



## Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

### Episode 31: David Knauss Part Two

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#### [Intro Music]

**Brian Miller:** Welcome to the Coach Approach Ministries podcast where we help people find their way with God by training the best Christian coaches in the world. I'm Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short. Today, I want to share with you part two of my interview with David Knauss, of Knauss Executive Coaching. We'll pick up with David sharing his first experience in executive coaching.

**David Knauss:** So we ended our time there, and I'm driving home, and I'm thinking, "Okay Lord, you called me out of full-time ministry overseas and into this coaching business, and now we're having significant life discussions with the CEO of the largest employer in our region," and we didn't even need business stuff. It was coaching a person from the get go, and I got paid for it.

**Brian:** That's what I wanted to ask you because as we think about... I've been a pastor for twenty years. You were a missionary, and you find yourself coaching in a health organization of which you have zero experience. Your wife's a nurse, which probably helped a little actually, but you don't have any experience at that level. How were you able to coach in that environment? Maybe you didn't need all that information, but I think that's what I and our listeners want to know.

**David:** I think that coaches, we really become an expert in the process. So the content really doesn't matter. Whether you're a rocket scientist or a CEO of a medical or whatever your context is. That doesn't really matter as much as being an expert in the process coaching. That process is tried, it's true, it's biblical, and it works. So we as coaches become an expert in the process of coaching.

**Brian:** Yes, so there's the difference. We still think we need to know something about the issue to solve the problem, but the process works. I hear that from people who didn't trust it. I know in areas I didn't trust it, and then I just had to give it a chance. I couldn't believe how well the process works.

**David:** It's amazing, and if you couple that now with as believers, and honestly just in the last year or two this has become more prevalent in my own coaching. We have something that nobody else in the world has, and that is we have direct access to the King of the Universe. The One who created everything, and He talks to us. We have the Spirit of God living in us and giving us wisdom. So if we're listening, again we've got our skills so the process we understand that, but we're also listening at the

same time to the Creator who can give us things to ask, awarenesses to bring, creativity in the process. It's quite a powerful one-two punch if you will.

**Brian:** So you got your training. You definitely knew how to coach. There was just something about you as a person, which I think is really important as a coach, that people really leaned into you, and said, "We want to work with this guy." You find yourself coaching at a major employer, a major hospital, working with some top, top people. Where does it go from there?

**David:** Just a few months into that process, I said, "Lord, I'm struggling with this, what should I do? Should I incorporate or is there still a ministry process you still want me to be involved in outside of the corporate world?" Because I mentioned the coach I had called, my previous supervisor through this sabbatical, he and his wife had retired and they had started a ministry to pastors and ministries called Life Impact, and Life Impact, they had decided that they wanted coaching as the foundation of that. What they do is they bring in coaches and pastors, Christian leaders, to a safe and confidential place where they could get rest for their heart, their souls, their bodies, in an environment where they can open up and talk about real issues.

So, pastors, it's hard to do that with your staff, as you probably know, if you say, "I'm struggling with my marriage." Where does that go? So, pastors start to feel somewhat isolated, or can, if they don't have a good community. Missionaries, the same thing. There's all kind of difficult things out there. So, they started this ministry, and they decided they wanted coaching as part of that foundation. They had asked me if I would start training their places. So, these locations, and now it's in nine countries around the world. A host will have a home where they open their home up and they're trained, skilled in coaching and a pastor, missionary can come into that environment and get rest and someone to minister and care for them and just bring the coaching process to that. They had been asking me to do this coach training. At that very time I was struggling between ministry and business, corporate. Back and forth, "Lord what do you want me to do?"

So, I just put a fleece out, and I said, "Okay, God, here's the deal, I'm on this fence that's painful. I don't know which side to fall on. If you want me to go to the business corporate world in a bigger way than this one contract is, would you please give me another corporate client? I don't have a website, I don't have a business card, I'm asking, if this is your leading, would you do this?" I'm sure there's all kinds of theology around that. That's what I did, and I made it very specific. I said within the next two weeks. Let's not dilly dally with this. Four days later I get a phone call from the head of a corporation about 20 minutes away from us, and she said, "I've heard about you, we have a need for coaching. I would like to hire you as a coach to do this one thing."

**Brian:** You still don't have a website?

**David:** Still don't have a website, and I still really didn't know what kind of coaching I wanted to do. Because, as you know, as a coach we kind of find our niche. What kind of coaching, there's corporate coaching, leadership coaching, all kinds of coaching out there. Again, same process, but where's my niche? Is it in the ministry world? I had all kinds of questions I didn't know. So, very interesting, she had a difficult employee, and she wanted me to come in and fix him. "I've heard about you, I need you to come in and this is what I want you to do." This was the second time I had one of those out of body

things, I heard myself saying this, and I hadn't thought through this, but I heard myself saying, "I don't do that kind of coaching, I only do executive leadership high end coaching." She basically on the phone begged me. "This is our last-ditch effort, we like this guy but he just isn't making it, and we really, really need help."

By the end of the conversation I said, "Okay, I'll do this coaching, but I really want to talk to you about your executive suite team and how I can help you to do this within your organization, not me just doing this one person." Well God was so gracious, and this guy was so ready for coaching. It was literally a miracle turnaround for him within six weeks. From becoming this troubled, difficult employee, and it turns out it was personal issues he was going through in his life, to being a stellar, high-producing employee. It so impacted her and her time that they said, "Okay, now we're ready to listen to you. How do we bring this to us?"

**Brian:** But you're not taking credit for that? You're still thinking it's the coaching process.

**David:** Oh, absolutely, it totally is, and of course God in the midst of that. So God answered my prayer and I said, "Okay..." And I reluctantly made a website and got a business card and incorporated. Knauss Executive Coaching, I started that LLC at the time. Things are starting to move, they're starting to do well. God provided in such a way that that one year contract with the hospital system, they extended it for another year, which actually created some personal issues with me because my wife, who's a nurse, couldn't get a job at the hospital.

**Brian:** Because you were there?

**David:** Well, it was the recession, and they weren't hiring at all. Period, there was a freeze on it. She would apply, there were jobs available, she would apply every month and wouldn't get a call back. I didn't feel ethically that I could go to the CEO or the commissioning officer and say, "Hey, by the way, would you give my wife a job?" At the end of this second year, the contract had ended, and I had my last meeting, and this is anecdotal to the whole thing, I had my last meeting with the chief nursing officer, and I said, "Okay, we're completely finished here, by the way I just wanted to let you know my wife is a nurse and she can't get a job," and she just looked at me and said, "Hey, why didn't you say something?" "Well, ethically I didn't think I could..." So the next day she got a phone call, my wife, and they were like, "Okay, what unit do you want to work on, what shift do you want, how much do you want to make?" There was no interview, it was just like, "Who do you know?"

**Brian:** I'm hoping they said, "Honey, you want to make more than that."

**David:** Right. It's been an amazing journey along that line. After two years, she was able to get a job at the hospital. And again, there's so many stories around about the joy of coaching. It's just so fun. At the end of 2013, now things financially for us are starting to take off, things are going well, and this is again back to my theme of reluctance in this whole process. My old supervisor, who is running this organization said, "Dave," Life Impact Ministries said, "Dave, our organization has grown so much that we really need an international director, and we really believe that you would be the person to do this," and my first thought was, "Well no, God's blessing in the business, this is ministry, it's not a paid position, I'd have to go and raise support for it. No I don't think I'm interested," and then a person much more godly than me, my wife, said, "Well, don't you think we should pray about this?" "Awww. Stink.

Umm, sure.” And within a couple weeks she’s like, “Dave, I think the Lord’s calling us back into the ministry, and I think this is exactly what we should be doing.” At that point, it took me three months of wrestling with God because I said, “Lord, you’ve blessed this business, it’s going, and you want me to release and give all of that up to go back into ministry?” You know, full-time ministry. It was a painful wrestling for three months, in fact I still walk with a limp because of that.

**Brian:** Should I call you Jacob then?

**David:** Yeah, you might have to. I really did wrestle with God on that, and I finally came to the conclusion, again, and this is maybe half a dozen times in my life where I had to say, “My life is not my own, it’s yours. You do with my life as you desire. I’m your servant, I’m your friend, and I’m your son. I will do and go where you want me to go.” I started negotiating with the Lord. As you begin to bring support in, I’ll decrease my clients. I kind of do this leverage thing, as you blossom the support side, I will decrease on the business side. So, we did that for about eight months, the Lord started blessing, started bringing in supporters to join us, partner with us on the ministry side of things.

