Bob: You've heard the expression, "to keep the home fires burning?" Dennis Rainey says don't just keep them burning but keep an eye on them, too.

Dennis: Sometimes fire can jump out of the fire pit and can start burning somewhere else. When you see the first smoke, because where there's smoke there's …

Audience: … fire.

Dennis: When you feel the first heartthrob for someone other than your spouse, pull out the fire extinguisher.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, February 8th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. So what are you doing to make sure that the fire you've got in your marriage is contained and burning brightly?

And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us on the Monday edition. We had an opportunity several months ago to be out in sunny Southern California. Do you remember?

Dennis: I do, where it's illegal to build fires.

Bob: What do you mean it's illegal to build fire? Well, I guess it is because of the …

Dennis: The fire danger in Southern California during certain seasons of the year, you dare not build a fire because it's against the law, but I suggested the building of a very warm fire.

Bob: You actually did incite people to …

Dennis: Fire building.

Bob: Fire building.

Dennis: And I actually had all the equipment there.
Bob: You brought a fire pit and the fuel and the whole thing, right?

Dennis: Had a fire extinguisher, too.

Bob: And what was your point in all of this?

Dennis: Well, let's just back up a little bit. You and I had the privilege of going out and meeting some of our listeners from KKLA in Southern California.

Bob: That's right, the station was celebrating its 20th year of ministry on the air, and so we were a part of the 20-year celebration in having this time together with some of our listeners.

Dennis: That's right, and they asked me what I'd like to speak on. I thought, you know, for people in Southern California, given the pace of life that they keep, what better subject than the subject of romance. So I decided to speak their language around an image that all of them, I thought, could identify with, and that is building a fire in the rain. It does rain in Southern California.

Bob: Yes, not very often.

Dennis: That's right, but in marriage it rains frequently. Building romantic fires is difficult, so we brought some logs, some fire starter, some charcoal-lighting fluid, and some different kind of lighters, and also a fire pit.

Bob: That's right.

Dennis: I didn't actually start a fire in the church where we were speaking but we had a good time with our listeners. We had a chance to talk with them around some practical principles of how their marriages can not only go the distance but how they can enjoy one another in the process.

Bob: Your point that night was that the rain of real life can extinguish the fires of romance, right?

Dennis: That's exactly right. There are all kinds of things you can do to start a fire, but there are plenty of natural ingredients like schedules, work, children, not to mention our own weaknesses and disappointments that we have with one another – lots of things that extinguish fires.

Bob: And, interestingly enough, as you were presenting this message, you were reflecting back on some events that had taken place in the Rainey family. In fact, that's where we pick things up, as you were reflecting on a fire that had gotten started just a few weeks prior to …
**Dennis:** Well, actually, I helped make the fire legal. The fire was burning, but I married them, and it's okay now for Rebecca and Jake to start a real fire.

**Bob:** To keep that fire going.

(Previously recorded audio)

**Dennis:** It is a privilege to be with you in beautiful Southern California. We drove up this morning from San Diego and about 10 days ago, I was doing the marriage ceremony of my daughter, Rebecca. Rebecca is 24 years old and married a young man – Jake Mutz is his name, and Jake is from Lakeland, Florida. He is number-three child out of 12. And we thought our family was big. The wedding was absolutely the most incredibly contrasting wedding you have ever been to in your entire life with absolute hysterical laughter and deep emotions of great moments.

The wedding started when all of our grandkids came in the back, and they came down tossing the flower petals, and my three-year-old grandson, Peterson, who is the son of my son Samuel, decided that racing past his other cousins wasn't enough, so he did a victory lap around the entire church.

The other high point of the wedding was after the wedding was over and before the reception both Barbara and I had to gather some things up and Rebecca and Jake had left to go the reception and Barbara had this thing elaborately planned where we had the reception at FamilyLife’s new headquarters. As you walk into our headquarters it’s the only place we really splurged in the whole building and we have this spiraling staircase that comes down. Barbara had this dream of her daughter standing at the top with her young groom beside her announcing she and her husband to come down and we were late.

It was only a mile and a half or so from the FamilyLife building and I was following behind Barbara and she took off and I couldn’t keep up with her. My cell phone rang and I pulled it out and it was Rebecca. She said, “Daddy, where are you?” I said, “Your mom had to pick up some things around the church before we left to come to the reception. We’re hurrying sweetheart.”

