

# THE SPARK...

## Igniting the Passion, Mystery and Romance in *Your* Marriage



### Using *The Spark* in a Small Group

Environment is everything! The Spark is a fun and engaging look at marriage. As you think about utilizing the book for a small group, keep in mind that the book will help you set an environment of fun and encouragement. Our conviction is that small groups should be held in a comfortable location. We highly recommend living room settings and highly discourage classroom or public areas where distractions can occur.

Your small group experience needs to be discussion driven. Whether you elect one couple to facilitate or rotate the responsibility is really at the discretion of the group.

#### ***THOUGHTS FOR LEADERS...***

1. **SEEK TRUST.** ASK FOR HONEST ANSWERS. GIVE PERMISSION TO “PASS” IF THEY CANNOT ANSWER HONESTLY.
2. **SEEK CONFIDENTIALITY.** INSIST THAT WHAT IS DISCUSSED IN THE CLASS STAYS IN THE GROUP. “*WHAT HAPPENS IN CLASS STAYS IN CLASS*”
3. **SEEK DISCUSSION.** DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SILENCE, AND USE THIS TIME TO SPRINGBOARD OFF SOMETHING FROM THE BOOK THAT SPOKE TO YOU OR YOUR GROUP.
4. **SEEK THE LORD.** PRAY THAT THE LORD WOULD MAKE YOU SENSITIVE TO WHAT HE IS DOING IN THE LIVES OF THE CLASS HE HAS ENTRUSTED TO YOU.

### Proposed format for the group

**Open with a “Hilarity Report” and general social time:** Prep the group that every week you will be asking members to share a story from the week of something “fun or funny” that has taken place. NOTE: you might want to ask a couple of outgoing types to come prepared each week. This part of the group is critical for the following reasons: 1) it gets people talking 2) it allows people to get to know each other. 3) it sets a fun tone for the group.

**Discussion Starter:** The group should read the appropriate chapter prior to the group meeting time. Start your discussion with general thoughts on the chapter. Included are optional discussion starters if needed and if time allows.

**Discussion Questions:** You will be provided with specific questions to ask the group. Do not be afraid to follow up class answers with questions that come to your mind.

**Wrap-up:** an optional wrap-up is included if you feel it is needed.

**Prayer Requests:** Close each week with prayer and praise requests from the class and ask someone to pray or pray yourself.

## Week 1. – An overview of intimacy

Hilarity Report: Set this up for the coming weeks. Then ask the class to share a funny story from their wedding.

Discussion Starter: Get to know you activity. Have the class think of an adjective that describes them as individuals. The adjective must start with the same first letter as their name ie “Looney Laura, Joking Jay, Marvelous Mark etc. then have the class share these names. Now have couples do the same with their last name using an adjective that describes them as a couple ie Laughing Laffoons, Serious Smiths, Joyful Jones’ and again have them share with the class. Note this starter will take longer than a normal week.

Discussion: Download our online intimacy survey and have each individual in the class fill it out. Ask the following questions:

Which area was easiest to answer, why?

Which area was most difficult, why?

Were you surprised by any of the questions why or why not?

Wrap up: For fun read them Ken Davis’ fore word to give them some insight into the authors. Read Mark 10:6-8 then read the follow excerpt from the book. Beginning on page 24 with the paragraph that begins “Intimacy is something we all long for. Read two paragraphs concluding at the top of page 25. Now give the class YOUR hopes for your time together.

Prayer:

## Week 2 – Chapters 1 & 2

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: Break the class into small groups if you have more than 5 couples in the class and starting with the couple who has been married the longest have them share their “love story” in 3 minutes or less. Encourage them to keep this moving or it could consume your entire class

Discussion:

1. Jay’s mom says couples will struggle with three things: Money, Sex, & In-laws. Do you find this to be true in general? Why or why not? Are there other issues you see in marriage?
2. In chapter 2 was the story of Joe Schumer discussing his priority list of God, marriage, children vs. God and family? Which priority list best describes you and why?
3. What do think about the following statement from Chapter 2? “The single best thing you can do for your child outside of having an authentic walk with Christ is to make your marriage a priority.”
4. Prior to the Intimacy survey had you thought about the five facets the Laffoons purport? Do you see those facets in your marriage why or why not?
5. “An important part of marriage is accepting the things we would rather change” do you agree or disagree? Why?

Wrap up: As the leader share your love story and your thoughts on the five facets of Intimacy

Prayer:

### Week 3 – Chapter Three -- No Longer Two

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: Read Mark 10:6-8 out loud to the class and ask “What is the reason a man must leave his father and mother?”

Discussion:

1. How would you describe the difference between oneness and being one?
2. On a scale of 1-10, rate the success you have in your marriage of being one.
3. What would you say is the purpose of marriage?
4. When do you feel most intimate with your spouse?

Wrap up: Read from The Spark p. 41 beginning with the paragraph which starts “We like to think of it as the Intimacy Dance” through the end of the chapter. Prayer:

### Week 4 Chapter 4 – Social Intimacy

Hilarity Report: Read quotes from kids on page 45

Discussion Starter: Using pencils and paper have each person write out their five great dates as illustrated on page 50. Have couples do this individually first, then compare the two lists and mesh them together.

Discussion:

1. On a scale of 1-10, from your perspective, rate the level of social intimacy in your marriage.
2. What first attracted you to your spouse?
3. What common interests do you have?
4. How often do you date?
5. What detractors can you identify in your marriage to social intimacy?
6. What attractors can you identify in your marriage to social intimacy?
7. What would be your five great dates meshed together?
8. What is one way you can improve your social intimacy over the next 21 days?

