



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Relationship Goals-Part 1

Guest(s): Michael Todd

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone, you're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Hello everyone, and welcome to this Monday edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and Family Talk is a listener-supported division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Now today's guest here on the program is Michael Todd, the lead pastor at Transformation Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. You may know of him from his wildly popular sermon series called "Relationship Goals." Since preaching that first sermon in the series back in 2017, "Relationship Goals" has had over 6 million views online.

In fact, in 2020, Pastor Michael published a book by that same title, spelling out those very same principles that clearly delineate the differences between our own earthly goals for our relationships, versus God's goals for our relationships. On today's program, our host, Dr. Tim Clinton will be talking with Michael about the book, the sermon series, his life, and how we can all make and reach Godly relationship goals.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Pastor Mike, so great to have you. Thank you for joining us here on Family Talk.

Michael Todd: Man, what a pleasure, Tim, to be with you today.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, as we get started, something's happening out there in Tulsa, a little church called Transformation Church. What's happening, even in spite of COVID and everything that's going on. Tell us a little bit about it.

Michael Todd: Man, we are a community that really believes in people, and for some reason, God saw fit to allow me to become a pastor. I always say He allowed me to become, because I count it as a privilege. It's a real honor. But I didn't have the conventional way of getting to the pastor.

In 2015, I took over as the lead pastor from a white gentleman who was 60 years old, and our church was planted in the hood of Tulsa. We had about 300 people, and I just knew our church was supposed to be multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multiplying, and multi-campus.

I didn't know what any of those things were, Tim, but I had crazy faith. I believed. We just started meeting people's needs and representing God. And that's our vision, to represent God to lost people, and found people, for one reason.

We want them to be transformed in Christ. And we started doing that and to God be all the glory. We're just grateful to be a part of this kingdom that God is building, and to be light in the darkness. So it's a fun time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Amen. We're going to be talking about relationships today, and Natalie, your wife, and your three children. Just tell us a little bit about... You met her when you guys were kids really, right?

Michael Todd: So I met the love of my life at 15 years old. I went to somebody's birthday party, and it was like one of those scenes out of a cheesy '80s movie, like the room with dark and the doors opened, and I felt like there was smoke coming from behind her. I was like, "Who is that?"

From that night on, I knew that there was something special about her. We started dating when we were 15 years old, and now we have been together for 20 years, and been married for 10. And that is God's grace.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Amen.

Michael Todd: Because she literally allowed me to go from a boy to a man. And we've learned all kinds of lessons. Hence, the reason I can write a book called *Relationship Goals*.

Out of our love, we have three beautiful kids. Isabella, she's seven, MJ, he's five, and Ava, she is three. And we actually are a few days away from having our fourth child. It's over now, it's done. The shop is closed. We have been fruitful and multiplied, we got to go and do something else.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What a pleasure to have you join us. I just want to share a little bit about what's going on with you and your church. You started a special sermon series on relationship goals that went viral. You've become a YouTube sensation. It's amazing, I mean, how many millions and millions of views you're getting on your work.

I went through your book, your brand-new book, called *Relationship Goals, How to Win at Dating, Marriage, and Sex*, and what a message. I so resonated with it. I look forward to going through it all.

But Pastor Mike, take us back to why this became a prominent theme for you, and why it's so important for all of us. Because I think at the end of the day, life is all about relationships. Get them right, you're blessed. Get them wrong, you're going to hurt. This is going to be a journey. But take us back to what God did in your heart. What seed was there?

Michael Todd:

Well, for me, I was raised in church. I have amazing parents. I've had Sunday School, and I've been through all the Vacation Bible Schools, and I've done everything. And when I got to my teenage years, me and Natalie, I was going into my relationship tool belt to try to see what was there, and what I had learned, and what I'd seen. And the only thing in the cupboard was, "Don't have sex before you get married."

That was the only principle, that was the only thought that was told. And it was really from more of a scary place. There was no information around it. It was like, "You'd just better not have sex before you get married."

And what happens when you did? What happens when you had thoughts, or you were introduced to something at an early age? Or you are at a hotel for a basketball game, and those channels changed from something that was kid-friendly to something that was adult? Like what happens?

All of those things began to happen to me, and I no tools to be able to deal with how a relationship was actually supposed to be done. What did God say about relationships? Where does dating and courting, and where do we get all of these ideas?

I suffered a lot in my relationship with Natalie, and we went through a lot of unnecessary hurt, frustration, and wounds just because nobody taught us about relationships. We didn't want to go down that road. We just had no information.

