

# THE SPARK...

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



### Using *The Spark* in a Sunday School Class

Environment is everything! *The Spark* is a fun and engaging look at marriage. As you think about utilizing the book for a Sunday school class, keep in mind that the book will help you set an environment of fun and encouragement.

### Three important “Environment Checks”

1. The leader’s ability to promote fun and encouragement. Picking the right facilitator is key to any Sunday school class. The facilitator for *The Spark* should ideally possess these character qualities. Integrity in their own marriage. Upbeat and encouraging in their demeanor. And finally, willing to direct the discussion in positive and uplifting ways.
2. The history of the marriages represented in the class. Know that even in the healthiest of churches you will find the class will fall in four general categories: Critical (they are having significant marriage issues) Struggling (they may be facing a particular challenge like finances or child problems) Growing (they are seeing fruit from their work on marriage) Flourishing (they are in a really good place right now and want to keep it that way). As you teach through the book, be sensitive to not get focused on one group only.
3. The individuals attending the class. Some examples of students in your class: “The Talker” likes to dominate class by delivering verbose answers in an attempt to display their knowledge. This person is best handled by acknowledging their answer then specifically calling on another person. “The Antagonist” likes to play the devil’s advocate when ever possible. Acknowledge their comments but ask yourself if their comment is valid and beneficial before remarking on it “The Loner” is there without their spouse. This person *may* have issues that are not common to the rest of the class. If this person’s spouse is teaching another Sunday school class that’s one thing. If however their spouse doesn’t attend church you may have to address comments like “this concept is unrealistic for me because...and or “this won’t work for me...”

In all these cases, don’t be afraid to say “I don’t have the answer but I will find out”. Jay & Laura have created a system for helping facilitators with issues they may face in class. For help email [info@celebratenet.com](mailto:info@celebratenet.com).

#### ***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 Class (45 minutes)

**Open with a “Hilarity Report” (8-10 minutes)** Prep the class 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 class 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 class.

**Discussion Starter: (5-7 minutes)** each week you will be given a simple activity or question in which to get the class thinking on the same page, moving toward the particular subject for the week.

**Discussion Questions: (20-25 minutes)** You will be provided with specific questions to ask the class. Do not be afraid to follow up class answers with questions that come to your mind. If discussion starts to drag, use one of the pull out quotes in the boxes throughout each chapter.

**Wrap up: (5 minutes)** Each week you will be given a thought to challenge or encourage the class.

**Prayer Requests: (5-7 minutes)** Close each week with prayer and praise requests from the class and ask someone to pray or pray yourself.

Keep in mind that it is important to keep the class on task and on time. Progressing through these stages will make the class more enjoyable and memorable.

### 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 i.e. “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 i.e. 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 list 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. then 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 a 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: