



# relationship goals

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First Edition

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# the basics

## Make a Connection

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God made us for relationships, and we believe you would get more out of this series by going through it with others. That's why we've developed this guidebook for you to use in a group.

It's really simple, and we have all the tools and tips to make it easy for you. In a group setting, you will have the chance to dive deeper into the study topics and hear stories from real people, as well as a short teaching from Dr. John Van Epp and Dr. Morgan Cutlip. Together, you'll answer questions and discuss the content further.

We believe the group experience will greatly enrich the **Relationship Goals** series for you, and we strongly encourage you to give it a try.





## How to Use This Guidebook



This book has **all the information you'll need**, including a table of contents, introductory information, a study for each week and between session growth sections.

**Use the guidebook as a guide, not a straightjacket.** If your group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions page 120.

If you approach each meeting with **prayer and a little preparation**, you will find this guidebook easy to use. Before each week, take the time to review that week's session. Make notes that will help you as you interact with your group.

## ♡ *Group Experience*

The **Relationship Goals** group experience is where it all should come together.

♡ We'll watch videos with engaging content by Dr. John and Dr. Morgan followed by group discussion. Although they primarily talk about dating, the concepts apply equally to friendships and other relationships. Most of the questions in this discussion guide allow you the **option of exploring your friendships or a dating relationship.**

Being part of a group has its advantages. You'll learn from one another and be able to pray for others in your group as you work on your relationships. You'll probably find that you're not alone in your relationship challenges and you all will be able to celebrate together when you see changes based on what you've learned and the goals you have accomplished.

There are two basic group structures for this series: small groups (e.g. life groups) and large groups (see pg. 118 for details).

**Enjoy your group!**

# relationshipgrowth



You will not regret taking some time with the Relationship Goals series to go deeper in this material. You will definitely benefit from doing so! Dr. John and Dr. Morgan emphasized that relationships do not run themselves, but that you are responsible for how you build your relationships. **So, in this series, we are determined to provide you with some great information to keep your head and heart working together.**

If you'd like to dig deeper in the concepts taught in this series, check out *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk* available on [www.LoveThinks.com](http://www.LoveThinks.com).

 **Add some spark**

Know that everything is in God's perfect timing.



- ♥ The questions in each personal growth section are designed to take around 30-45 minutes.
- ♥ You can do these on your own or with someone you are dating. If you are working on this with a partner, discuss the questions before writing out your answers. It could take a little bit longer.
- ♥ We encourage you to begin each personal growth time with a prayer, asking God to help you think through your relationships and to show you what you need to work on to keep growing.





session

two

27

singles section





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## Session Two: Video Notes



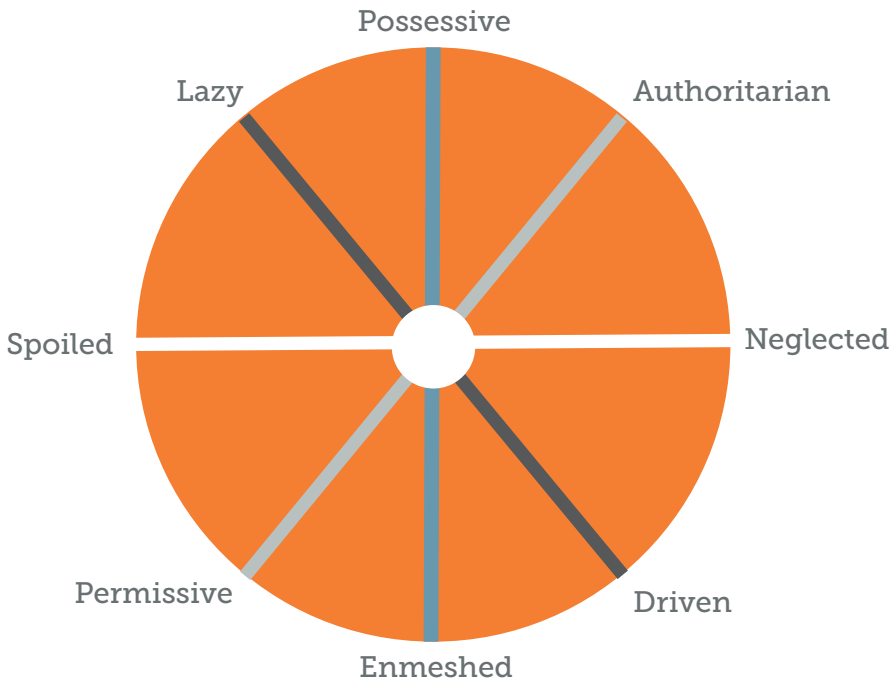
The five areas to explore in a dating relationship are captured in the acronym **FACES**, and F stands for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

