

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

The Zimzum of Love:

A New Way of Understanding Marriage

by

Rob and Kristen Bell

CHAPTER 1

WHAT'S A ZIMZUM?

1. Rob and Kristen Bell describe falling in love as a tectonic shift, an expanding of your center of gravity. What image or phrase best describes how you felt when you were falling in love?
2. Zimzum specifically speaks to married couples; but if you are in a serious relationship or engaged, you will find much of this book, and the questions that follow, applicable to your relationship and where it might be headed. If you are in a relationship, how did you meet?

If married, when did you first suspect that this person would be someone you would marry? What was the process you went through to make that decision?

3. Rob and Kristen describe the energy field between two people in a marriage (p. 4). Can you think of actions/words in your lives that increase the flow of energy? Things that block its flow?
4. What does “zimzum” mean (p. 18)? Does this word help define the way you view marriage? Have you thought about having to “create space for the other person to thrive” in your marriage before?
5. In the book, Rob and Kristen explore four aspects of the energy field between the partners in a marriage: responsive, dynamic, exclusive, and sacred. Which of these four qualities do you think is currently expressed well in your marriage? Which ones are you looking forward to exploring more?

CHAPTER 2 RESPONSIVE

1. To keep the energy field between you healthy and vital, each person needs to intentionally act for the other’s well-being (what the Bells call “responsive”). What would happen to the flow of energy if only one of you were doing this? Has there ever been a time when your flow felt one-sided in this way?

2. For this zimzum process to work, we have to know what our partner needs. Do you know right now, without asking, what he or she needs? Have you ever asked that specific question? If so, what was the response?
3. “You cannot keep your issues to yourself. *The space is too responsive*” (p. 29). Does this statement surprise you? When has an issue you thought was yours alone affected your marriage?
4. Why is taking care of yourself a gift to your partner? Has there ever been a time when you weren’t taking good care of yourself? How did it affect your marriage?
5. How have you been guilty of keeping a scorecard (p. 31)? In what areas do you particularly tend to keep score? How can you stop doing so (pp. 33–36)? Have you seen the truth of this method in your married life?
6. What’s the difference between spark, substance, and sacrifice kinds of love (pp. 36–37)? What has your spouse sacrificed for you in your marriage?

CHAPTER 3 DYNAMIC

1. “Everything that comes your way can be an opportunity for the love to flow more freely between you” (p. 46). How is this dynamic attitude different from how many people view life’s stressful events? When has a stressful event allowed love to flow more freely between you?

2. What is the most difficult season you have faced together? How did you get through it? What was its effect on your marriage?
3. What about your partner still surprises you? Do you find it comforting or disturbing that you'll never have him or her entirely figured out? Why?
4. Why should the stronger person apologize first (p. 63)? When has an apology defused a tense situation in your marriage?
5. How has money been a point of conflict in your marriage? What is your current practice with budgeting? How does that work or not work for you?
6. Is there an issue you've struggled to communicate honestly to your partner? If so, why has it been hard to share? What do you think would happen if you did?

CHAPTER 4 EXCLUSIVE

1. What are some of the shared experiences or inside jokes that have strengthened your exclusive space as a couple? Why is this exclusivity important?
2. When you examine how you see marriage, is it more of an adventure together or a limitation of your freedom (p. 82)? Where does this image come from?

3. Has there ever been a time that you or your partner brought someone else into your exclusive space, and, if so, what was the result (pp. 85–86)?
4. Are you giving your energies first and foremost to each other? Who or what is competing for your energies?
5. As you've focused your energy on the two of you, have you seen your love overflow beyond both of you (pp. 94–95)? If so, what did that look like?

CHAPTER 5 SACRED

1. “Something beautiful happens in marriage when this person you're with knows the truth about you and still loves you exactly as you are, extending grace to you time and time again. The space between you is sacred because when they do this, they're showing you what God is like” (pp. 101–102). How has your partner shown you what God is like?
2. What, if anything, is preventing you from feeling comfortable in your own skin? How does such a feeling from one person affect both of you? What are some ways you can cultivate more gratitude for your body?
3. Rob and Kristen explain that “the Greek word for *forgive* is actually two words attached to each other”: “send” and “away” (p. 105). When have you had to “send away” something about your partner? How did you do it? Did it improve your relationship?

4. What are some ways your marriage affects the world around you?

EPILOGUE

1. What are a high point and a low point you and your partner have weathered together? What have you learned from these experiences?
2. What picture or shared memory would you choose as emblematic of your life together?
3. What have you learned in this book that is applicable to yourself, your partner, and your relationship? What's one thing you need to work on in the coming weeks?