

What is Christian Coaching?

**Frequently asked questions and
answers about Christian
coaching**

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Introduction

“Coaching” is a word that has come into popular use in recent years. Various kinds of self-described “coaches” have emerged, advertising what they do as coaching. Some of the misunderstanding of coaching is a basic confusion with the word itself. Is it someone who tells someone what to do like a sports coach calling in the plays? Or is it something else? Then there are the assumptions and impressions some from the world of coaching give about the rationale, power and influence of the coach and the person being coached. It is no wonder that people are skeptical or negative about coaching.

The following pages seek to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about coaching. The goal is to clarify and differentiate coaching from other helping skills as well as to define and differentiate Christian coaching from others who practice coaching in our world today who may not be followers of Jesus Christ.

What is the foundation of “Christian” Coaching?

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1 NIV.

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” Philippians 3:8–9 NIV.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 cor 5:17 NIV.

It all begins with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is entirely “in Christ” that the Christian coach finds their salvation, identity, their being and what follows, what they do. What that ends up looking like for a coach is someone who provides the “grace space” for the coaching client to explore where they are, where they need to be and how to get there.

It is only “in Christ” that we can truly be forgiven, die to self and live for others. And in the coaching relationship, dying to self is critical, foundational and necessary. “It’s not about you” is a phrase that fits especially well for the coaching relationship. The point is that knowing who you are “in Christ” and also “whose” you are, is the place to begin. It is from that place where the coach can truly devote themselves to Jesus and the person across from them and “do” the best kind of coaching that will serve the coaching client for their highest good.

What is coaching?

To begin, we are not talking about sports coaching. We also are not talking about telling someone what to do. Rather, coaching is a helping skill that involves a focused dialogue primarily through questions on the part of the coach.

Various definitions of coaching have been developed to describe more precisely what happens during a coaching dialogue.

“Partnering with clients in a thought provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” *From the International Coach Federation.*

“Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their growth.” “Coaching... is helping [people] to learn rather than teaching them.” John Whitmore, in *Coaching for Performance*

“Coaching is the art and practice of guiding a person or group from where they are toward the greater competence and fulfillment that they desire.” Gary Collins, in *Christian Coaching*

“Coaching is practicing the disciplines of believing in people in order to empower them to change.” Tony Stoltzfus, in *Leadership Coaching, the Disciplines, Heart and Skills of a Christian Coach*

“Mentoring is imparting to you what God has given me; coaching is drawing out of you what God has put in you.” Dale Stoll

“Coaching is helping people grow without telling them what to do.”

“[Coaching is] helping people discover what they could not discover on their own, so they can become what they want to become.” Aubrey Malphurs, in *Maximizing Your Effectiveness*

With these definitions, coaching can easily apply to many instances where one is to be helped and supported in one's development by another. Therefore coaching can be of service in many arenas of life. The spectrum can run from an informal one time conversation to a longer term formal coaching relationship.

Is Coaching Biblical? Can coaching even be “Christian?”

The Bible does not use the word “coach” nor does it speak of coaching. Yet there are numerous examples of this helping skill reflected in various conversations in the Bible. They may not be a whole coaching conversation yet parts and pieces of the elements of a coaching conversation are present in many of the interactions in the Bible.

Coaching Elements in the Bible

God seeks Adam and Eve in the garden and calls, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). God says to Cain, “Why are you angry?” and “Where is your brother Abel?” (Gen 4:6 & 9). Certainly God knew the answers to these questions but in keeping with what we may call good coaching, God asks these questions for the hearer’s benefit rather than to simply gain information or make a point. These questions serve a higher purpose, to raise awareness in Adam and Cain about what has happened so they understand the seriousness of what they have done. You may even say that it is in the broader category of preaching the law as the hearer, in this case Cain, could come to an awareness of his sin and guilt.

