

An Introduction to the Champions Network and the Champions Academy

Welcome to the Champion Academy Session #1. This lesson is meant to be a thorough introduction to LCRL's Champions for Religious Liberty Network. For short, we call it the Champions Network. The Champions Network is a growing network of individuals and groups that come together to understand that God engages the world in two distinct ways: to bless and to save. God blesses the culture of this world in order to preserve it for now. God saves individuals in the world, saves them from their sins, death, and the devil through the saving Word of the Gospel. Jesus, the Son of God, lived, died and rose again on the third day to save people, and take them to be with Him for all eternity.

Champions Network is therefore about equipping people to both understand God's two-kingdom engagement and then learn how to be faithful civic citizens as God's ambassadors by being two-kingdom people actively. You and I will learn so much more about all of this in coming weeks and months as we learn together. Simply know this: there is a network of people who are learning how to engage and then engaging fellow citizens in our country, engaging governing authorities locally, at the state level, and finally at the federal level. We can do so much more by networking together than we can do apart.

In order to build, create, and sustain a helpful Champions Network, we have created the Champions Academy. This is the main educational hub for the network. People that sign up for the Champions Academy are called Champion Apprentices. Just like in most trades and sciences, we have to learn before we can do. To be a faithful two-kingdom citizen in our world, there are helpful principles to learn,

and then learn how to use. Therefore we are all Champion Apprentices. We have actually developed a 5-Stage Journey to becoming everything you can be as a Champion Knight. You will learn more about why we use this terminology. Simply remember this: You will enjoy becoming confident in being a Christian in this world, and specifically how to engage with so many others on the cultural issues of our day. This course of learning will change your life, possibly your family, and hopefully your local community.

Let's talk a bit more about the Champions Academy. Everything you need will be accessible to you online basically. You may end up buying books or checking them out of a local library, but all of the learning modules are available to either individually online or your local Champions Chapter. A Champions Chapter is a group of Champion Apprentices and Facilitators meeting to learn and engage. Our Champions Academy online is divided up into Individual educational modules, group discussion sessions, group conversational practices, and book discussion resources. The Champions Academy is facilitated locally, in a Champions Chapter We encourage you to engage that local community of people being disciplined in two-kingdom engagement so as to be good stewards of our god-given responsibilities as faithful citizens in our country and world.

You will access the Champions Academy through a subscription. Your local facilitators will provide you with an access code for the Champions Academy. For those who want to learn but do not have a local chapter to help them, the LCRL National Champions Network Staff will help you join a Special Online Chapter, until a Local Chapter is founded. Remember we are not just learning for learning-sake. We

are learning and growing so that we can literally engage people in our own communities.

Let's talk about the objectives. Being a champion for religious liberty is not about conquering the world for Christ, as if we are launching a new season of the crusades. This is about championing religious liberty for others, even for those who are not religious or God-fearing. The concept reflects the philosophy of the Founding Fathers—specifically **James Madison** and **Thomas Jefferson**—who argued that freedom of conscience is a natural, unalienable right that underpins all other civil liberties. The idea is that if the government can control what you believe, it can inevitably control what you say, write, and do.

Our champions are servant minded, people who have a Christlike mindset. Some of us are very passionate and want to get going ASAP, sort of like the apostle Peter we learn about in the Gospels. He was quick with a sword, like, lopping off ears, and Jesus telling Peter as he's reattaching the servant's ear: "No not that way, Peter."

We want you to spend some time learning principles like Dynamic Differentiation, Reformation Restraint and Vocation Respect, the very principles that cause us to slow down and see what God is up to in His left-hand kingdom before we go in and try to make changes that may seem so obvious to us, but may not be what God would have us do. So a good deal of focused and practical learning is always better.

The last element to this first lesson is this: The Champions Academy Sessions are five-fold in purpose with each of these being a part of our time together each session:

- Inspirational - Inspiring you to live out as a champion for religious liberty

- Educational - Helping you to understand, navigate, and depoliticize the issues of the day
- Prayerful - Guiding your...learning into the Lord's calling for faithful, public living
- Social - Supporting one another and others with two-kingdom engagement
- Missional - the Academy has you working on an advocacy plan for your community. Your plan will help you coordinate your engagement for religious liberty in your community. Have a plan for all of you working together, everyone working small tasks will help you raise God's voice for the good of all.

Let's explore a few more parts of the Champions Academy

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING MODULES

As a subscriber we want you to work through each learning modules, hopefully keeping pace with the other Champion Participants in your local Champions Chapter. This will allow for better discussion orientation when you come together as a group. Normally Champion Chapters meet once a month for the lesson discussions. This is where you can discuss together and practice your conversation skills. So, first work through the easy to follow individual learning modules.