She said “I’m standing at the top of the stairs.” I said “Wait a second sweetheart. I think a highway patrolman just pulled out behind your mom. Yes, he’s moving in behind her and he’s turning into the area and the lights just went on. He’s pulling your mother over. Hold on sweetheart.”

So I pulled over behind the patrolman and I had a big grin. He immediately grabbed his gun like this (shows action) because I’ve got a big pick up and he came over and said “Can I help you?” I said, “Sir, that’s my wife up there.” I mean he had to believe I was going to a wedding I was dressed in a black suit with a pink tie.

(laughter)
I said, “Sir, my daughter just got married. That’s the mother of the bride. My daughter is standing at the top of the stairs about the make her grand entrance and my wife is hurrying to get there. Have mercy on us.”

(laughter)

He looked at me with a stern look and said she was going 64 in a 50 this won’t take long. So he walks up to Barbara and she rolls the window down and he let her go.

Now all of you men know if it had been us in that front car…
(laughter)

…it would not have mattered if we were going to our daughter’s wedding or not he’d have written us up but my wife is too beautiful.

Well, that wasn’t the true high point. One of the high points of the wedding was when Rebecca stood before her mom and me and gave us a tribute, and I clipped out 120 seconds of that tribute, because some of you here came here to learn how to light a fire of a different kind – romance. But you have some fires going on with the kids, and you just need to know, there’s hope. It can be done.

Rebecca: Dad, you have been a source of courage, strength and godly character. I always knew I wanted to marry someone like you – a man with virtues, morals, a heart after God, character, integrity, and a deep reservoir of love to give me all the days of my life. Thank you for modeling what it meant to be pursued and treated like a lady.

I remember putting on my best outfit, fixing my hair, putting on a dab of makeup and hurrying downstairs to wait for my date. You would sneak out the back door and come around to the front, and you would knock. Mom would answer the door and then call for me saying, "Rebecca, your date is here." I would walk over and you would put your arm out for me to take, then you would escort me to the car. You would open the door for me, making sure I was safe inside before shutting it. I felt love, honor, and respect in those moments.

The rest of the date was a whirlwind, but the moments before and afterward were the best, as I was taught to wait on you to open all the doors and allow me to walk in front of you. Thank you for showing me what it looked like to be pursued and treated like a lady in a healthy relationship.

I am most grateful to you for being perfect, Daddy.

I cannot be more thankful to be standing here today marrying a man who is, in many ways, like you. He treats me with honor, respect, and love and who strives daily to better himself for me. What more could I ask for. Thank you so much for screening all of my dates and boyfriends [laughter] and for doing and saying what was in my best interests even though it might have been difficult and I might not have received it well. I cannot tell me how thankful I am for the way you protected me for this moment today.
Dennis: [applause] I did just fine all the way up until the pronouncement, when I pronounced them husband and wife, and I made the mistake of identifying myself. I said, "As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," and I looked at Rebecca, and I said, "and your Daddy," and I could not get it out. I did it with a whisper — "I pronounce you man and wife." Jake didn't even ask me for the kiss. He just took the kiss and walked down the aisle. It was incredible, absolutely incredible. They're off honeymooning, and we're getting e-mails from them as they check into Internet cafes and, I'll tell you, family is powerful.

If you came to visit our family in Arkansas, you would notice some things about not only where we live and how we live, but you'd notice that the housing in Arkansas is substantially cheaper than what you have out here. We live in the country on a couple of acres of land that we bought back in 1983 where we wanted to raise our kids. When we bought that we had a bulldozer come in and level off a section of that property and I asked them to build me a fire pit. Well, that fire pit became a witness to literally hundreds of conversations, smores, hot dog roasts with teenagers and conversations now between Barbara and me. That fire pit taught me a lot of lessons about building a fire.

So in our remaining time that we have this evening, I want to talk to you about building a fire in the fire pit of your home. And you wonder if this is a biblical concept, it really is. There is nearly a whole book of the Bible dedicated to building a fire. It's found in Song of Solomon.

In fact, Song of Solomon, chapter 8, verses 6 - 7 say this — "Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm, for love is as strong as death, jealousy is severe as Sheol. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench it nor will rivers overflow it. If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would utterly be despised."

God created the human heart to love. He created us to love Him, and he created us to experience passion and romance and love in marriage. Do you remember when you first dated and how combustible all the ingredients were for that fire? I mean, all she had to do was look at you like Rebecca looked at Jake as she came down the aisle. He nearly fainted.