When Jethro joined up with Moses he observed how Moses was managing the judgment for the people. Jethro began with a question, “What is this you are doing for the people?” Then there was a follow up question, “Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?” (Ex 18:14). This causes Moses to answer him and try to explain. It does not say how long this dialogue goes on. Yet one may infer that this exploration of the facts and the question by Jethro that it helped Moses to be open minded to what followed from Jethro, specifically some practical advice about delegation and managing the work.

Nathan employs the metaphor of the poor man and his young ewe lamb in 2 Samuel 12. This led to David’s awareness of his own sin and the serious nature of what he had done. If Nathan had simply said to David, “you sinned against God” in a direct way, like so many other prophets have done, it may still have had its intended effect. Yet in this case the story or metaphor of the abuse of the poor man got past David’s potential denial of his own sin and powerfully convicted him when Nathan said to him, “you are the man” (2 Sam 12:7).

In coaching, there is a goal of “connecting the dots” and help us see beyond our own blind spots or denial through questions that direct us to think in ways we may not have thought about.

In Luke 10 Jesus answered a question with a question: “On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ 26 ‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’” in Luke 9 Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with Him. He asked them the question, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” Then Jesus had a follow up question after their answers. “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” This was a means to teach and also a means to get people to think. It was not manipulative, but helpful to guide them through the thinking process and owning their answers.

Is coaching sinful or a blessing from God?

We have an appreciation for God’s gifts in many areas of life (James 1:17). Many things flow from God’s gracious hand as He provides for every living thing (Psalm 145:16). In that sense God provides His gifts like counseling and teaching and also coaching. In this sense, coaching can be Christian as long as a Christian practices coaching from the posture and assumptions of a Christian.

Furthermore, we would not reject out of hand coaching as sinful, unholy or patently unchristian just because some non-Christians apply unchristian or anti-Christian assumptions or principles to their coaching. In the same way, we would not reject counseling out of hand just because Sigmund Freud or Carl Jung or some other early influential psychologist promoted some unbiblical or antichristian psychological theories. As with any gift from God it can be abused or appreciated, a curse or a blessing.

What makes one a Christian Coach and what is their mindset?

For the careful Christian who also is a coach, they will remember that anyone who has been baptized by Christ have “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). They will see themselves as “in Christ” (Rom 6, 8; 2 Cor 5:17, 19; Eph 1:3). They will hold to the promise that they are connected to the vine, Christ Jesus and produce fruit through Him (John 15; Luke 19:11-27; Mark 11:13—14; Eph 2:10). This fruit is not by their own strength or by their own training or wisdom as a coach or anything else, but only in Christ.

This perspective makes a world of difference when the coach interacts with others in general but even more importantly when they are in a coaching relationship. There will be love and devotion to the one being coached as a reflection of how God relates to us. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The fruit of the spirit will be evident (Gal 5:22 & 1 Cor 13). There will be a spirit of humility as the coach considers others “better than (them)selves” Phil 2:3. There will be a losing of ones-self in service to the one being

coached and they will bring a spirit of worship to all that they do (Eph 5:20 “giving thanks in everything” and Col 3:17 “doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”). It will not be about them as coach. The focus will be on serving the one who is being coached.

What assumptions does the Christian Coach have about the person being coached?

Whether the person being coached is a professing Christians or not, the Christian coach sees them as people for whom Christ died (John 3:16). Coaches will understand that they and the ones being coached are not perfect, but they will also understand that Jesus died for both of them. That means that both are persons that God loves and seeks to forgive. This view of God towards the other will cause the self-aware, mature Christian coach to not fall into manipulation, controlling behaviors, or otherwise have unhealthy attitudes or boundaries with respect to the person they coach.

One prominent coaching school advocates a high view of the person being coached as well. They say that people are “naturally creative, resourceful and whole.” As Christians we would put it differently of course. We might say that people are “naturally creative, resourceful and whole only through Christ.”

