

*B<sub>4</sub>T Champions*

*Workbook*



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# RELATIONSHIP

# 1

LESSON

**H**ello and welcome to the B4T Champions discipleship training! Over these next several months, we will be learning the valuable insights and practices of Business for Transformation (B4T) and how to begin advocating for B4T in the context in which we live. Expect to be challenged, equipped, and encouraged to live out new personal habits and to start new initiatives that will touch the local church, community, and the nations of the earth for the glory of God. Thanks for investing this season of life to become a B4T Champion!

In this lesson, we will be looking at the most foundational component of B4T, the priority of relationship. Unlike all created things, the reality of relationship does not have a beginning. Instead, it is a foundational and immutable characteristic of God, who has always existed in relationship with the other members of the Trinity (Genesis 1:1-3, 26, John 1:1-2, John 17:5). This aspect of God's character may be the only reason anything other than God even exists. Therefore, relationship is where our journey begins for understanding God, His design for us, and the work of championing B4T.

## God's Relational Nature

Perhaps no other claim more adequately sums up God's relational nature than John's inspired declaration that God is love (1 John 4:7). Though it's possible to love oneself, which God certainly does, the fullest expression and demonstration of this core attribute of God can best be seen within the context of His relationship to another unique being. As Paul states in 1

### *Key passages:*

*God is love.*

-1 John 4:8b

*This is my command: Love each other.*

-John 15:17

**NOTES:**

Corinthians 13:5, “[love] is not self-seeking.” Therefore, love presupposes relationship not to oneself but to another. God has always modeled this kind of relationship within the context of the three Persons of the Trinity.

God the Father lavishes love on the Son (Matthew 3:17, 17:5, John 15:9). The Son lovingly adores and submits to the Father (Mark 12:30, Luke 22:42, John 14:31). The Spirit perfectly obeys the Father and Son’s unified will to testify about and glorify the name of the Son (John 15:26, 16:14). Out of this extraordinary and glorious dynamic of loving relationship among the Godhead bursts forth the creation of all things. This includes the creation of human beings designed to reflect His image through loving relationships.

## God’s Design for Human Relationships

*“The most important [commandment],” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”* (Mark 12:29-31)

In the beginning, it is clear that God created man for relationship. God placed the first man, Adam, in a garden (Genesis 2:15) where God Himself personally visited with him (Genesis 3:8) and spoke to him (Genesis 1:28). These initial circumstances for human existence demonstrate God’s primary design for humans: to hear God’s voice and enjoy God’s presence. It also shows that the first and foremost relationship man can have is with God Himself. Before Adam had any other relationships, he knew God. But God wasn’t finished. Later, God created woman to be a helper for man because “it is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). In this act of creation, we learn that though relationship with God is supreme,

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humans were also designed for relationship with one another.

*NOTES:*

Jesus reiterates these truths in the New Testament by summing up all of the law into His famous command in Mark 12:29-31. It turns out that relationships are so important for humans that the greatest commands God gives are about having right relationships—first with Himself and then with others. When these relationships are healthy and rightly ordered, everything else flourishes.

### ***Relationship with God***

*My prayer is not for [the twelve disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)*

One can hardly overemphasize the importance of a relationship with God. As stated before, God designed us to know Him. Jesus affirms this design with His words (Mark 12:29-31), His prayers (John 17:20-21), and His actions (Hebrews 12:2b). Ultimately, Jesus guarantees that multitudes from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will end up in a blessed eternal relationship (John 17:3, Revelation 7:9) with God because of Jesus' spilt blood (Revelation 5:9). It's the overarching metanarrative of the entire Bible.

However, we have a part to play as well. God does not force anyone to love Him back. God has given us the responsibility to receive His love and love Him in return. The chief way we show God our love is by obeying His commands and abiding in Him (John 14:21-24, 15:5-10).

This two-way relationship between God and man is a fundamental axiom of existence. St. Augustine writes: "Without God, we cannot. Without us, He will not."<sup>1</sup> Only God knows why He has ordered the

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in *If God Be For Us: Sermons on the Gifts of the Gospel* (1954), by Robert Edward Luccock, p. 38; this may be a variant translation or paraphrase of an expression in his 169th sermon: "He who created you without you will not justify you without you."

*NOTES:*

universe this way. Certainly, God could accomplish much more without us, but being efficient doesn't appear to be His primary goal. Instead, God prefers to have a genuine relationship with us! Therefore, let's respond in kind by prioritizing relationship with God over all else.



Discuss it!

## ***Relationship with People***

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)*

The Bible is littered with dozens of instructions for relating to one another—encourage one another, be kind to one another, pray for one another—and all of this can be summed up by Jesus' words to "love one another" (John 13:34) and echoed by Peter's words, "above all, love each other deeply..." (1 Peter 4:8).

We know that the only way we can love anyone is because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). It follows from this that since Christ plainly demonstrated God's love for all of us (John 3:16), there is literally no person on earth we cannot also love and have a relationship with. This is the secret sauce of God's kingdom. People yearn for genuine connection with other humans across all demographics, ages, mental abilities, and social groups. This is why depriving them of human connection is considered by some leading researchers to be nothing less than torture.<sup>2</sup> The hardest criminal, the staunchest atheist, the proudest advocate of a false religion are all hard-wired at their core to let God's love in, no matter the consequences.

When we love people like God does, we will see lives transformed. It's why the apostle Paul could say, "love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8a). It's also why

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, J. Wesley. "Solitary Confinement: Torture, Pure and Simple." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 15 Jan. 2018, [www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/almost-addicted/201801/solitary-confinement-torture-pure-and-simple](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/almost-addicted/201801/solitary-confinement-torture-pure-and-simple).

