STOKING THE FIRE | INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW (15-20 MINUTES)

OPENING PRAYER: (2 minutes); Pray:

- We would be refreshed in the grace of Christ;
- We would grow in enjoyment of Jesus and one another;
- God would grant us wisdom and help us reach new levels of intimacy and enjoyment; and
- Christ would be put on display by how we love one another.

ICEBREAKER: (10 minutes); Have each participant couple share how long they dated before they got married?

FACILITATOR: OVERVIEW OF THE DAY (3-5 minutes)

OVERVIEW OF THE DAY: Give a welcome and summary of the day. Use the language below or give your own welcome and summary.

Welcome to year 1, session 2 of Grace Marriage coaching. You are establishing a rhythm of prioritizing and investing in your marriage. Today, we’ll focus on how to encourage one another and to bring life in your marriage through intentionality and romance.

EYE EXAM/PERSPECTIVE CHECK: First, we will re-visit the characteristics we love about our spouse. We’ll examine our perspective and see if we are focusing on the positives or on the negatives. Our satisfaction in marriage is impacted by the perspective through which we look at it.

BAD UGLY MOM SYNDROME (BUMS): Second, we’ll discuss how many believers live under the pressure of feeling they are never doing well enough in life. We can get to a point where it does not seem we are succeeding at anything. We’ll learn how to encourage one another and help fight discouragement with encouragement. Although the title addresses mothers, the lesson is designed for all believers to be encouraged in the perfection of Christ instead of being discouraged by their own imperfections.

KINDLING THE FIRE ... WITH ROMANCE: If we allow it, life’s demands will squeeze out romance and creativity. Today, we’ll plan to intentionally bless each other and keep the fire burning in our marriage.

THE INTIMACY IGNITER: Next, we will take some time to talk with one another and connect. We establish this rhythm of connection and knowledge to help us grow in effectiveness and understanding.

SPOUSE BOOSTER ... THE DIRTY FISH TANK: Sometimes there is more to do than time to do it. Further, there are certain tasks or duties that hover over us like a cloud. In order to avoid feeling overwhelmed, we’ll take a look at our lives and see if they are too full. Plus, we’ll discuss how we can help each other make life more manageable.

THE 621 CHALLENGE: As we do each quarter, we’ll discuss the importance of spending one-on-one time together and schedule time together for the next ninety days.
QUARTERLY ACTION PLAN/TAKEAWAY CARDS: In addition to your Participant Guide, you have a “Quarterly Action Plan/Takeaway Card” in front of you. During the coaching day, record ideas and takeaways on this card. If you finish a worksheet early, take time to think on and fill out your card. Then, during the quarter, keep your card in a prominent place to remind you of points of emphasis from the coaching.

Now, we will turn our focus to giving God thanks for His blessings and for our spouse.

**THE EYE EXAM (45 MINUTES)**

**EYE EXAM/THE SCRIPTURES (2-3 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Read the first paragraph of EYE EXAM/THE SCRIPTURES. Then, go around the room and have a different person read one of the passages until all the passages have been read. Remind everyone that if they do not feel comfortable reading to just tap the shoulder of the person beside them.

**EYE EXAM/READING THE LESSON (5-7 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have two volunteers read the lesson out loud. Have the first person read from the beginning of the lesson to the end of the paragraph at the top of page six. Then, have the second reader pick up on the paragraph that starts “Now, let me share the same morning...” and read to the end of the lesson. If you feel breaking up the reading another way in your group is more helpful, feel free to do so. Some groups go around the room and read a paragraph each. If you do this, make sure everyone knows you can pass by tapping the shoulder of the person beside you. Have the other members of the group follow along during the reading.

**EYE EXAM/THE WORKSHEET (10-15 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Now, have each individual in the group take ten to fifteen minutes to fill out the Eye Exam worksheet. On the first worksheet on page 9, list 10 things you are thankful for, why you are thankful for them and how you feel led to express that thanksgiving. Then, specifically answer the questions regarding your spouse on page 10.

**EYE EXAM/ONE ON ONE DISCUSSION (10 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have each spouse take five minutes each to read the worksheet to the other. Have them be specific and elaborate on what they wrote.

**EYE EXAM/GROUP DISCUSSION (10-15 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Open the floor for participants to share one or two things they are thankful for about their spouse or something they are thankful for over the last quarter. If time allows, open the floor for participants to share how they felt led to express thanksgiving. The facilitator should share first to try to spark discussion.

BREAK: 10 Minutes
BAD UGLY MOM SYNDROME (BUMS) (50-55 minutes)

BUMS/READING THE LESSON (7-10 minutes):

FACILITATOR: Have three volunteers participate in reading the lesson. Have the first reader start with the beginning of the lesson and read to the bottom of page 13. Have the second reader start with “Second, remember” on the bottom of page 13 to the end of the paragraph on page 14 that starts with “Guys, fight the great accuser…” Have the third volunteer start with the paragraph that starts with “Give each other breaks...” and read to the end of the lesson.

BUMS/THE WORKSHEET (10-15 minutes):

FACILITATOR: Have each person in the group take 10-15 minutes to write a letter of encouragement to their spouse. Have each participant take their time and pray for wisdom as they write. They can refer to the Eye/Exam worksheets on pages 9-10 to help them with their letters.

BUMS/Individual Discussion) (10 minutes):

FACILITATOR: Have each spouse read their letter to the other. Then, after both letters are read, give the spouse time to generally discuss the impact writing and hearing the letter had on them.

