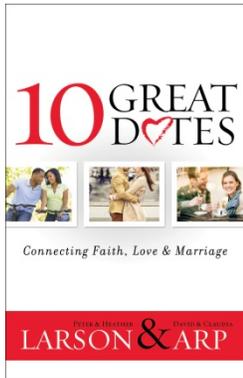


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10 Great Dates

Creative Ideas for a More Spiritually Intimate Marriage



Denver, CO: As couples unite in marriage they usually come together with different personalities, life experiences, and family traditions. But Christian couples with different spiritual maturity and spiritual convictions, may encounter unforeseen challenges in raising a family, holiday celebrations, financial decisions, and the ability to grow deeper as a couple spiritually.

In *10 Great Dates: Connecting Faith, Love & Marriage* (Bethany House), “dating coaches” **Peter & Heather Larson** and **David & Claudia Arp** believe that couples can experience a more intimate, loving marriage by sharing their own unique spiritual experiences while mutually pursuing a deeper faith in God.

“Christian couples have the incredible opportunity to explore a deeper meaning to their faith in a fun, intentional and non-threatening way,” says Peter Larson. “No matter what you are dealing with in your marriage, we want to offer practical steps for exploring the many facets of faith in marriage, and how you can live it out together on a daily basis.”

Understanding the need to keep things exciting and meaningful, *10 Great Dates* offers creative date-night ideas, unique pre-date preparation, and interesting ways couples can experience God together. Also featured are personal experiences from the Arp’s 50-year marriage and the Larson’s 18-year marriage.

“Finally, here is a book that helps couples connect spiritually, and all in the fun format of great dates. I highly recommend this book.”
Gary Chapman, PhD, author of *The Five Love Languages*

The authors hope that although Christian couples may not be in the same place spiritually, they should be pursuing the same journey together. Some of the ten featured dating ideas include:

- **Appreciating Your Differences:** How we accept and forgive each other will affect how much spiritual intimacy we have in our relationship together and with God. As couples discuss their similarities and differences, they will affirm their individual strengths and how they benefit their relationship.
- **Getting Into the Word:** Meaningful couple devotions grow out of your own individual walk and quiet times with the Lord. Due to your schedules, you will need to be flexible and understanding with each other. Consider a family bible study, a group bible study, a topic that interests you both, and always keep God as the focus.
- **Talking Together with God:** Praying together is often difficult for couples. Yet, there is a profound level of intimacy that can be created through prayer. Couples prayer requires vulnerability, honesty, humility and sincerity as they draw closer together by praying together before the Lord.
- **Building Your Marriage on a Strong Foundation:** It is never too late to build your marriage on a God intended foundation. Those who want to be intentional in their marriage practice the principles of leaving, cleaning and becoming one. This demonstrates their marriage as a priority, and allows couples to spend time together as friends, and enjoy God’s gift of marital intimacy.

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- **Guarding Your Hearts Under God's Canopy:** There are many temptations that can lure someone away from their spouse and family, including pornography, power and money. In order to connect your faith in your marriage, you need to guard your heart from the many temptations that can damage a marriage. God's sacred canopy offers a protective covering for a couple and makes it a holy institution.

Couples can practice the **10 Great Dates** ideas together or with other couples their church or community with additional information at www.tengreatdates.org. Other chapter topics include Experiencing God Together, Loving Your Closest Neighbor, Facing the Storms of Life Together, and Making Your Marriage a Lighthouse.

The authors hope that these **10 Great Dates** will draw couples closer together as partners and friends as they get to know each other better while growing deeper in their faith. As couples grow closer spiritually, they will be reminded that they can stand strong and count on each other through the various transitions of marriage.

"If we love our marriage partner as we love ourselves, we will have their best interest at heart, we will want to serve rather than be served, and we will resist the urge to manipulate or pull power plays," says Peter and Heather Larson. "We will have a relationship based on love, trust, and service. We will strive to accept each other, and love one another unconditionally."

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About the Authors:



Peter Larson is a licensed clinical psychologist and co-developed the customized version of the widely used PREPARE/ENRICH couples assessment tool.

Heather Larson has a master's degree in psychology. She is the founder of Bridgewell Coaching. They are the hosts of the 10 Great Dates Before You Say "I Do" DVD curriculum. Married for 18 years, the Larson's have three school-aged children and live in Boulder, Colorado.

Coauthors **David** and **Claudia Arp**, founders of Marriage Alive, have written more than 30 books. Their 10 Great Dates seminar is popular across the U.S. and internationally. Frequently appearing in national media, the Arps have been married nearly 50 years and live in Great Falls, Virginia. Learn more at www.marriagealive.com.