Joseph modeled the importance of resolving any issues from your family upbringing by how he named his two \_\_\_\_\_.

**The first way** you are shaped by your upbringing is by how your family gave and received love, and handled their \_\_\_\_\_.

**The second way** your family impacted you is by how they shared \_\_\_\_\_, and **the third** is by how you learned family \_\_\_\_\_.



- Attention (neglected-spoiled)
- Responsibility (lazy-driven)
- Territory (possessive-enmeshed)
- Authority (authoritarian-permissive)

## Discuss as a group:

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The first major area to get to know about yourself and anyone you date is the impact your upbringing has had on you. The story of Joseph and his thirteen years of struggles after he had been rejected by his brothers is found in Genesis chapters 37-41. In his thirties, Joseph actively resolved his emotional pain caused from his family.

*Joseph had two sons born to him before the years of famine came... Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh (Forget), saying, "God made me forget (let go, forgive) all my hardships and my parental home." He named his second son Ephraim (Double Prosperity), saying, "God has prospered me in the land of my sorrow." And later, in response to his brothers who feared he would take revenge on them, Joseph said, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position, so I could save the lives of many people. Genesis 41:50-52; 50:20 (NLT).*

1. What do the names of Joseph's two children and Joseph's response to his brothers reveal about how Joseph worked through those memories and emotions.
2. Most people eventually get married. There is an old saying, "You don't just marry the person, **you also marry the family.**" What are some ways that this is true, and why do you think this matters to you at this time in your life?



*Now play segment 1 (00:00-05:26)*

**3.** What are some things from **how your family relates** and acts (or has related and acted) that you want to take with you into future relationships? What are some things you want to leave behind?

*Now play segment 2 (05:26-09:40)*

**4.** What you learned about Joseph is that he took the **time to forgive** and work through the hurts from the family in which he was raised. What habits do you imagine Joseph developed that helped him to respond in this way?

**5.** What are some of the **habits you have learned from your own family** about forgiveness?

*Now play segment 3 (09:40-11:49)*

**6.** Make a list of as many **feeling words** as you can brainstorm together as a group.

**7.** Describe how your family has helped you to learn about your feelings and influenced the ways you handle or **express your feelings?**

*Now play segment 4 (11:49-17:32)*

**8.** What are some of the **responsibilities you have or had in your home** and among your family? How do you think those responsibilities will shape how you will act in other relationships both now and in the future?

**9.** How are (or were) **disagreements handled within your family...**

between your parents... between you and your siblings... between you and your parents? How has this affected the way you handle disagreements with others (e.g. friends, family, and dating partners)?

**10.** If you are in a relationship with a person who had some problems or dysfunction in their family, how can you determine if those **problems will come out** in their life or in your relationship?

*segment 5 (17:32-24:33)*

**11.** Set a specific goal for how you can work on improving some way that you relate with members of your family that will **benefit your relationships both now and in the future.**

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# Session Two: Summary

**There are five major areas to get to know about a dating partner that are very predictive of what that person will be like in a long-term relationship, and especially in marriage. These five areas can be captured in the acronym, FACES. “F” stands for someone’s family background. This area, like all five, is also an important area for you to work on in order to improve both personally and relationally.**

Joseph portrayed the importance of working through family issues by naming his two sons in honor of his healing process: ... *It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household ... It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.* (**Genesis 41:51-52 NIV**).



*The first way you are shaped from your family upbringing*

is by **how you learned to give and receive love and manage your emotions**. Specifically, consider the mood of the home and how emotions were expressed.