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Jesus tells us to love one another; He wants the watching world to see what it looks like.

God made us first to know and love Him, and in that way we can truly know and love one another.

*NOTES:*



Discuss it!

## Relationship and B4T Champions

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)*

As B4T Champions, we desire first and foremost to be people that walk with God in all phases of our lives. We believe the fruit of our work in championing B4T is tied to how well we learn to listen to God's voice and obey. This priority of relationship with God over task can often create a tension between chaos and order that we must learn to live with. For this reason, we don't shy away from presenting an orderly process for becoming a B4T Champion; yet we must constantly check our hearts to make sure our relationship with God is still preeminent.

Many people start with a strong sense of dependence on God's leading when their work feels chaotic and uncomfortable; but as their work matures and they develop mastery over their processes, there is a temptation to rely on God less, subtly becoming resistant to His new directions. As B4T Champions, we must learn to navigate this tension such that listening to and obeying God's voice is our process.

As we meet together, if at any minute someone feels we've lost focus on God as we discuss a topic or issue, we want to call a timeout so we can resubmit ourselves to Him. This value of relationship is also why it is important that each person spends intentional time seeking the Lord to make sure He wants them to be part of this group. If what we are doing is of Him, we have hope for success; if not, let's find something

### NOTES:

else to do. Our desire IS NOT to make plans and ask God to bless them, but rather to hear what His plans are and do that. We must train ourselves to always remain in the vine.

We must also think carefully about how love should direct our work of influencing people for God and B4T. Are we willing to invest in people and churches as their servants, regardless of what we get from them? How much time and money is a genuine relationship worth? What does loving one another look like in our context?

Here are some practical ways we build and maintain relationships as B4T Champions:

- We seek to build relationships through face-to-face meetings, video calls, and ongoing communication with individuals and church leaders for as long as they want and at whatever level of involvement they find most helpful.
- Over time, with God's help, we begin to recognize the unique assignment God has for each individual and church in order to customize a process that makes sense for them.
- One of the most important questions we must ask every time someone agrees to meet with us is, "How can we serve you?" and then make sure to pray for them before the meeting ends.
- When we come as servants, truly valuing their interests above our own, it builds trust and grows relationships. As stated by one B4T Champion: "Loving people is our agenda. There is no other agenda."



Discuss it!

## Summary

Let's not forget the reason that the Gospel is good news. As Jesus says in John 17:3, "Now this is eternal

life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” The Gospel is good news because we get to have an eternal relationship with God, and through this relationship we are able to love others.

*NOTES:*

It is a joy to journey together to become B4T Champions. May the emphasis on relationship permeate everything we do in this training and beyond.

*Goal: To discover the importance of prioritizing relationships with God and people as we champion B4T.*

# 1

ASSIGNMENTS

## B4T Champion LIFE Assignments

*L=Learn, I=Integrate, F=Foster, E=Enjoy*

Please visit [openusa.net/B4Tchampions](https://openusa.net/B4Tchampions) for the complete list of homework assignments and corresponding links.

### WEEK 1

- L Read John 14-17 and write down what you learn about relationships. *Leave feedback in online form.*
- I Spend 15 minutes with God without having an agenda.
- I Schedule a time this month to meet with a church leader to tell them what you are doing and ask them for prayer. Ask them if they'd be willing to meet with you every month of the B4T Champion training to update them on what you are learning and to pray with them. If they cannot meet regularly, ask if they know someone in leadership who can (e.g., another pastor, elder, deacon). This person should be a personal advocate for you to encourage you throughout the training.
- F Pray for 3 people in your sphere of influence (e.g., work friend, family member, church friend) to grow in their relationship with God and others.
- F Share with someone what you are learning about relationships.

E Praise the Lord for being in relationship with Him and other people.

E Plan a time this month to hang out with some friends and do anything you like. Just delight in being with them!

## WEEK 2

L Read Patrick Lai's blog entry about the importance of relationships. *Leave feedback in online form.*

L Read "The Gospel in B4T." *Leave feedback in online form.*

I Spend 15 minutes with God without having an agenda.

F Pray for 3 people in your sphere of influence (*e.g.*, work friend, family member, church friend) to grow in their relationship with God and others.

E Praise the Lord for being in relationship with Him and other people.

E Tell someone how much you value your relationship with them.

## WEEK 3

L Read "Tentmaking Rosetta Stone."

L Read the Tentmaking section titled "Living the Life" on pages 257-264. *Leave feedback in online form.*

I Spend 15 minutes with God without having an agenda.

F Pray for 3 people in your sphere of influence (*e.g.*, work friend, family member, church friend) to grow in their relationship with God and others.

F Share with someone what you are learning about relationships.



Praise the Lord for being in relationship with Him and other people.

## WEEK 4



Watch the “Up Close” video and in your words write down what you think B4T is all about. *Leave feedback in online form.*



Spend 15 minutes with God without having an agenda.



Pray for 3 people in your sphere of influence (*e.g.*, work friend, family member, church friend) to grow in their relationship with God and others.



Praise the Lord for being in relationship with Him and other people.



Tell someone how much you value your relationship with them.

Access [openusa.net/B4Tchampions](https://openusa.net/B4Tchampions) when you are done with these assignments to submit feedback and new ideas for homework, content, processes, etc.

### *Want to go deeper in this topic?*

- Read *Tentmaking* by Patrick Lai. (For a monthly reading plan, see Appendix on page 95.)
- Read *Calvary Road* by Roy Hession.
- Read *A Tale of The Three Kings* by Gene Edwards.