Co-author of *Faith Coaching*, Christian coach Chad Hall writes in his blog through Coach Approach Ministries (<http://ca-ministries.com/a-response-to-gospel-coach>) that some react with strong negativity to coaching because of what they perceive as preconceived inherent entanglement of coaching with humanism where it teaches that people are basically good and need to look within. Not true for the Christian Coach. Hall says that Christians may look within to “discover hidden strengths, latent talent, unused knowledge, unapplied wisdom, dormant values, and self-evident evidence that their life is not aligning with (the scriptures).” But not for their own goodness and never for salvation.

Where did coaching come from?

Historically, Socrates was known for his questions to engage the students. It was a form of inquiry whereby questions would be used to stimulate critical thinking and illuminate ideas. Socratic, thought-provoking questions are a cornerstone of coaching as they facilitate thinking out loud, develop critical and creative thinking and therefore promote self discovery and learning by the one being coached. Then questions are also employed as a means by which those thoughts translate into intentional choices and behaviors.

Vickie Brock PhD wrote in her groundbreaking work, *Sourcebook of Coaching History* and speaks of the history of coaching by tracing it back to what she calls “root” disciplines such

as socioeconomic theories, philosophy, psychology, business, sports, adult education and other disciplines. Each has their influence in the emergence of coaching in the twentieth century. Yet she credits sports coaching as the catalyst that brought coaching its own identity. Thus she observes that coaching is a hybrid field that itself now branches out into life and business specialties.

According to Bill Dueease, writing for the Peer Bulletin 172 in 2009, the term “coaching” began somewhere in the late 1880’s in the sports field. Then in 1972 W. T. Gallwey wrote *The Inner Game of Tennis* which represented the first major transition from sports coaching with control and teaching to instead facing the challenge that the opponent within is often more formidable than the opponent in the sports match. Sir John Whitmore believed that “Gallwey was the first to demonstrate a simple and comprehensive method of coaching that could be readily applied to almost any situation” (Dueease, 2009).

In recent decades, coaching appeared in the late 1970’s in the business world, seemingly as a response to changes in leadership models and business culture. Then in the 1980’s coaching began to appear outside the business context. In the 1990’s coaching began to emerge as a distinct discipline. An example of this is the founding in 1995 of the International Coach Federation, the most widely respected certifying body for coaching.

How does coaching work?

When someone comes to you for help, what is your immediate reaction? You want to help. This person comes to you and asks a question and you try to provide the answer or at least think out loud with them to come up with your best guess or best idea as to what would most help them. If you are a lawyer, accountant, plumber, mechanic, pastor or other specialist, you seek to answer their questions out of your specialty. That is normal and in many instances exactly what is needed.

And what often happens? Many times people reject other people’s advice. Why? Simply put, it is not their idea. It may not be what they want to hear. It may not be what they expected to hear. They may not be ready to hear it. In short, the success rate of people hearing, understanding, accepting and absorbing and acting upon the advice that is given is relatively small. Certainly there are exceptions. Often times we go to the expert for advice: doctors, lawyers, etc. Yet even there how many of us heed the advice of the professional? We don’t like hearing that we have to lose 25 pounds and so we resist what they say.

Coaching helps people ask themselves new questions, to think in ways outside of their normal patterns, and “put two and two together” so that they see what they need to do, decide what they need to decide and to take action.

For example, what do called workers do when they receive a call into ministry? A number of things are done: prayer, scripture reading, and the counsel of wise friends and advisors. Yet there are also other approaches that are often included. How many pastors considering a call didn't write down two columns of the positive and negative reasons for accepting a new call? How many of us appreciated the questions those wise friends and colleagues asked us? Perhaps it was a question someone asked us that led to our decision. Perhaps it was the way someone summarized what we just said and we heard it coming back to us in a new way. Then somewhere along the way, the fog blows away and the decision becomes clear. There may even be an “ah-ha” moment where clear thinking emerged and the decision became self-evident. Those friends who are wise know they can't “tell” their friend what to do. They are not the Holy Spirit! Yet in these situations many friends and colleagues will help the one with the call to “think through” the decision. In many ways this is very close to what happens during coaching. Someone comes along side the other and serves as a “thinking partner” to assist the other to get unstuck. Thought in this way, coaching is not so foreign after all!