I absolutely love the international caring, coaching of our own staff. It was just a delightful time. In fact, I was where we have one of our oases over there with Life Impact, and we got an email saying that the founder and his wife, now they’re in their early seventies, late sixties, were both diagnosed with cancer, and when I got back from that trip, he called me, he said, “Dave, we have to focus on our health, we don’t have time to do a talent search, look for a president, we just really need you to step up and take over and lead the organization.” Both my wife and I knew immediately that that was the right thing and God was calling us to do that.

**Brian:** I love your vulnerability, you’re like, when God was calling you to make more than 250 an hour, you were like, “Okay God, I’ll say yes to that,” but when God’s calling you obviously back into the missions you’re like, “Okay.” That’s just honest.

**David:** Right, so what I had to do though, my clients, I had to say to them, “Look, I’m taking on this role as president of this nonprofit, it’s going to take all of my attention. I will service our contract till it ends, which most of them was by the end of the year, which would have been 2014, but after that I cannot continue the contract.” That was another laying down completely. So I’m now shifting completely out of the business and back into full time ministry. I let them know that, that happened, so now fast forward a couple months into February of 2015, I’m in [country name removed for safety purposes 00:16:22] and we’re opening an oasis there. I’m telling you the two closed places that I shouldn’t be, but we were there and opening an oasis and meeting with the couple and the host family that was providing that care there. Of all things, I get five emails from five new clients saying, “Dave, we want to hire you as a coach,” and I was like, “Lord, what are you doing?”

So, I actually wrote to them, I said, “Hey, I’m in [country name removed for safety purposes 00:16:58]. When I get back I’ll call you and we’ll get through this.” So I’m flying back from [country name removed for safety purposes 00:17:03], and I’m on the airplane. I’m talking to the Lord about this, and very distinctly I hear him say, “Well, why don’t you hire some coaches,” and I’m like, “Well yeah, if I had a business, and I was trying to grow it,” and he said, “Well that’s what I want you to do.” So, I thought, “Ok, well we’ll see.” Again, very reluctantly working at stepping into the business part of things again. I

actually called around and I got some coaches, and I asked them how much they would charge, I wanted to give them the full amount of what they wanted to be paid, and lo and behold, they were only a third of what of my clients were willing to pay. So, the next trick for me in there, if you will, not really a trick, but what I had to figure out, was how could I convince them that, they weren't going to get me, they were going to get somebody else, but they could still pay that same amount. It turned out not to be an issue at all.

**Brian:** I was going to say, they probably didn't think twice about it. We always think, "Oh, that's going to be a problem." It wasn't.

**David:** Right, it wasn't at all. They said, "Hey, Dave, we trust you, we believe in you, we know about you, and great, bring it. We need the service of coaching and bring it on." So I hired the coaches, and I started really just invoicing and writing checks.

**Brian:** That's your job.

**David:** That was my job, and servicing the clients from a relational standpoint. How's it going? I'd call them up. How you doing? What's going on? And then encouraging and bringing the coaches to a point where they felt like they were being cared for and had someone to process and talk if they got stuck. So then I'm actually running a business, not being a practitioner of it. It was just kind of running itself. I really wasn't out looking for more clients, I wasn't doing more than just allowing the Lord to bring people by and do that. It's just really until this last summer, it's just been on autopilot. And then some things, amazing things, happened in our personal life, where God miraculously provided a home for us in an amazing location, and grandma decided to move into assisted living near her daughter, and our two youngest boys have moved out of the home now, so we're empty nesters.

There's that sense of, "Ok, Lord, it feels like there's a new change, something about to come. Our eyes and our hearts, are just open to whatever you lead." So, I'm still the President of Life Impact, and it's growing and God's blessing that. Business, I've started to look at that and saying, "Is there something here that you want to do," and just really in the last couple months we've heard the Lord say, "Okay, I want you to really start giving some more time to the business again." So, we're in that process of looking at what does that mean. Is it growth he wants to do there? Is it depth he wants to do? I'm really having more of a passion for bringing coaches along and saying, "Hey, I seem to have this bucket that He's pouring clients into, and I need more coaches to help me service those clients." So, I'm thinking it's going to move towards that direction a little more, but we're really just sitting with our hands open and asking the Lord to do with it what He wants because it's all His, it's His business, not mine.