I really do believe ignorance many times in the Bible, is correlated with darkness. We were dark in the area of relationship. We knew how to sing worship songs. We knew how to have community groups, but we didn't know how to actually do relationships. Romantic, business, friendship. Nobody talked about that stuff. It was almost like people just had them and you were supposed to figure it out.

For me, when God delivered us and took us through this journey of restoration and healing, I began to write down the things that I was being shown, and the things that I taught, and the things that I found in God's Word. And He shed light on it. That darkness that was there, that ignorance that was there, there began to be light or revelation shone on it.

And I said, "If I ever get a chance, an opportunity, I will share what has helped me get to this place in relationship with my wife, and with business partners,

and with all kinds of people." And that's where the heart of *Relationship Goals* actually came from.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The landscape out there is pretty rough. You look around and you realize, people struggle on how to do relationships right. As a matter of fact, when you look at romantic relationships, and I know your message is beyond romantic relationships...

Michael Todd: It's all relationships.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're going to talk about how to win at relationship period. But our relationship with God vertically, our relationships with those closest to us, and then how we do life. It's everything.

But we battle on how to sort of pull down the veil here, and engage in a meaningful way. It seems like such relationships are everything. Everything in life will work against that very thing.

Michael Todd: Yes, sir. Well, because relationships, they actually are the image of God on the earth. In the beginning, He said, "Let us." That wasn't just God, that was God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They were all there. They were in relationship.

The whole reason that God made Eden was to have relationship with man. The whole reason He sent Jesus, is so that we could be back in relationship with God. Relationship is the picture of the Father's heart on the earth.

So that is why I believe that there is such an onslaught against relationships, healthy relationships. Children being raised in homes that there is no communication about it. And I think that it's time us to stop being taboo. Because this is the thing that I tell people all the time. I said, "If you don't teach your kids, if you don't display it, somebody will."

And the crazy thing about everything that I learned about relationships, that I learned about sex, that I learned about marriage, I learned in the sixth-grade locker room. Which is the worst place, let me repeat, the worst place, to learn about how to do anything God's way.

I didn't hear it from a youth pastor. I didn't hear it from my senior pastor. I didn't even hear it from my parents, even though they wanted... Because they were scared that they would introduce me to something too soon.

I understand the concern, but we are in 2021 right now, where everybody has access to everything, from internet to cell phones. And if you are not the first mention of something in your children's life, that first mention, whoever does it, whether it comes through a rap song, a rock song, a Disney show, or anything, that's going to be very hard to tear down that stronghold in their mind.

And so, what my heart is, is to help people renew their mind around relationship, and equip them with tools to be able to pass it to the next generation, and then be able to, in their own relationships, be able to find a way to win. Because I believe it is God's plan and purpose for everybody to win in relationships.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Pastor Mike, for years I taught the Psychology of Relationships course at Liberty University, and thousands of kids went through the class. One of the things that stunned me was to realize how many of them did not want to have a relationship like their mom and dad.

Michael Todd: Wow.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let me say that again. How many of them did not want to have a relationship like their mom and dad. And in addition to what you're saying, we often don't know how to do relationships well. And you don't give well what you don't do well, as leaders in a church and more. We're not having this conversation, we're not training anyone.

Pastor Mike, in your book, you talk about relationship goals and having an aim. What's the old saying, "Hey, if you aim at nothing, you're going to hit it every time."

Michael Todd: Yes, sir.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that's where we're at. What you're trying to do is say, "Hey, step back for a moment. Let's take a look at this thing and let's get ourself oriented." You talk about God goals. Explain what you mean by that.

Michael Todd: The whole concept came from archery. I mean that term, relationship goals, was something that was popular and trending. Just people would look at pictures of celebrities, or people who had money, or people who had the perfect family. And they'd be like, "Oh, that's goals. That's a relationship goals."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sure.

Michael Todd: But when I stepped back and I thought about a goal, in my mind immediately I feel like I saw archery. And the thing about somebody who has an arrow, is that is a weapon. Though you are actually trying to hit something, if you are frivolous and careless with it, people get hurt.

And I think the thing in relationship that people don't calculate is, if you're frivolous with who you date, how you go about your relationships, people get damaged. Many people are damaged by careless people not aiming.

So, I said, "Why don't we aim at a target? And why don't we go to the One who formed relationships and figure out how to aim, and what to aim at." And from

that relationship goal, the relationship with God, when you hit that target, it allows all your other relationships to actually flourish. Marriage relationships, romantic relationships, business relationships, friendships, all of them, if we can figure out how relationship is supposed to work.

So, God goals, is really God. Like the goal you want, is a relationship with God, because out of that it's going to teach you everything that you will need. My tool box got filled when I made my relationship goal, God.

And out of that, He gave me the patience, the love, the kindness, the tenderness. He gave me tools that I needed to have relationship with other people that are not naturally in me.

That's what everybody needs to know, is that what is natural, is not necessarily what makes you win in relationships. It's what's not natural. It's sacrifice. Everybody's born selfish. I don't have to teach any of my kids mine. They know mine. But I have to teach them to share.

Well, if you never become generous in your singleness, you will never be generous in a relationship. And it's those things that you get taught by being in a relationship with God that makes your relationships with anybody else flourish. And that's why I believe that God goals, or goals that have God in the center them, are the ones that we should be aiming at first.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You mentioned about being online, and being flooded with every kind of innuendo and message. It takes over our kids. It takes over all of us. And when we think about the challenge of embracing God's Word, His teachings, some would say, "Wait a second. Pastor Mike, you did a sermon series on relationship goals and you started talking about reorienting back to God's directives, and what it means to embrace His ways in our everyday life. Would people watch that?"

What's amazing is, your sermon series went wild. I saw at one point you had more than 15 million views on that sermon series.

Michael Todd: Tim, this is how I know, number one, that God wants this message, whether it be from me or anybody else. He needs this message out, because so many of the people's problems... I feel like God is in heaven hearing the prayer requests, and so many of them are damaged from relationships.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They are.

Michael Todd: If people can learn how to aim and win at relationships, then many of the things that are hurting... God hates for His children to be hurt. Just like we hate for our children to be hurt. But a lot of time, ignorance and ignoring makes people fall into situations that they could have otherwise been able to avoid if they would have had light in the situation.

I believe that in this day and age, what God wants is His light to be shown and shining in everybody's relationships. And that starts with making Him your relationship goal.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

You're listening to Family Talk, the division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, your host. Our special guest, Pastor and best-selling author Michael Todd. We're talking about relationship goals. His brand-new book, *Relationship Goals, How to Win at Dating, Marriage, and Sex*. It's just flying off the shelf. Delightful conversation.

You know, when I went through the book, what I loved was your love for scripture, your command of scripture. And I loved your personal style. As we talk about this journey of getting to God goals in our relationship, you are very honest about how we get sideways with what the world wants for relationships.

You talk about a season in your relationship with your wife, Natalie. And there was an insanity time in there.

Michael Todd:

The thing that people have to know is, I want to say two things. That if you're not humble, open, and transparent, or at Transformation Church, we call it "HOT." If you're not humble, open, and transparent, you never can actually get healing. God only heals what you reveal.

There is this air in our society today to don't say what you're really dealing with. "Oh, you're a pastor. Don't really talk about it." "Oh, you're a Christian. Don't actually tell anybody you dealt with pornography, just be free from it and pray for those who are..."

That is the biggest farce I've ever seen that is still rampant in the church today. Because God doesn't bless who you pretend to be. He blesses who you really are. He will take you from that moment.

And so, for me, Dr. Tim, it was a point of being very honest and being transparent. See, that's another thing that people don't understand. There's a difference between honesty and transparency.

Honesty is telling the truth when somebody asks you. But the truth of the matter is, most people don't ask you the question you need to be truthful about. But transparency is offering up, is being to say, "Hey, this is something that is, I don't want there to be anything that I'm hiding."

And that transparency is what I approached this book with, because that's what I needed as a young person. I needed somebody to say, "Hey, I really did this. I really messed up. This was my actual thought process."

Before I married my wife, I had 10 months of insanity. You can imagine, from being with somebody from the age of 15, growing up together, going to prom

together, then going into adulthood in college and doing all of these different things. The culture tells you, "How do you know she's the one, if you haven't tried other things?"

As I began to drift, and take my aim off of God, and look at things that the celebrities were doing, and looking at what pop culture was telling me, and seeing the things that the dudes on the football team and the people that are around were doing, it just drifted me enough to say, "Well, maybe I need to before... I know she's a great girl, and I know she's never done anything and I could see it working, and I want to be with her. But maybe before that, I need to test the waters."

And that is a prime example of letting something, that culture, who did not make relationships...They define something that only God made. I have my iPhone right here. If my iPhone breaks, I don't go to Honda, a car dealer, to fix my iPhone. Why? Because they weren't the manufacturer.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's right.

Michael Todd: The same thing with our relationships. I tried to go to culture to tell me how to do something that they didn't make. That led to me lying. It led to me entertaining other young ladies, it led to sex. It led to all of these things that ended up hurting and damaging the person that I really wanted to be with.

And that 10 months of insanity turned into 10 years of rebuilding trust. 10 months turned into 10 years of trying to get back to the same place that we were when we were doing it God's way.