How is coaching different from other helping skills?

Consulting

Often the consultant is called in to help an organization to analyze their situation and help them determine a way forward. They ask questions, gather data but in the end they deliver a report with recommendations. They tell someone what to do out of their expertise.

Teaching

A teacher is often viewed as the one who stands in front of the class and lectures about a subject: Math, science, history, etc. The caricature of a teacher is someone in front of a classroom or lecture hall who presents what they know. So they are the expert in their particular field and they help the students by telling them more about the subject at hand. To be sure good teachers ask rhetorical questions of the class yet the primary example of a teacher is that of an expert sharing their expertise with the class by telling them about it. Once again they help by telling.

Counseling

What does a counselor do? They are experts in mental health and assisting people to move forward out of their pathology or hurt. The difference between counseling and coaching has been described in this way: the counselor helps bring someone from a negative place to a normal place. The coach on the other hand brings someone from a normal place to an even more focused, productive and effective place.

Coaching presumes a certain level of mental health and ability. While some might view working with the coach as remedial or an indication that they are in a negative place, typically those who are involved in coaching are those who want to get even better. So coaching is distinct from counseling while there may be a number of common elements.

Mentoring

In business and industry and even the church, the term is used to describe the older wiser practitioner or pastor who takes a younger protégée under his wing. The mentor has the wisdom and experience, they are the expert in their field and they help by telling. They may also ask questions and may tell stories yet the primary benefit of the mentoring relationship is the wisdom and experience of the older, wiser practitioner being shared with the younger protégé. They also help by telling.

Pastor

The average person observe pastors standing in front of the church or class teaching the Bible. Are there exceptions? Sure. Pastors often engage in “pastoral care and counseling” where they go to the hospital and meet people and speak with them confidentially about their particular spiritual struggles. They ask questions, they listen, they care, they read the Bible and they pray and often give advice. Yet in this instance and at their core, the pastor is primarily the expert by virtue of his training and he helps by telling people that expertise. They too help by telling.

Advisor

What does an advisor do? By definition they give advice! This is another helping skill that speaks information in order to help. In many ways it is a general term that includes many of the above helping skills.

Coach

The coach by comparison has as an expertise is in his or her coaching. They see the other person or client as having expertise in their situation. After all, the coach will never completely understand and appreciate the nuances of the coach client's situation. They could tell the coach client what to do but will they really own it and act upon it? There may be hesitancy for many reasons, one being that the coach (or in this case, the advisor) doesn't quite read the situation correctly and so their diagnosis and prescription are off. But the main goal is ownership and passionately moving forward. In the end, the coach didn't tell them what to do. The coach was a thinking partner for their exploring and choosing what to do whether the step was large or small.

With helping skills other than coaching there is a transfer of information or learning from the helper to the person being helped. We may call it advice, wisdom, experience, teaching, and so on. Each have their place and importance. Yet with coaching the expertise for the coach is in their coaching skills, not in transferring information or knowledge. Therefore the difference between coaching and many other helping skills is that the coach helps by asking questions instead of helping through telling or sharing information.

Consider this chart which illustrates where the various helping skills primarily reside:

	I help by asking	I help by telling
The other person (the person being helped) is the expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach 	
I am the expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Mentor • Consultant • Advisor • Pastor

In general there is a shift when it comes to coaching:

- From telling or advising to asking questions
- From fixing or solving problems to promoting discovery, awareness and intentional choice
- From assuming they need your expertise or that you are smarter than they are to acknowledging that they know a lot and can solve what it is they are facing.

- From feeling responsible to resolve their problem to leaving the responsibility with the person being helped.