Wrap up: Encourage the couples to take a moment and calendar their next date

Prayer:

### Week 5 Chapter Five – Mental Intimacy

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: Jay shared a story of their “sock drawers” on page 56. Have the couples share a way in which they are opposite (break groups if necessary)

Discussion:

1. On a scale of 1-10, from your perspective, rate the level of mental intimacy in your marriage.
2. Identify the way(s) in which you and your spouse are intelligent. (Using Howard Gardner’s eight multiple intelligences) from pages 62-68
3. Identify the areas in which you defer to your spouse’s intelligence.
4. What detractors can you identify in your marriage to mental intimacy?
5. What attractors can you identify in your marriage to mental intimacy?

Wrap up: Have the couples make a plan to identify in what new way can you defer to your spouse’s intelligence?

Prayer:

## Week 6 Chapter 6 – Emotional Intimacy

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: On page 76 Jay says **“I believe that men feel emotions more intensely than women.”**

Do you agree or disagree?

Discussion:

1. On a scale of 1-10, from your perspective, rate the level of emotional intimacy in your marriage.
2. Identify the ways in which you and your spouse express emotions?
3. Think of the last “chili incident” you had in your marriage. What emotional filter were you utilizing to process at that time? What emotional filter was your spouse utilizing?
4. What common filters do you and your spouse utilize when processing emotion?
5. What detractors can you identify to emotional intimacy in your marriage?
6. What attractors can you identify to emotional intimacy in your marriage?

Wrap up: Have the couples discern what is one way you can accept your spouse’s common filter?

Prayer:

## Week 7 Chapter Seven – Physical Intimacy

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: Read the Ultimate Top Ten list from page 87-88 and as a class vote on those you think are legitimate.

Discussion:

1. On a scale of 1-10, from your perspective, rate the level of physical intimacy in your marriage?
2. In what ways do you think you and your spouse succeed at being provocative and passionate?
3. In what ways do you need to improve being provocative and passionate?
4. What detractors can you identify in your marriage to physical intimacy?
5. What attractors can you identify in your marriage to physical intimacy?

Wrap up: What is one way you can improve your physical intimacy over the next 21 days?

Prayer:

## Week 8 Chapter Eight – Spiritual Intimacy

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: On page 110 in the second sentence the Laffoons claim that marriage is the simplest form of “church” do you agree or disagree

Discussion:

1. On a scale of 1-10, from your perspective, rate the level of spiritual intimacy in your marriage?
2. Identify how you and your spouse express yourself spiritually?
3. Identify the common spiritual values that you share as a couple?
4. Explain your relationship, as well as your spouse’s, to Jesus Christ.
5. What detractors can you identify in your marriage to spiritual intimacy?
6. What attractors can you identify in your marriage to spiritual intimacy?

Wrap up: Have couples determine ways they can build “church” into their marriage.

Prayer:

We now enter the second part of the book

## Week 9 Chapter Nine – Lose Yourself

### Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: On a whiteboard/ chalkboard or flip chart draw out the marriage circles (all four illustrations) diagramed on pages 132-133. Ask the class how they were taught to view marriage

### Discussion:

1. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well you lose yourself in your marriage. List some examples.
2. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well your spouse loses themselves in the marriage. List some examples.
3. Describe how you view marriage. Is it three separate circles: you, your spouse, and the marriage? Or do you view it as two circles intersecting. Give examples of this being fleshed out.
4. Name one area of “self” that you have been holding onto which if let go, would grow your marriage.

Wrap up: Read Philippians 2: 3-8 (page 129-130) of the book and pray for the class to adopt Jesus attitude.

### Prayer:

## Week 10 Chapter 10 – Love your spouse

### Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: The Laffoons have often described each other as cartoon or other children’s character. Laura would describe Jay as “Barney the Big Purple Dinosaurs” and Jay would at times describe Laura as the “Tasmanian Devil” Have the couples share what cartoon character best illustrates their spouse, keeping in mind they can use cartoons other than the Laffoons used.

### Discussion:

1. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well you love your spouse. List some examples.
2. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well your spouse loves you. List some examples.
3. Give examples of how you show your spouse that they are your priority.
4. What is at the heart of love for your spouse? Give examples.
5. On page 141 the Laffoons talk about the one reason NOT to have sex. Is this a practice common today? If not why not?

Wrap up: Have couples share with each other one “*new*” way they can show their mate they are a priority.

### Prayer:

## Week 11 Chapter 11 – Lift the Marriage

### Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: Secure three clear containers (glasses or pitchers). Using food coloring make one glass full of red water to represent the wife and one glass of blue water to represent the husband. Pour equal amounts of both red and blue water into the third empty glass to make purple water. Share with the class how Purple cannot be made unless there are equal parts of both red and blue.

### Discussion:

1. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well you live as if your marriage is more important than you are. List some examples.
2. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well your spouse lives as if your marriage is more important than themselves. List some examples.
3. Is your daily mindset “I” or “we” as you answer life’s questions?
4. What steps can you take to begin thinking more “we”?

Wrap up: Challenge the couples to examine their marriage and ask: “Is our marriage a lighter or darker shade of purple (meaning one spouse is more dominant)” And what can be done to make it a more even shade of purple?

Prayer:

### Week 12 Chapter Twelve – Say “I Do”

Hilarity Report:

Discussion Starter: The first sentence of the chapter states “we all enter our wedding day with many misconceptions of what marriage is really going to be.” Have the class share some of their misconceptions.

Discussion:

1. What were the circumstances when you first knew you were in love? How did you feel?
2. How do you keep that feeling alive?
3. Share a time when your marriage encountered rough or rotten circumstances.
4. What principles or practices did you employ to get through that time?
5. Describe your view of a covenant marriage.
6. How do you say “I do” each day?

Wrap up: Close this chapter and this class by “Blessing the couples”. As the leader share your heart and vision for their marriage.

Prayer: