

RELATIONSHIP GOALS

CHALLENGE

30 DAYS FROM GOOD TO GREAT



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PEEK**



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MICHAEL TODD

COMPANION TO THE #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

RELATIONSHIP GOALS CHALLENGE

30 DAYS FROM **GOOD** TO **GREAT**

MICHAEL TODD

with Eric Stanford



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To my parents, Tommy and Brenda Todd, who challenged me,
loved me, and pushed me toward my wildest dreams.

Thank you for the tools and for being my example
of real relationship goals.

Forty-one years and counting . . .



#RelationshipGoals has been a trending topic worldwide for years now. Search for this hashtag on social media, and you'll find celebrity couples posing at exclusive clubs, stills from romantic movies at the point where the boy gets the girl, cute couples kissing on a beach or cuddled up in bed, a boyfriend-girlfriend pair holding balloons in the park and giving the impression that their relationship has never been anything but pure happiness. And when people repost these pictures with the hashtag, what are they saying? They're saying, "I want a relationship like that!" Kim and Kanye, Jay and Bey, Prince William and Kate, some unidentified couple who look really good in a picture that happened to go viral—we can easily become obsessed with their seemingly perfect images and make them our idols and ideals.

Okay, maybe you've never noticed #RelationshipGoals online, much less posted anything with it. But if I were to ask you to think about the relationship you want, would an idealized picture flash into your mind? Maybe it's you with a tall, handsome pro athlete who takes you on shopping sprees. Or maybe it's you beside a girl who's hood like Cardi B but has a sweet side like Carrie Underwood. Is he an amazing listener with a classic swag like George Clooney and a job that pays both his bills and yours? Can she cook like your mama and get just as hype as you do when your team scores?

Now, if you just asked *What's wrong with that?* in your

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head, allow me to submit to you that maybe there's more to relationship than what pop culture has taught us or our own imaginings have dreamed up. Maybe our society sells an illusion of romantic relationship that's more like a mirage—the closer you get to it, the more you realize it's not real at all. Maybe the things we tend to celebrate are built on unstable foundations and are bound to eventually fall. But also . . . maybe there are some truths here that can be unlocked about how and why human connection is so important and how we can achieve it.

I believe so, and that's why I've written *Relationship Goals* . . . about *real* relationship goals.

—from *Relationship Goals*



ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

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A graphic of a target with concentric circles, centered behind the title.

ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

Since my book *Relationship Goals* came out, I've been hearing from people all around the country and overseas about how it's helping them turn their lives away from the shallow #RelationshipGoals they used to pursue and start aiming for the kinds of relationships that will help them live out a purposeful life. I've heard from teenagers who have never even been on a date and from couples who have been married for decades, from longtime churchgoers and from people who are far from God, and many more. They're seeing change in their lives. They're rediscovering love and unity in their relationships and being liberated to do what they were put on this planet to do.

It's not because I'm so smart that these results are happening. (I've still got a lot to learn about relationships. Just ask my wife, Natalie.) What's making the difference is that *Relationship Goals* is based on the Word of God, which was true long before social media existed and will be true long after anybody remembers what a hashtag is.

I'm so thankful God has allowed me to play some part in helping to turn around some relationships. But there *is* one request I've been getting a lot, and that is for help to put the key principles of *Relationship Goals* into practice over the

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long term. In other words, to create new habits that will solidify gains and prevent relationships from slipping back to the way they were before.

That's where this book comes in.

Included are thirty Scripture-based messages that each end in a specific GO challenge—something for you to talk about or plan or do to improve your relationship. If you'll do one

THE WORD OF
GOD: TRUE LONG
BEFORE SOCIAL
MEDIA EXISTED AND
STILL TRUE LONG
AFTER ANYBODY
REMEMBERS WHAT
A HASHTAG IS.

GO challenge per day, that's a month of new insights, key decisions, and fresh starts. Challenging, yes, but if you accept the challenge, it will help you meet your goals and win at relationship. It will take your relationship from good to great.

I deliberately applied my book *Relationship Goals* to all kinds of important relationships in our lives, including friendships, work relationships, and church relationships. It was for people who are single and for people who are involved in romantic relationships. This book, however, is more focused. Here I'm specifically talking to people who are in a romantic relationship and want to make it better.

So, let me ask . . .

Are you dating? You're having fun hanging out with people and (I hope) exploring whether a particular person might be a godly marriage partner for you.

Or are you engaged? The big day is coming up. And meanwhile, maybe you're thinking that before you enter the covenant of marriage, it would be a good idea to make sure the two of you are aligned with each other and aligned with God.