When should coaching be used and not used?

We are not saying that coaching is superior or should be used in place of all others. There is a definite time and place for each helping skill. They each have value for specific needs and situations. If it is an emergency or there are strict time constraints then coaching is not the answer. The leader does not coach people out of a burning building. This would be a time sensitive or emergency situation and a leader should simply tell people where to go and how to get there. If there is a need for new information or technical knowledge then coaching is not the answer. Sometimes classroom learning or reading new material and content is the best thing that is needed. On the other hand, if there is a concern for quality or maximizing the learning for people and facilitating their forward movement, then coaching is the best choice.

Can or should coaching be used in instances of spiritual or pastoral care?

If a Christian coach sees who they are in Christ as His baptized child, sees themselves in service to the other, and in love seeks to help, then coaching can be a powerful resource or additional tool for the caring spiritual shepherd. While proclaiming law and gospel, teaching the Bible, catechesis, pastoral care will be standard items in the pastor's toolkit, there can also be a place for coaching. It is yet another way of engaging people to think about their spiritual life and relationship to their God and Savior. What will that look like? It will most likely look like a shift from "telling" people what to do to helping them through deep listening and questions to help people think things through. It is a way for them to consider where they are and where God would want them to be and then determine what they will do, empowered by Christ. It is a way to courageously invite them to be intentional in what they will do in being faithful disciples as they repent and believe and follow Jesus. Thus coaching is not a replacement or a superior way to be a faithful shepherd yet it is an additional approach that may prove helpful in many cases.

What place can coaching play in leading a church?

Much of the day-to-day work of church life involves working with people in organizing projects, programs and other forms of work. It involves meetings that are formal and informal, planning and encouraging people who may be experienced leaders or those who are just getting started. In each of these settings, coaching is a powerful resource to serve those who serve. How can coaching help? The Christian coach leader will engage with

people with a Biblical and theological worldview and the larger perspective of what Jesus wants for His church. The Christian coaching leader will assist people to assume appropriate responsibility and grow in their knowledge and skills and actually do what is needed. There will be respect and an honoring of the gifts that God provides both to the pastor and the priesthood of believers through good Christian coaching.

That may look like the pastor taking a coach approach by engaging in the dialogue in the council meeting or board meeting with questions. They will help the group to think about the issue with God in mind, with the greater good of the community in mind, with the church's shared vision in mind. It may also look like the coaching leader asking clarifying questions not only about the issue at hand but also after the solution is agreed upon. For example they can ask who will do what and when so that everyone is aware of what has been decided and exactly what can be expected or exactly will be done. This is using coaching skills for the benefit of the ministry without the leader telling what should be done and thus setting themselves up as the person to be agreed with or challenged. Power plays and dependency are avoided and there is broad ownership of the solution and action steps. All of these are healthy ways the church can live together and move forward.

Are there any standards or oversight in the world of coaching?

The international Coach Federation (ICF) began in 1995 and has established a list of coaching competencies and ethical standards for coaches. They have also established a process of evaluating and credentialing coaches based upon those competencies. Furthermore they work with coaching educational entities granting their approval should their coach educational content and process conform to those competencies and standards. Over the years their process has been continually updated and the requirements are considered quite demanding and rigorous. Their website is a wealth of information about coaching and gives an insight as into the growing profession and practice of coaching. <http://www.coachfederation.org>

The competencies for coaching that the ICF identifies are:

1. Setting the Foundation
 - a. Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards
 - b. Establishing the coaching agreement
2. Co-creating the relationship
 - a. Establishing trust and intimacy with the client
 - b. Coaching presence
3. Communicating effectively
 - a. Active listening

- b. Powerful questioning
- c. Direct communication
- 4. Facilitating learning and results
 - a. Creating awareness
 - b. Designing actions
 - c. Planning and goal setting
 - d. Managing progress and accountability

Some “Commandments” for Christian Coaching

Coaching is not a replacement for preaching or teaching God's Word.