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Suggested Interview Questions:

1. How is this marriage book different from the other books out there? Why is it vital for couples to continue to date even after they are married?
2. Why is it so difficult for couples to connect on a spiritual level? Why is it important for couples to connect spiritually?
3. What is your advice to couples who feel their schedules and personalities may not adapt to these dates? Are these ideas for couples together or some that require individual time?
4. These dates are not your typical ideas for dating. Why did you decide to focus on the spiritual intimacy and growth of dating?
5. What are some of the dating “ground rules”? What is the benefit for couples with the pre-date preparation and date-night tips?
6. What should couples understand if they are at different places on their spiritual journey? Should they try to change their spiritual differences?
7. What are some ways that couples can experience God together?
8. What are some challenges you have faced as a couple? What did you learn through these challenges?
9. Is it important for couples to experience the Word together or individually? What are some suggestions to help them make time together to study the Bible?
10. Why is it important to still have fun in your marriage and focus on the positive aspects?
11. What would you tell couples who don’t feel they are equipped to lead each other in studying the Word, or in prayer together?
12. In what ways, can difficult times and hurt that couples face together draw them closer?
13. How can a marriage overcome the damages done by infidelity, addiction or pornography?
14. Why do you compare a marriage to a lighthouse? How can couples create a marriage that ministers to others, and is an example to them?

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Notable Quotes from *10 Great Dates*:

Closely related to acceptance is the core value of forgiveness. Without forgiveness we cannot build an intimate relationship with or partner or with God. Forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian faith, and in every healthy and growing marriage, couples willingly forgive each other. No one is perfect and we often let each other down. (Appreciating Your Differences)

This pathway to experiencing God does not have to depend on an external setting or situation, but relies on an internal acknowledgment of God being actively present in our daily lives. With this in mind, you may be surprised by how often God creeps into your consciousness. (Experiencing God Together)

Maybe you have faced crisis situations-an illness, financial stress, or a broken relationship. Whatever fears and problems you have faced or are presently facing, crisis times are times when extra resources are needed. These are the times you need to affirm those things that are truly important in life, and shared spiritual values will provide a welcome foundation. (Experiencing God Together)

We believe one key to a successful marriage is to keep the positives above the negatives. The results? Couples who like each other hand enjoy being together-couples who are best friends. Happier couples enjoy pursuing many leisure activities together. They have not forgotten how to be best friends. Healthy couples find ways to stay connected or get reconnected in the midst of their busy lives. (Loving Your Closest Neighbor)

Oneness in marriage also gives the picture of two persons joining together to form a sacred partnership-growing together in your love relationship and enjoying one another completely. Any pain, hurt, insult, any lack of support or faithfulness, any failure to help your partner will reflect back on your marriage partnership. Any joy, compliments, faithful support, successes, or blessings also reflect back on your marriage partnership. (Building Your Marriage on a Strong Foundation)

A heart that is left open to temptation, to feelings of entitlement and resentment, can become polluted. Protecting our hearts is a daily necessity. No one is immune to temptation. If we don't run from temptation, our hearts can become closed and shut off. (Guarding Your Heart Under God's Canopy)

When we commit to live in the safety of God's sacred canopy, we can experience the true joy of a committed marriage that has a divine purpose. Under His canopy, we can connect our faith with our love and our marriage. (Guarding Your Heart Under God's Canopy)

Our marriages can also be a lighthouse to others who are moving through the fog of life. Whether it's your children who are watching you, or friends and neighbors who are struggling in

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their own marriages, your relationship can inspire, comfort, and even provide direction to those around you. There are rocks and fog they will face, but the lighthouse can point them to shore and safety. Your solid marriage can point others to God and give them a sense of hope and direction. (Making You Marriage a Lighthouse)

Endorsements:

Finally, here is a book that helps couples connect spiritually, and all in the fun format of great dates. I highly recommend this book for couples, small groups, and churches who want to strengthen and build godly marriages.

Gary Chapman, PhD, author of *The Five Love Languages*

This book is both practical and fun. It gives couples tangible ways to grow together spiritually all in the fun, guilt-free format of great dates. The Larsons and Arps have done the work. All you need to do is carve out time for your 10 Great Dates!

Gary Smalley, author of *The DNA of Relationships*

Don't settle for an individual faith walk when connecting spiritually as a couple could transform your marriage. This book provides an effective road map for couples who want to journey together.

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott, #1 *New York Times* authors of *The Good Fight*

This book will refresh your marriage. You can't beat the life-changing content, 10 meaningful dates, and the wisdom of some of America's finest marriage experts.

Jim and Cathy Burns, authors of *Closer: 52 Devotions to Draw Couples Together*; speakers at Creating an Intimate Marriage seminars

God in your marriage . . . is everything. But while connecting with God together would seem so natural and easy to do, it isn't. Here's a fresh start to a new 'God life' together.

Dr. Tim Clinton, president, American Association of Christian Counselors; executive director, Center for Counseling & Family Studies, Liberty University

In working with hundreds of couples, the *desire* to build a strong, growing faith together as a couple is there--what hasn't been is what this book shows, how to get there!

John Trent, Ph.D., author of *The Blessing*; president, StrongFamilies.com

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This book goes beyond spending time together. It offers guidance on deepening an emotional and spiritual bond. Each exercise provides insight and opportunities to authentically know and be known in new ways, bringing honor to one another and glory to God.

Gayle DiMartino, marriage ministry director, Willow Creek Community Church