus **together** as two strands weaving together with His strong third strand -- and your "cord" will never break.

**The Master's Hand* by Annie Herring is from her album "Waiting for My Ride to Come," recorded with The Sparrow Corporation.

***I Am Your Father* by Jerry Williams (Harvest) is from his album "Give Them Back," recorded with The Benson Company.

****Holding out Hope to You* is from the album "Hope," recorded with Warner Alliance.

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