**The second way you are shaped from your upbringing is by how power was shared within the family.** Look closely at how attention was shown, responsibilities were divided up, authority was carried out and territory was shared.

The final way you were shaped from your upbringing is by **what you learned about family roles** from each of your parents or caregivers, and especially the ones with whom you felt the most connected.

These key areas of how your families shaped you are very predictive of how you or a partner will act in a family-type relationship. Be aware, **sometimes these influences are like dormant seeds during a dating relationship, but come into full bloom when planted in marriage**. So dig around, and make sure you and your partner follow Joseph's example.

## Relationship Growth: Session Two

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This is your time to go deeper. But remember these tips:

**\*Pray**

**\*Limit distractions**

**\*Approach each exercise with a positive attitude**

**\*Carve out 30-45 minutes for this process**

### ♥ Add some spark

What helps you stay focused on God? Write it on a notecard and put it somewhere you'll see it for a daily reminder.



In this session, we used the term **family upbringing** to refer to any type of family background, even if they were not your biological family members. **There are three common ways you have been shaped by the family in which you were raised:** the ways that you give and receive love and handle your emotions with a partner; the ways that you share power with a partner; and the roles that you will fulfill and expect from a partner. As you now have time to think more deeply about your own family upbringing, answer the following three questions with as much detail as you can.

1. If I was to get married and become a parent, what do I:

*Want to repeat from my family of origin?*

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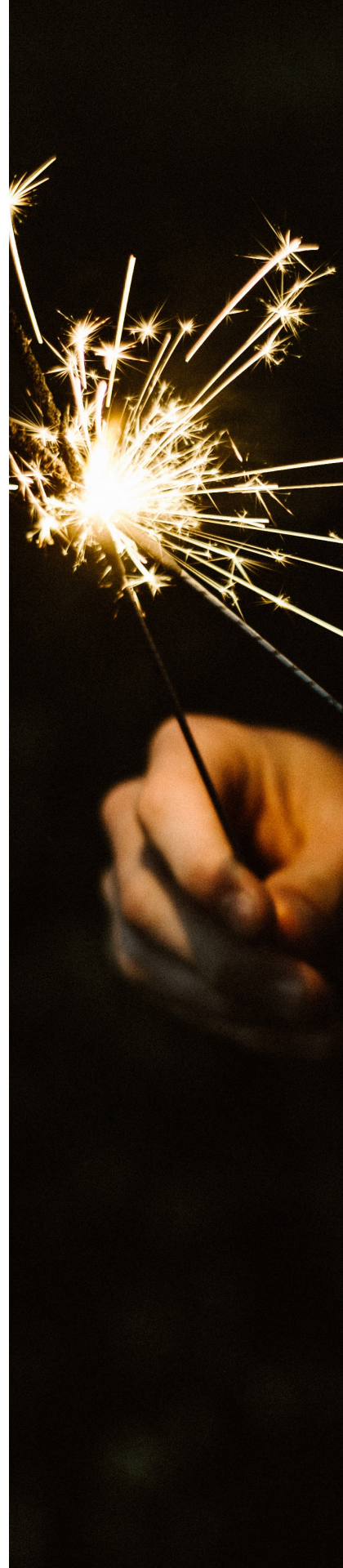
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*Want to not repeat from my family of origin?*

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*Want to add that was different than what happened in my family of origin?*

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2. The Apostle Paul said boldly, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). However, reality is that when someone promises to change, those changes are often slow, tedious and many times, temporary. So, when you are in a relationship with someone, **how do you know if they will truly change those areas they need to change?** In the first session, Dr. John and Dr. Morgan described ingredients of lasting change. How would you detect each one in a friend or dating partner who was promising to improve something in his/her life?

*Self-aware and insightful into their issue(s):*

*Willing and motivated to change:*

*Has learned new information and has a plan:*

*Persists with the change over time:*

3. Now it is your turn. **Write out a specific area that you want to change about yourself and your family upbringing, and apply the four ingredients of change** (a great passage that affirms these same ingredients for change is **Ephesians 4:17-32**).

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