Or are you married (whether for the first time, second time, or so on)? I don't care if you're all glowing with newlywed bliss or you've been married for forty years and you think you know what the other person is going to say before she does. Married people need to shake up the status quo to seize what God has for them.

If you're in any of those categories, this book is for you.

You're not going to find much advice in here like "Stick a love note in his pocket for him to find later" or "Buy your wife flowers on the way home from work." That's all fine, but you can come up with stuff like that on your own. Am I right?

The thirty-day *Relationship Goals Challenge* gets into substantial issues. It's going to help you find answers to questions like these:

- How does our love relationship affect who we're becoming as individuals?
- How can my loved one and I communicate better?
- How are we going to fight when it comes to that?
- How do we find healing for deep-seated issues?
- What should our spiritual lives as individuals and as a couple look like?
- How can we build love for a lifetime?

I've grouped the challenges into three major themes that will be familiar to you if you've read *Relationship Goals*:

1. PURPOSE: what God is calling you to do with your life in this season.

2. HEALING: 'cause, bro, sis, you gotta deal with those issues you've got if you want to be released.

3. ONENESS: that loving unity that makes relationships, especially the marriage covenant, so strong.

You can't tell me that if you deal openly and honestly with all these topics, your relationship won't be changed by the end of the thirty days. It will!

Freedom is coming!

Love is gonna build!

Victory is on the way!

Say it with me: "Victory!"

Oops, sorry, I got excited and started preaching. But I hope you've got the idea of what a big deal this thirty-day challenge is going to be for your relationship.

I hope you and your boo will read these challenges and discuss them together. But even if your partner isn't interested in that, you as an individual can still read the book and the relationship will benefit.

Do you accept the challenge?

GO!



We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

—EPHESIANS 2:10



DAY 1 INVITE HIM IN

Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.

—REVELATION 3:20

When it comes to the marriage relationship, I used to assume that two people who are each at about 50 percent come together and in combination make 100 percent (or as close to it as they can get). It even seemed biblical because we're told, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one" (Genesis 2:24). In other words, I thought the marriage equation was $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$. In my mind, that was why people call their spouses "my other half" and say things like "You complete me."

Jerry Maguire is such a liar.

I've been married for over a decade now, but I realized early on that my original marriage equation was all wrong. The equation for marriage is really this: $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$.

Are you currently questioning everything you learned in second-grade math class? Let me help you. One whole man plus one whole woman plus God in their midst creates one healthy marriage.

If you're dating seriously or engaged, God should be in the middle of that relationship too. What's different is that you don't have a marriage covenant together. But God still wants to be the center and the source of unity for the two of you. If

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you're headed for marriage, know that you're supposed to be entering into a 1 + 1 + 1 relationship.

No matter what your official relationship status (married, engaged, dating, it's complicated), it's important for the health of the relationship that you've been working on yourself, trying to make yourself the best you that you can be. Hopefully your partner has been doing the same. But even more important is the presence of the Third Member in the relationship. God's participation makes it possible for the man to fulfill his purposes, for the woman to fulfill her purposes, and for the relationship to fulfill its purposes.

Let's go back to marriage because I want to create a visual in your mind.

A godly marriage is like a triangle. First, the husband and wife are connected at the bottom of the triangle. When this is done in marriage, this is a beautiful connection, an honored connection, one that is intended to bring life to both people. From day one of their marriage, a wife and husband are bound together in a holy covenant. The bond is intended to last for a lifetime, and they will hopefully be strengthening their connection and enjoying the rewards of it for as long as they live.

But there's another part of the triangle. God is at the top, with each of the marriage partners spiritually connected to Him (assuming they're both believers in Jesus). This gives them another way to be connected—through God. And look at this: it's a geometric and spiritual truth that as each partner

**GOD SHOULD BE
IN THE MIDDLE
OF ANY GODLY
RELATIONSHIP.**

draws closer to God, each one is also drawing closer to the other. The fact that God is in the middle of that marriage is the key to their getting the relationship win.

Again, God should be in the middle of *any* godly relationship. When you're going

out or chillin' at home with your bf/gf, God is on the date too. If you're in that engagement period where you're working on merging two lives into one, God is watching to see how you prepare for the marriage triangle.

Now, this triangle thing is probably not an entirely new idea to you, especially if you've read *Relationship Goals*. But let me ask you something: Have you two, as a couple, ever actually invited God into the midst of the relationship? Maybe it hasn't occurred to you to do that. Or maybe you've just assumed He would automatically be there so you didn't need to pay any attention to Him.

Or maybe once (like at your wedding) you *did* consciously ask God to be at the center of your relationship, but since then you've mostly forgotten about it.