There will come a time in Jake and Rebecca's life when that look won't cause him to faint and there will come a time when that fire will not ignite as easily. How do you move from new love through disappointed love to cherishing, committed love where there is warmth and a flame that burns and, yes, occasionally flashes, but it has passion, romance?

Well, I want to give you seven ingredients of starting a fire. You might want to pull out a piece of paper, because I'm going to share with you, especially a little bit later on, some
differences between men and women and how we start fires that you may want to write down and talk about over a date sometime later this week.

But the first place we want to talk about building a fire is, first of all, commitment. The first way you’re going to build a fire in the rain is commitment. I know in Southern California that even the thought of discussing fire causes people to get a little nervous around here, and so I had never seen one of these before, but this is a California fire pit. This is how you do fires out here. You can't have them like we do in Arkansas. It's got to be contained with a spark arrester, and you put the stuff in there, and you put this on your back deck, and you folks in Southern California call that a fire pit.

Well, I guess it is a fire pit. I think it resembles the subject of commitment in marriage, because the reason you have these in Southern California is because it creates safety, boundaries. It contains the fire. God made marriage – He designed it, not man. God made marriage for us to experience that fire in our marriage relationship. It's spoken of in that passage I just read – "Put me like a seal on your heart." Why? Because the seal was a promise. It was a security builder. A boundary builder.

At Rebecca and Jake's wedding, after they said their vows to each other, they then moved to the side and signed a document that contained their written vows that Barbara and I had paid a calligrapher $225 to write their vows on a piece of 100 percent pure cotton paper that we paid 50 bucks for. I didn't know you could spend $50 on a piece of paper. But they signed their names at the bottom of their vows, dated it, and then the rest of us signed it, witnessed it, and promised to hold them accountable to keep the most important pledge two human beings ever make in a lifetime.

Four of our adult children who are married now have the covenants in their home. Rebecca and Jake will have theirs soon, but as you walk into Ashley and Michael's house, our oldest daughter and her husband, who is a doctor, their covenant is the first thing you see. Back in Samuel and Stephanie's house in Nashville, Tennessee, their covenant is above their marriage bed. I've had our married kids call us after they've been married for a few months and said they've caught their spouse going back and rereading what they promised.

[laughter]

I want to challenge you, as the believing community, as people who are followers of Christ to do two things – I want to challenge you to eliminate the "D" word from your vocabulary and never, ever use it again in your marriage no matter how long you're married or no matter how bad it gets. Eliminate the "D" word and replace it with the "C" word.

But a second thing I want to challenge you to do is when one of your friends, one of your family members, or perhaps, God forbid, you parents, after 30 or 40 years want to get a divorce, do battle. I've got a buddy who moved out from his spouse, who was about to trash his family of 20-some years to his wife and their two kids, and his
business partner canceled a golf outing that was the dream of a lifetime and appeared on his doorstep, knocked on the door, and said "What are you doing? Over my dead body."

And today Tim and Lydia have now been married several years in addition to the ones they were married before, but I just married a daughter who would never have come to be if they hadn't stuck it out. There's a lot at stake in marriages and families but you know what? It begins with yours, and you have to make a commitment to build a fire in your fire pit.

A second aspect of building a fire in the rain – and you have to pardon me here, I'm going to take a sidestep for just a moment and kind of backtrack before we build the fire in there, but the second one is quench fatal attractions – quench fatal attractions. Sometimes fire can jump out of the fire pit and can start burning somewhere else. I'm not going to start any fires here tonight, relax.

But you know what? When you see the first smoke – because you know, where there's smoke there's …

**Audience:** … fire.

**Dennis:** When you feel the first heartthrob for someone other than your spouse, pull out the fire extinguisher. Barbara did this the first year of our marriage. I led a guy to Christ, a businessman. He was in our home eating breakfast over a number of weeks, and what was happening was this guy was beginning to make passes at my wife.

Barbara came to me about three or four weeks in the process, and she said, "I am totally embarrassed." We were just starting out our marriage. She was not secure in my love yet. This took tremendous courage on her part to expose this little flicker that was occurring over here, but she said, "I think this guy is being too friendly." You know what happened when she did that? Whoooosh – gone. It exposed it.

When you experience an emotional connection with another person who is not your spouse, don't go there. Don't cultivate it, don't give it any fuel, use the fire extinguisher of accountability and share it with your spouse, expose it.

There's other kinds of fire that jumps out of the pit – pornography, Internet chat rooms, there's a lot of places today where even in your home where you would think it would be safe, it's not a safe place. So we have to apply biblical principles and use fire extinguishers quickly to extinguish it.