**Brian:** Listening to all this, a couple things are really standing out. It's a lot about who you are, and I don't mean just you. I mean as a coach it's a lot about who you are. You want to be the kind of person that people just sense, "I want to work with that person." I think that has a lot to do with your faith. You've concentrated a lot on being a godly person.

**David:** Well, and I didn't share this earlier, but maybe this is a good spot. When we came back from overseas, one of the things I heard the Lord ask me, it was actually kind of crushing, he simply asked a question of me, "Do you love me?" Honestly, it's kind of silly when you think about Peter in that interaction with Jesus, but my response was exactly the same, "Well, of course I do." I went through

bible college, served overseas, saw conversions, church plants, “Of course I love you,” and then he said, “No, do you love me,” and I said, “Well, there’s a lot I know about you, and I love what I know about you. Of course.” It’s a cognitive type exercise and I just said, “Yes, of course I do,” and then a third time he said, “No, David, I want to know do you love me?” It just broke something in me. I just said to him. “Lord, I don’t know how to honestly answer that at this point. Help me, how do I love you?”

It kind of turned me into a questioning of how do I get to know Jesus more, and relationally with him? Not just about him, and not just working for him, but know him. I came across, in the process of that, in the beginning to interact and understand that more. I came across John, the book of John, and you know those chapters 14, 15, 16, 17. That real relational you and me, me and you, I am in the Father, I don’t do anything that the Father doesn’t talk to me about and show me. It just hit me like a ton of bricks. I don’t know that I have a relationship with the Father. I’m focusing on Jesus, and what would that look like? Of course, they’re all one, but they’re three distinct persons. That kind of unnerved me even more than the other. So I started searching for the next six months, and began to intentionally work on that relationship with the Father. What would that Father relationship look like, and who is the Father? How do I interact with Him?

As the Lord would have it, I ended up back in John in a few months, and I’m reading through those same passages, and Jesus says, “It’s to your benefit that I go and be with the Father, so that we can send the Spirit to you,” and I just kind of threw up my hands because it just jumped out and I thought, “Oh my word, here’s another relationship I need to work on.” What does that mean? I’m embarrassed to say it, but thirty years of walking with the Lord in ministry and I had to be taken down to some basic relational interactions with the Son, and the Father, and the Holy Spirit. That, what I did there, was the New Testament, I just started going through and I had an orange highlighter and every place the spirit is mentioned I’m going to highlight it. Honestly, I was absolutely shocked at how much the scriptures talk about the Spirit and our interacting with Him, and His role in our lives. Coming from a very conservative upbringing and training, the Spirit was kind of put to the side as He’s the one who we’re sealed for redemption.

That was about it. He’s our deposit. There’s so much more interaction that I was reading about. I really began, in a very honest and even a coach approach to this with my relationship to God. Simply asking and listening and just sitting before Him and hearing from Him, it was so transformational in my life that I honestly felt like a baby Christian learning how to crawl in my relationship with God. I would point everything back to the things that He’s been doing in my life, the blessings, and the increase and all that. I’m certainly not a prosperity gospel person, but I take it all back to that point of that relationship with Him and how it transformed my walk with Him.

**Brian:** David, you’ve really inspired me through this whole conversation in three areas. One, just to be closer to God and the Father. To look at that relationship and not look at it for how it transforms me, but knowing too that it will transform me into the kind of person that people will want to be around even more and work with. You’ve inspired me to really put my thought process to the process of coaching and let the process of coaching work, and you’ve also inspired me to have more confidence in just putting out a shingle that says this is what I do. For me, it’s leadership development, and I’m hoping

that's true for everybody who's listening. That they've had those three inspirations as well, and I suspect they have. I just want to thank you for joining us today and sharing your story.

**David:** Well thank you for having us Brian, having me here, and having this conversation. I do give God all the credit and all the glory, and it's a fun journey to walk with Him no matter where he leads us.

**Brian:** Thanks David.

**David:** God Bless.

**[Outro Music]**