If you've been more or less ignoring God's role in your relationship lately, then I can assure you that the persistent knocking sound you hear is Jesus at the door of your hearts, telling you He wants to come in. All you've got to do is turn the knob and say, "Hey there, Lord! C'mon in!"

My wife, Natalie, and I have found that there's a big value in consciously committing or recommitting a relationship to Christ's lordship. Today could be the day when you drive a stake into the spiritual ground and, together, ask God to be the leading figure, the guide, and the unifying power in your relationship. (When I talked in the introduction about taking action to solidify gains and prevent relationships from slipping back to the way they were before, this was just the kind of thing I was talking about.)

THE PERSISTENT
KNOCKING SOUND
YOU HEAR IS JESUS
AT THE DOOR OF
YOUR HEARTS,
TELLING YOU HE
WANTS TO COME IN.

So here's your first—and most important—challenge: invite God into your relationship. This might just give you a change in perspective that helps you see your relationship in a whole new way from here on out.

DISCUSS

- What areas of your relationship have you been keeping God out of? And why have you been doing that?
- Are you prepared for changes that might have to happen when God takes His rightful place at the center of your relationship? Why or why not?



Spend time in prayer together with your significant other, inviting God to take control of your relationship and to guide and bless you in it.

NOTES ON ISSUES WE DISCUSSED, PLANS WE MADE,
AND THINGS WE BELIEVE GOD IS SAYING TO US:



DAY 2 THIRSTY FOR GOD

O God, you are my God;
I earnestly search for you.
My soul thirsts for you;
my whole body longs for you
in this parched and weary land
where there is no water.

—PSALM 63:1

When you're trying to decide what movie to see on date night or how to load the dishwasher or whatever, you might not be thinking too much about your *purpose*. But I've got news for you—good news. God's had a purpose for you since before you were born.

Does that mean God has a purpose in what you do on a Friday night or in how you clean the kitchen? Yes, in a way. When we have a clear target for our purpose as individuals and our purpose as a dating or married couple, it affects everything we do.

Paul the apostle told us, “We are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10).

So, first of all, let me tell it to you straight: if you're dating someone and what you're doing together or talking about or dreaming about wouldn't fall in the category of “good things,” you need to reevaluate your activities. In fact, if your significant other isn't a part of your doing anything signifi-

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cant, it might be time to move on. (See chapter 5, “Does It Need to End?” in *Relationship Goals*.)

But what if you’re in a more committed relationship? How can you look together toward the dreams God has for you? And here’s the really amazing question: How can you as a couple live out God’s purpose in even bigger ways than you could as individuals?

God doesn’t leave us hanging when it comes to discovering His big ideas for our lives. Psalm 119:105 tells us that the Bible is “a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.” God wants us to find Him. He wants us to know those good things He has in mind for us. After all, we can’t hit our relational targets without knowing what they are.

So I’m telling you: Get into God’s Word. Alone. Together. Online or audio or reading your granddaddy’s leather Bible. Don’t worry about how your mama or your best friend or the preacher down the street reads her Bible; just figure out something that works for you.

The important thing is that you’re spending time getting to know God through His Word and prayer, because that’s how you discover His purpose for you. Just like when you get to

**IF GOD’S NOT
ENOUGH FOR
YOU, NO PERSON
EVER WILL BE.**

know someone new to your family. You spend time with him, you hear his stories, you learn what he likes and what he can’t stand. The more you get to know him, the more you know automatically what’s going to make him sad or mad or merry like Christmas. You learn the person’s character.

I can tell you right now that you will never know God completely. Why would we want to worship a God we could figure out? The more I know about God, the more I realize how much I have left to know. And that’s okay with me.

The same thing goes for knowing our purpose. As we spend time with God, we get a better idea of His big plans for us. We see more clearly how our marriage or dating relationship fits into those plans. We see enough to get excited. We see enough to trash what isn't fitting with God's dreams. We see enough to want more.

I tell single people who are thirsty for a relationship, "Be thirsty for God. If God's not enough for you, no person ever will be." When you're in a relationship, you should stay thirsty for God.

So this week I challenge you to get into God's Word together. Of course, if you've just had a date or two, it might be too early for this. But if you're serious about each other, then going to Scripture together could be one of the best choices you make. Maybe you have your devotional times separately. Could you do that together? Maybe one person spends more time in prayer, Bible reading, and worship than the other. How could you both get more consistent in those things?

SEEKING GOD
MAKES US
THIRSTY FOR
MORE. EACH
TIME, WE FIND
MORE OF HIM.

Seeking God makes us thirsty for more. Each time, we find more of Him. And the better we know Him, the better we understand the purpose God has in mind for us.