Coaching is a wonderful helping skill. This does not mean that there is no room for preaching or teaching. Christian catechetical education, Bible study and preaching are mainstays of the way of the Christian. Having said that the opposite is also true. When one has Bible study and the preaching of the Word, there is also a place for dialogue where people can work with another for growth and development as Christians and as those who seek to fulfill a certain calling or vocation. For example, “iron sharpens iron” (Prov 27:17), certain offices in the church work to “prepare God’s people for works of service” (Eph 4:12), and we are called to encourage one another (Ron 12:8; 1 Thes 5:11; Heb 10:5 and others). Therefore there is also value in the conversation and consolation of the brothers. These other elements can be provided through dialogue that looks and sounds like coaching.

Coaching is not for every situation and is therefore not a cure all.

If there is an emergency or time concerns, coaching is not advisable. In these situations, which are often unavoidable beforehand, the voice of authority needs to speak for the safety and well being of others. “Walk quickly and calmly to the exits” to avoid a fire needs to be said by one voice for all to hear and take heed. Yet if the goal is personal development or maximizing the learning then coaching is well advised. This allows the one who is to develop, learn or grow to wrestle with the relevant material, information or facts and integrate them into their lives and behavior.

Coaching is not manipulation or leading them where you want them to go.

A good lawyer asks questions of which he or she knows the answer. Then a good lawyer will guide the witness to the testimony they want to hear. Not so with a good coach. Coaches

best serve their coach clients by taking advantage of where the coach client is already motivated or interested. This takes advantage of the pre-existing buy in of their interest or concern. To that end the coach will inquire of what it is they want to accomplish and ask questions to attain new insights or discoveries that will inspire them to new actions.

If the coach wants to tell them what to do and merely uses questions to take them there, then that is not coaching. It is manipulation. The coach best serves the coach client by advocating for the client and their interest or concern, not the coach's interest or concern. Having said that, the coach can certainly bring up what the two may have in common and identify values and beliefs that will potentially shape the outcome of the coaching conversation. For example, if both coach and coach client are Christians then it would not be manipulation for the coach to ask the coach client to name the boundaries of Biblical truths and sound doctrine that will shape where they want to go. In that case it is acknowledging what is already true for them. Having said that, a Christian coach working with someone who is not a Christian will not want to be a party to coaching someone toward an action or decision that is not God pleasing. In that instance the coach will be up front and honest and decline the coaching relationship and bear witness to their faith with the person being coached.

Coaching through questions does not equate to being soft on sin or dispensing cheap grace.

If one thinks that questions somehow relieve the person being coached from facing their sin is a misconception about coaching. Just because the coach does not “preach” at the person proclaiming law and gospel does not mean that this “proclamation” is not taking place. Refer to the case of God seeking out Adam in the garden and you find deep conviction of sin through God's questioning. Questions are often very challenging to answer! Asking someone to speak to their current reality of sin and then to confess what brought them there is humbling and shameful. To be a coach asking those questions and many others takes courage! A good coach has the courage to ask questions that challenge assumptions, put them on the “hot seat” to rethink what they are doing and where they are going. Questions encourage one to search their assumptions or what they are denying. It invites one to gauge how what they are thinking and doing coincides with God's revealed will and His desire to be gracious and merciful. Questions can indeed preach law and gospel.

Coaching is not only dialogue through questions.

Yes, the prevailing actions by the coach is asking questions. However, it is much more than that. There is listening, observing, and acknowledging what they are saying and doing and therefore affirming them. There are clarifying, reflecting and synthesizing statements by

the coach that are given which often bring together what has been said over many appointments. There are indeed times for direct messages which speak the truth in love and the coach will at times be identifying actions. Coaching has been described as “co-active” proposition where the person being coached is the primary partner in the collaboration. Therefore coaching is not just asking questions but involves other elements involved in a dialogue and the related skills.