GROUP DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Champion Chapters will provide for a Once-A-Month Group Discussion Session. In these sessions you can discuss what you learned through the individual learning objectives, helping underscore the main points. The local Champions Chapter will facilitate 1) Community Engagement Plans; 2) Prayer & Worship Opportunities; 3) Book Discussion Groups; 4) Key Two-Kingdom Bible Study Opportunities for

your congregation; 5) Launch another Champions Group, either at your church or another church in your community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLANS

As was mentioned before, we do not learn for learning's sake. We are learning how to put our temporal liberties to work for the greater liberties found in Christ Jesus. We seek to be useful in our communities to help bless culture and local, governing authorities and agencies. Therefore our Champion Apprentices and ranks get involved in the civic affairs of the local and state community. Your Champion Chapter's Community Engagement Facilitators will help get engaged, slowly at first, and then as God gives you confidence to grow into that stewardship. Remember, it is important for governing authorities to get to know you as much as you affirm or question their actions. As Christians and two-kingdom citizens, we engage culture with a wholly different mindset and approach than many others. Get involved, you will. For this Session: Consider what places in your community can you visit and then commit to praying for the people and their work in that place or area. How will you commit to praying for them?

BOOK DISCUSSION SESSIONS

One of the fun ways to learn together is to read a book or two together. Some people read a lot of books and others haven't read a book in years. Therefore, we have created a couple of different reading lists: The Casual Reader List and the Avid Reader List. Some books appear on both. Your local Chapter should have one or two Book Facilitators who will organize the Book Discussions. A great way to get out into your community is for our Book Discussion Groups to meet at local coffee houses or restaurants. That's a great way to invite others in the community to participate with you. It just might end up being evangelistic in nature, too.

PRAYER & WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Once or twice a year there are National Days of Prayer, that Civil Authorities might call for in the country, state or local community. Your Champions Chapter will want to be prepared to engage, at least with local prayer in your church and when appropriate in public. Election Times are times for prayer. The National Day of Prayer in the United States is always in May. State Legislative Sessions are great opportunities for prayer. Even helping your pastor remember to pray for key culture issues is something that the local Champions Chapter helps to facilitate. And we encourage our Champions to be involved in literally going out and praying over their local communities. You know, everything we do is God's Work. Therefore, we need to be in prayer far more often, seeking God's guidance in how we should interact in many more of our interactions with people. Your local Champions Chapter will have a Prayer Facilitator or two to help coordinate prayer efforts.

KEY TWO-KINGDOM BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

As your Champions Chapter gets rooted and growing in knowledge, peace, and confidence, there will come the opportunity to help facilitate more two-kingdom Bible Study resources for others in your congregation. Let's be honest, so many Christians are afraid of the political sphere and politicians. Some people believe that politics has no place in the church. We might all agree with that in some way or another. After all, one of the first principles we will learn in the Champions Academy is that God distinguishes between the work of the Church and the work of the State. Just remember, both entities, State and Church, are God's entities, His institutions. While each has their special callings, they are actually not separate from one another. They are meant to work in concert with one another. Our Founding Fathers believed that, and created a constitution that abides by that.

So, when the time is right, and a number Champion Apprentices have moved up ranks, there will be great moments when Champions can help facilitate healthy two-kingdom resources for people to taste and see that the LORD is good in the civil realm as well as the spiritual realm.

LEARNING CHAMPIONS VOCABULARY THIS SESSION

LCRL - Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty - This is an organization that was launched by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in 2017. The Center provides input, education, advice, advocacy, and resources in the areas of life, marriage and religious liberty and seeks to engage in discussions in Washington, D.C., to establish partnerships and resources in our nation's Capital for the sake of our churches, schools, universities, and seminaries.

LCMS - Lutheran Church Missouri Synod - The **LCMS** typically refers to **The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**, a conservative Protestant denomination in the United States. Established in 1847 by German immigrants, it is known for its strong commitment to "confessional Lutheranism," meaning its teachings strictly align with the historic Lutheran confessions found in the Book of Concord. Headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, the LCMS is the second-largest Lutheran denomination in the U.S., with over 2 million baptized members.

LCRL Champions Network - Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty is LCMS' Advocacy Voice in Washington D.C. In order to support the work of The Center the growth of a two-kingdom-minded network of citizens magnifies the impact of the Church's advocacy in the nation's capitol and at the state capitals around the country. Let's review what we learned in our introduction.

Last thing we want to do is ask you to begin learning by heart our LCRL Champions Network Theme Bible Passage: 1 Peter 2:15-17. How do you learn this passage by heart, by learning by heart phrase by phrase. This week, learn the first phrase. Next week add the next phrase. The third week, add the third phrase. With each phrase simply say to yourself over and over and over again. Then say it to your children or to your parents or to your neighbors, etc. Before you know it, you will have learned by heart long passages of Scripture. And you will be blessed beyond measure.

Here is 1 Peter 2:15-17:

15 "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."