**Bob:** Well, that's part 1 of a message from a recent time we spent together with some listeners in Southern California, where you encouraged them to make sure that the fire stays where it belongs, right?
**Dennis:** That's right and, still, this week you're going to hear that men and women start fires differently. That's why when Barbara and I were writing our book, *Rekindling the Romance*, she wrote the first half of the book to women to talk straightforwardly, realistically, and authentically, about the real issues for women in starting fires and maintaining that fire in their marriage and helping women better understand themselves and their husbands.

I attempt to speak to the men in the last half of the book around the needs of their wives and how they can meet the relational needs, the conversation needs, the needs for intimacy that their wives have. And, Bob, I would recommend to every couple, regardless of whether you just started your marriage, whether you've been married 5, 10, 15, 25 or longer, get a copy of our book and begin to read it together and talk about those areas together, because it's so easy to allow life to extinguish the flame and to not enjoy the warmth that the romantic fires create.

They were never intended to be the single source of love in the marriage relationship, but marriage was not meant to be lived outside of that warmth. And some who are listening to us have lost hope, they need to get the book. Others just need a refresher course, others are great at romance, and this will give them a ton of ideas.

**Bob:** And what's been interesting is to hear from listeners who have read the book, and they have benefited from reading their half of the book. They have written to say, "It really helped me understand things I didn't understand completely," but they have also been very glad that their spouse read his or her half of the book because …

**Dennis:** … had a lot of those letters …

**Bob:** … Barbara has a chance to say some things to wives that husbands …

**Dennis:** … can't say …

**Bob:** … and would like their wives to hear.

**Dennis:** Right.

**Bob:** And you have a chance to exhort us, as men, with some things that our wives are cheering you on about.

**Dennis:** Well, actually, Barbara took the pen in hand in the half of the book to the men and actually wrote some things to the men that are not my words, but they are hers. She was dictating, and I was typing.

**Bob:** You were making sure that we got the message, right?

**Dennis:** It will help every man better understand why a romance is not an equation when it comes to his wife.
Bob: Yes. We've got copies of your book, of course, in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center, and we want to encourage listeners to get a copy. There is also a resource our team has put together that was designed to spark a little creativity in the romantic relationship between a husband and a wife.

It's a resource called Simply Romantic Nights, and we've had a lot of couple order this and found that it is a fun way to have some date nights together throughout the year that are designed to be romantic and something special.

There is information about the Simply Romantic Nights Kit that you'll find online at FamilyLifeToday.com. Or if it's easier call 1-800-FLTODAY for more information. That's 1-800-F-as-in-family, L-as-in-life, and then the word TODAY. That's 1-800-358-6329. We can answer any questions you have about Simply Romantic Nights or you can order a copy of Dennis and Barbara's book when you get in touch with us by phone.

While we're on the subject of romance, there is another great message that we have shared with our listeners here on FamilyLife Today from Jody and Linda Dillow. They were speaking at a FamilyLife event not long ago and gave a message on the Four Flames of Intimacy, and it was very well received. We had a lot of requests for it. This month, during the month of February, we want to make that message on CD available when listeners make a donation of any amount to the ministry of FamilyLife Today. Jody and Linda's message helps you understand the subject of romance and intimacy from God's perspective. It helps you to see it as God's blessing and gives you very practical help on making sure it remains a priority in your marriage relationship. It's a message a husband and wife ought to listen to together and talk about, and we'll be happy to send it to you as our thank you gift when you make a donation of any amount this month to the ministry of FamilyLife Today. We are listener-supported, and so those donations are vital for keeping this ministry on the air in this city and in cities all across the country.

When you fill out a donation form online, which is one way of donating, there is a key code box there, and you type the word “FOUR” into that key code box, and we'll know that you'd like to have the CD sent to you as a thank you gift for your donation.

Or if you'd prefer to donate by phone, it's 1-800-FLTODAY. Call that number, you can make your donation over the phone and just mention that you'd like a copy of the CD on intimacy, and we'll be sure to send that out to you as well. And, again, thanks for standing with us and helping to support the ministry of FamilyLife Today.

Tomorrow, we're going to hear part 2 of Dennis's message on keeping your flame burning in the rain. We're going to find out some of the differences between men and women when it comes to fire building and fire tending. I hope you can be back with us.

I want to thank our engineer today Keith Lynch and our entire broadcast production team on behalf of our host Dennis Rainey I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.
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