BUMS/Group Discussion (15-20 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Facilitate general discussion regarding the lesson. Some questions to spark discussion are:

- Why do many Christians feel more discouraged about themselves than encouraged in Christ?
- If your child approached you and said “sorry I am such a bad person,” but thanks for loving me anyway, how would this make you feel as a parent?
- When Jesus says His yoke is easy, His burden is light and He offers rest for our souls, practically how should this play out in our daily lives?
- How can we encourage one another to live in victory, as opposed to defeat?

Be careful not to allow this part to go too long. However, if the discussion is very helpful, it can go longer. Be watchful to make sure everyone remains engaged so this portion does not drag.

BREAK: Take a 10-minute break.

KINDLING THE FIRE ... WITH ROMANCE (45-50 minutes)

KINDLING THE FIRE ... WITH ROMANCE/READING THE LESSON (6-8 minutes)

FACILITATOR: You will need three reading volunteers for this lesson. Have the first volunteer read the first page of the lesson (page 21) to the end of the paragraph at the top of page 22. Have the second
reader start with the paragraph that starts with “Below are eleven areas…” to the end of area “6. Getaways.” The third volunteer will pick up with “7. Surprises” and read to the end of the session.

**KINDLING THE FIRE … WITH ROMANCE/ THE WORKSHEET (10-15 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Give each participant three to five minutes to go over the ideas on pages 24 and 25. Have the men check the boxes on page 24 of things they’d like. Plus, have them write down other ideas at the bottom of the page. The ladies will do the same thing on page 25. After five minutes, have the couples switch participant guides and use the information to come up with ideas to bless one another. Use the Quarterly Action Plan Card to record ideas from your spouse’s list.

**KINDLING THE FIRE … WITH ROMANCE/INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION (12-15 minutes):**

**FACILITATOR:** Have husbands break up with husbands and wives with wives (groups of 3). Then, have them each take four minutes and share what they are going to do this quarter to bring more life into their marriage. This will be a total of twelve minutes, with each person sharing four minutes each. The facilitator will let the group know when it is time to switch and let someone else share. There may be two groups of two, depending on your group numbers.

During the discussion, have the participants take notes of any additional ideas on the Action Plan Card or on page 26 of the Participant Guide.

**KINDLING THE FIRE … WITH ROMANCE/Group Discussion (15 minutes).**

**FACILITATOR:** Have each couple share one romantic or fun memory they have in their marriage. The hope is that each couple can learn from what other couples have experienced. Caution them not to share anything that might embarrass their spouse. Plus, give participants the opportunity to pass if they don’t feel comfortable sharing or if nothing comes to their mind. Again, participants should record any additional ideas on their card or on page 26 of the Participant Guide.

**BREAK: At this point, break for your meal. If you are running early, take a longer time for the meal. If you are running a little behind, take a shorter period. You should start the next session with one hour and 45 minutes left in your coaching day.**

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**THE INTIMACY IGNITER (30- minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Read the lesson at the top of page 29 to the participants and then send them to talk with one another for the next thirty minutes. One spouse should share for 15 minutes. Then, prompt the couples to switch and allow the other a chance to share. Each person can just share what is on his/her heart and/or can use the questions in the lesson to promote communication.

**FACILITATOR:** When everyone is finished, bring everyone back to start the next lesson.
**SPOUSE BOOSTER ... THE DIRTY FISH TANK (20-25 minutes)**

**SPOUSE BOOSTER ... THE DIRTY FISH TANK/READING THE LESSON (3 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have one volunteer start at the beginning of the lesson on page 33 and read to the end of the paragraph that starts with “Marilyn and I have run together...” Then, have the second reader start with the paragraph that starts with “Further, if we get more on our plate....” and read to the end of the lesson.

**SPOUSE BOOSTER...THE DIRTY FISH TANK/THE WORKSHEET (5-10 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have each participant fill out the worksheet.

**SPOUSE BOOSTER ... THE DIRTY FISH TANK/INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION (10 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have each couple discuss their worksheets with one another. Remind the participants the purpose of this lesson is how you can learn to help and bless your spouse, not on how your spouse can bless you more. Use it as an opportunity to learn not as a chance to complain or take offense. Use the quarterly action plan card to record to-do’s or projects to focus on this quarter.

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**THE 621 CHALLENGE (25 minutes)**

**DATE NIGHT CHALLENGE/READING THE LESSON (3 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have one volunteer read the lesson.

**INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION/WORKSHEET (10 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR:** Have each couple plan their quarter together and fill out the worksheet on page 40. Have them determine how often they will go out on dates or have one-on-one time together. Make sure they plan specific time together. Otherwise, it rarely happens. Additionally, ask the couple to consider whether it would be practicable for them to get away for a night or two during the quarter.

When the couple has decided how much time they will spend this quarter, have them discuss further specific date ideas. Have the couples discuss things they have done in the past and things they would like to do in the future. On the worksheet after the lesson, have them list date ideas they come up with and creative things they have done in the past.

**GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes):**
FACILITATOR: Open the floor for participants to share any date ideas they might have that could benefit others in the group. It could be a date idea they have or something they have done together in the past. Also, give couples the opportunity to share how they are going to find time for each other this quarter.

BREAK: 10 Minutes.

SUMMATION, ACTION PLAN AND INSIGHTS (15 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Have each participant take 5-10 minutes to write down their three biggest insights of the day and their areas of focus for the next 90 days. They can use the blank sheets on pages 41-47 of the worksheet if they would like.

Then, go around the room and have each participant share their biggest insight of the day. Remind participants they can pass by tapping the person beside them on the shoulder.

CLOSING PRAYER

FACILITATOR: Either close in prayer or have a volunteer in your group close the day with a prayer.