So, my encouragement to everybody out there is, always allow God's Word and God's way to define how you do relationships. Because it will save somebody a lot of hurt, and it will bless your life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The scripture says, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God and He'll give it to us." You quoted Psalm 32:8, I wrote it in my notes. "I will instruct you and I'll teach you in the way you should go."

Michael Todd: Yes, sir.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We hold onto that. Pastor Mike, I want to jump a little bit forward here.

Michael Todd: Let's go.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In the book, you talked about single, being single, and the importance or the significance of it. I know in sports, we have a saying that says, "Trust the process."

You talk about, in your relationships, you want to look at it as a progression, not necessarily perfection. There's a process going on here. And it starts with the single piece, getting it right. Take us in there.

Michael Todd:

Well, I believe that singleness is the most important part of your relationship, because the one thing that you will always be is a single person that is coming into relationship, and coming into unity, with somebody else.

And the problem that I see, Dr. Tim, is most people don't know who they are as a single person. So when somebody else tries to figure them out, they don't even know what to tell them.

What ends up happening is, if we skip this part of God giving us identity... I do a part in the book called, "Before the Person." And I talk about all the things that God gave to Adam, before he gave Eve. Like He gave Adam identity. He gave him an assignment. He gave him a place, His presence. He gave Adam all of these things before a person, so that when He gave Eve, he would not be looking for those things in Eve.

I think that is the reason why so many relationships fail, is because they go into them with wrong expectations. "Well, I don't know my identity. I don't know who I am. I don't know what I like. So when I get with you, I need you to fill those holes in me."

And when they can't do that, now they're not as beautiful, or they're not as fun, or "You changed." But the thing is, I really believe we all, in this sin-nature that we are born into, we all have these God holes that only He can fill.

And people try to put money in them. They try to put drugs in them. They try to put success in them. They try to put family in them. But if you don't allow God to give you these things before a person, you will always look for them in a person.

I just believe singleness is that season of discovery that sets you up to be so grateful for that season, and then delighted when God joins somebody else. And it helps you choose better. Because if you don't know you... Or if you do know you, you can recognize somebody who doesn't know themselves.

That's one thing that helps you be able to make a better decision. It's not out of need, it's out of purposes aligning, and seeing what God has for you to do together.

So, I think singleness, I tell people all the time, singleness is the best season of your life. And I tell people just on a practical level, this is the most time you'll ever have to do anything you want to do in your life. As soon as you get in a relationship and you add kids, keep cutting it in half because you then have to

sacrifice. If you want to learn a new skill, learn a new skill. If you want to travel, travel.

Michael Todd: This time is for you to discover who you are, who God's made you to be, and all those giftings that He has called you to be able to place in this earth.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The season of singleness. It's so easy to get lost there. It's also easy to feel like you're less than because you don't quote, "Have someone." But boy, if you can get this thing straight. You begin to realize ultimately that intimacy, in other words, that oneness, is healthy when I bring a healthy separateness, also.

Michael Todd: You have to. Because if you don't, then you lose yourself. One of the sad truths, Dr. Tim, is I counsel people many times in marriage who got their identity from the spouse and the kids. And then when the kids leave, and they're just left with that person, they had not developed their singleness at all for years.

They didn't know what they liked to read. They didn't know what movie. They lived their entire life for somebody else, and now they're at 48, 56, 62, trying to rediscover who God created them to be.

And I'll say this, I don't think you ever stop being single. I think you are in a covenant relationship, but God always wants to work on the single person. In my prayer time, God doesn't talk to me about my wife. He talks to me about me, and what I need to change so that I can become a better person, so that I can go and be a better husband. Do you understand what I'm saying?

I really do believe that, if we work on our singleness, and get that rhythm of working on it, it gives to us and produces for the rest of our lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. We're talking today with Pastor Michael Todd. He has a brand-new book out called *Relationship Goals, How to Win at Dating, Marriage, and Sex*.

Absolutely phenomenal ministry out of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Transformation Church, a YouTube sensation, so much more. We've got a lot more to talk about. We're out of time today, but, hey, I so look forward to us continuing our conversation tomorrow. Thank you for joining us.

Michael Todd: Man, what a pleasure. This is going to be fun.

Roger Marsh: What an absolutely invaluable conversation today here on Family Talk, featuring Dr. Tim Clinton and Pastor Michael Todd of Transformation Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of their conversation.

Now, to learn more about Pastor Michael, Transformation Church, or his book called *Relationship Goals*, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. That web address again is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

Remember, you can also give us a call anytime. Our number is (877) 732-6825. Thanks again for listening to Family Talk. And from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, have a blessed day.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.