DISCUSS

- What kind of devotional lives do the two of you already have?
- What might be some practical and helpful ways for y'all to seek God together?



Make plans for (or reevaluate) devotional practices that you have with your loved one.

NOTES ON ISSUES WE DISCUSSED, PLANS WE MADE,
AND THINGS WE BELIEVE GOD IS SAYING TO US:



DAY 3 YOU ARE WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE

God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.”

—GENESIS 1:26

Since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.

—ROMANS 8:17

Whose image were you and your loved one made in? Kanye and Kim? George and Amal? David and Victoria? No, God made you to be like Him.

So if you or your loved one are letting your identity, your character, or your personality be defined by anybody but God, you are missing out on who you are supposed to be. One of the best things the two of you can do to help each other go from good to great is to get in the habit of reminding each other of who you are in God.

Can I say something about this? The Enemy is going to *hate it*. He’s not scared of fakers and posers. He’s scared of people who find their purpose, know who they are, and don’t worry about what anybody else is doing but instead take their stand and obey God.

Why do you wish you had a job like the one somebody else has? Or a house like the one that other couple are living in? Or the “perfect” family that you saw on Instagram? The

temptation to compare ourselves with others is always there because, if we give in, it gets us off our true identities.

There was this one preacher whose outfit I thought was cool. He was successful and where I thought I wanted to be, so I decided I should dress like him. I went to the store where this person got his clothes, and I put on the same stuff.

What I'd forgotten was that I've got thighs. And a booty. At the time, I had more of a gut. So when I looked in the mirror, trying to suck everything in, I just looked like a sausage. I felt like an idiot.

It's a good thing I've got Natalie. At times like this, she says, "Michael, you're comparing yourself with others. Don't forget who you are."

She's right. I can never be comfortable in the identity of somebody who's not me. I've got to be who God made *me* to be. And so does Natalie. And so do you and your bf/gf or h/w.

Here's a beautiful thing. None of us have to guess who we are. God's already given us our identities: we're the King's kids, made in His image and set up to rule. And if we're followers of Jesus, we're coheirs with Him of God's glory.

Don't you forget what the Word tells us, and don't let your loved one forget it either:

- Nothing is impossible for you because of Christ who lives in you!
- You are the head and not the tail!
- You are above only and not beneath!
- When you believe, mountains start to move!

Either you've accepted somebody else's identity or you know who you are in Christ.

The problem is that most believers have not been in the

Book enough to be able to find out their identities. So people on social media, in the neighborhood, or in business meetings tell us what our identity is, and we take on that perception.

God says, “Don’t believe the lie. I created you the way you are on purpose. That little quirk? I’m going to use that to change people’s lives. People are saying you’re a burrito short of a combo? Don’t worry about it. I want to use you to touch people who are missing some burritos.”

Do you understand what I’m saying? God wants to use all of you. He wants to use all of your loved one too. But both of you have to know your identity is confirmed and affirmed in Him.

So, today I challenge you to assert your loved one’s identity in Christ. For example, if your husband is feeling like his career is going nowhere, remind him that the Lord has created him with unique gifts and has a plan for him. Or if the mother of your babies is feeling like her life doesn’t count because all she does is take care of ankle biters all day, remind her that God sees all she’s doing and honors her.

How can you remind your loved one of his incredible God-given value?

**EITHER YOU’VE
ACCEPTED
SOMEBODY ELSE’S
IDENTITY OR YOU
KNOW WHO YOU
ARE IN CHRIST.**

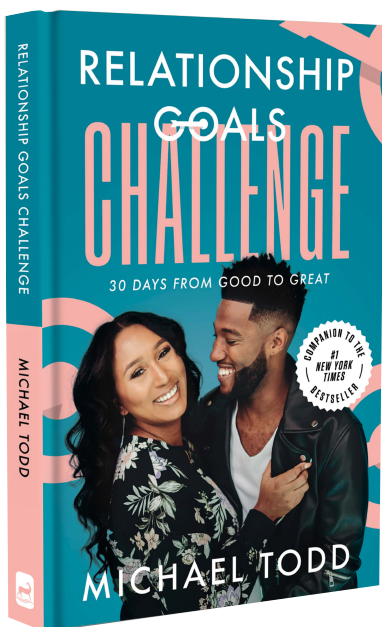
DISCUSS

- What special qualities, gifts, and destiny do you feel that God has planted in your loved one?
- What things have perhaps been getting in the way of your loved one’s living out his or her true identity?



With love, and in godly confidence, affirm the identity that God has given your loved one.

NOTES ON ISSUES WE DISCUSSED, PLANS WE MADE,
AND THINGS WE BELIEVE GOD IS SAYING TO US:



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