

10 Great Dates Resources for Marriage Education and Enrichment

10 Great Dates: Connecting Faith, Love & Marriage, by Peter and Heather Larson and David and Claudia Arp (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2013) provides a non-threatening and flexible opportunity for couples to explore and share what is really important to them. Ten chapters address such topics as appreciating our differences, experiencing God, and facing the storms of life. In each chapter, the authors share their thoughts and experiences related to the topic, then offer suggestions for a “Date,” along with two copies of a tear-out worksheet outlining a recommended conversation for the participating couples. Couples are encouraged to read the chapter and fill in their worksheets individually before the date, then to choose a pleasant setting away from distractions in order to focus on the conversation. A “Post-Date Spiritual Discovery” at the end of each chapter suggests ways to build on the conversation.

A Leader’s Guide, which may be downloaded free from www.10greatdates.org, offers tips for using this resource as a group study. Couples could be asked to read each chapter and experience the “Date” before each session or, especially if you are offering child care, you could schedule time for private couple “Dates” after the group session, during which they would be asked to fill out their individual worksheets. The Leader’s Guide also suggests ice-breakers, group guidelines, activities, prayers, and group discussion starters

Similar resources by the Arps include their earlier *10 Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage* (updated in 2014) and *10 Great Dates for Empty Nesters*. The books are available through most popular booksellers and at www.10GreatDates.org. You can also order the updated DVD edition of *10 Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage*, which provides 10-15 minute date “launches” to use with a group, along with a Leader’s Guide, one copy of the participant’s book, and a trailer for promoting this program. A curriculum kit titled *The Second Half of Marriage* contains a DVD with nine sessions, a Leader’s Guide, and one copy of the participant’s book. Recently the Arps published *\$10 Great Dates: Connecting Love, Marriage and Fun on a Budget*, which offers 52 creative dating ideas costing \$10. or less. Each date includes suggestions for preparation, date ideas, “talking points” for conversation during the date, and a “Great Date Takeaway” to help keep romance alive. Another resource, *10 Great Dates Before You Say “I Do”* is designed for use with engaged couples. The Arps have also written books on parenting and family relationships, available through the same website.

Whether you offer these programs as group or individual couple activities, participation in them is an easy first step for involving couples in marriage education and enrichment. Visit www.marriagelovepower.net for “Best Practices Articles and Recommended Resources” for marriage education and enrichment and other related topics. You can also find these documents at <http://www.gbod.org/leadership-resources/marriage-family-ministries> (search by topic or title) Permission is included to download and distribute them as you wish.

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