Coaching should be dismissed because it takes too long. People should just accept the truth as it is told to them and act upon it.

We wish that things could be that simple. However, we know from our own experience and research that people often do not accept what another tells them and it is infrequently put into practice. If this were not true, then doctors could count on simply telling the heart patient to change their diet and lifestyle. Pastors could count on simply telling people to bear witness to their faith and the people would quickly conform. Yet human beings and human relationships do not work that way. This is parallel to the truth from Romans 7:8, “sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.” In other words, our sinful nature resists admitting sin and often that resistance turns to rebelliousness in doing what is forbidden. Or even more plainly, when we are told what to do, we sometimes act like children and do the exact opposite.

Yes, coaching takes time. Yet in careful coaching, with the elements of listening and asking questions we can unearth the core issues which may not have been dealt with. Short advice giving conversations or supervision seems to “cut to the chase” and tell people what they need to do, but unless we listen to what is really getting in the way and deal with it then we will be looking at the same problem over and over again. Coaching therefore is going slow at first in order to move much faster in the future. Coaching provides real progress. It is hard work. It takes time and patience. Yet once dealt with progress moves rapidly.

Concluding Thoughts

Coaching is not so new after all. It is a combination of things that have been used for millennia. Listening, asking questions for various purposes, guarding the agenda of the person being coached for their own sake, challenging their assumptions, reflecting back with them, and then asking them what they will do as a result of the dialogue. Yet it is not simply another confidential conversation with a friend but a system of working with people where they maintain responsibility for their thinking and actions and where the coach is the partner who supports them in the journey. It is flexible enough to be used either informally or formally, one on one or with groups. Coaching is for the sake of greater growth, development and productivity. It can be used for mundane things or significant life decisions. Coaching is a blessing to be received.

Coaching, like anything else can be used for good or for evil, with good intent or for bad. It can conform to one's preconceived worldview whether it be Christian or not. Yet the Christian who is also a coach has the blessing of being "in Christ" where there is law and gospel yet the gospel predominates. The Christian coach, empowered by Christ, can bring a true "grace space" to coaching where there is not only personal growth but spiritual growth as the person being coached intentionally goes forward empowered by Christ.

If you have other insights into coaching or other questions about coaching that we can add to this volume of "frequently asked questions" please share them with us at scottgress@me.com.

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About Scott:

Scott Gress serves as leadership coach and coach trainer, consultant and leadership presenter.

Scott graduated from Concordia Seminary St. Louis and received his Masters of Divinity in 1988. Prior to seminary he earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and worked for ADP, Automatic Data Processing. In December of 2003 he completed a Masters in Organizational Leadership from Palm Beach Atlantic University where he was also named the outstanding graduate of the MacArthur School of Leadership. He has served as an adjunct professor of Organizational Leadership at PBAU.

Scott began his formal coach training in 2006 through The Coaches Training Institute totaling 122 hours. In 2009 he was certified as a Transforming Church's Network (TCN) consultant. He is a member of the International Coach Federation from which he is certified as an Associate Certified Coach. He has continued to grow as a coach through Internal Impact, with 60 hours of advanced coach training earning their Global Certificate in Leadership Coaching in March of 2013 and Coach Approach Ministry's Coaching as Brain Based Learning in 2015.

Scott has served as a parish pastor after his ordination in 1988, circuit counselor for 11 years and First Vice President of the FL-GA District briefly prior to serving as a special coach consultant to the FL-GA District and Director of Coaching for TCN. Today Scott is called by Lutheran Counseling Services of Orlando FL and continues to serve the FL-GA district and the wider church, non-profits and others. He is an independent contractor in leadership training, consulting, coaching and coach training.

Scott and his wife Maria have two sons, Nathan and Stephen and reside in South Florida.

You may follow Scott on his blog at scottgress.com, and contact him to strategize how he can support your goals through a sample coaching session. 561-542-4472 or scottgress@me.com.

