



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 39: The Questions that God Asks

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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, and I'm joined here today by Mary Selzer, as I said, one of the best Christian coaches in the world, I said that, she's going to be too humble to agree to that, but Mary is a Detroit native and has been in ministry all her adult life. She's a popular speaker and Bible teacher which has become the catalyst for her writing career, and Mary is a recipient of the Herstal Writing Award for her devotionals. Mary's a PCC certified coach and a mentor coach with the International Coaching Federation. She also served as president of the Michigan ICF and is now current past president. She coordinates all the training of coaches in the Michigan district for the Assemblies of God. She is a very interesting person. What's the Bible say, if I wrote down everything about Mary, it would take up more books than I have here. So, Mary, welcome to the podcast.

Mary Selzer: Thank you Brian. I'm very honored to be here and looking forward to our conversation.

Brian: Me too. Me too. So, you've written a book. That's what I want to focus on. There's so many things we could talk about today, but we get 30 minutes, and I want to make sure we get to this book because it's just fascinating to me. The book is called, *25 Questions God Asked: Discover the Answers that will Change Your Life*, by Mary Selzer. How'd this book come about?

Mary: Brian, when I was in coach training, Jane Creswell happened to be one of the trainers, and she mentioned that she was studying all the questions that Jesus asked. I remember thinking that would be quite a study, and then I thought, "Well what about all the questions God asked or all the questions that Paul asked," and then my brain just sort of exploded with this idea, "What about all the questions in the Bible?" So, I got my NIV study Bible off the shelf, and I started at Genesis 1:1 and began a search to record every question in the Bible. I recorded who asked the question, who it was asked to and the purpose of the question. It took me a year and a half.

Brian: Goodness.

Mary: I took it from Genesis to Revelations, and then when I would do coach training, I always like to begin with a devotional, and so, I just started creating devotionals based on questions in the Bible until

they were so well received. I had some people who said, “You really need to publish these.” That was what sort of inspired me to begin writing. *25 Questions God Asked* is a result of that study that I did.

Brian: So, one of major themes in coaching is to create awareness in the client. That’s certainly a big piece, and that’s typically we, as coaches, ask questions. Is God similar in that, or are there other reasons God asks questions? How would you respond to that?

Mary: God never asked a question that he didn’t know the answer to, obviously. He’s omniscient. He knows everything, but imagine after Adam and Eve sinned, and then God shows up and says, “Adam, where are you?” Well God knew where he was, but he wanted Adam to speak the truth. When the angel is wrestling with Jacob, the name Jacob means liar, or supplanter, or cheater, and the angel says, “What is your name?” He had to speak what his name was. My name is liar. My name is cheater, and then, God changed his name. God would use these questions, I think, not so much for his benefit, but for the person’s benefit, to draw out the reality and the truth of what was really going on inside their heart.

Brian: Yeah, God doesn’t have the benefit of being able to ask a question that he doesn’t know the answer to which is something I strive to do. I strive to ask questions I don’t know the answer to and that they don’t know the answer to. Just this idea of creating awareness in them. The first question I remember from the Bible, the first time I have this great awareness of it, I was at Urbana missions conference and, I think, A.G. Fernando was expositing Jonah, and Jonah ends with a question. It ends with the question, “Why should I not be concerned about this great city?” That’s a question for Jonah, to bring awareness, I assume.

Mary: Right, right, and one of the chapters in my book, the last chapter in my book, it focuses on that question, and I titled that chapter, “Just Let God be God.” So, Jonah is struggling with no mercy for the Assyrian people, and those Assyrians, they were ruthless.

Brian: They were awful.

Mary: I’m half Assyrian, but we’ve really changed down over the years, so we’re not as bad as we were in bible days.

Brian: I hope so. Goodness.

Mary: Jonah, he’s upset because he thought if he delivers this message, “Repent or you’re going to be destroyed,” that he just kind of sat there waiting for God to destroy, but there’s a scripture, I believe it’s in Jeremiah, that says, “The Lord is angry for a moment, but then he moves in to compassion and mercy.” That is just so amazing. The Bible doesn’t say God is anger, or God is vindictive. It say’s God is love, and I think Jonah had to learn that God just did what came natural to him. He loved and he forgave.

Brian: Yeah, and as coaches, often, I find the perspective shift we’re able to bring is from internal to external, and that’s certainly what God was trying to do for Jonah.

Mary: Right, and what a sad book. It’s a fascinating book, the great fish and all of that, but what a sad ending, and you don’t know what happened to Jonah at the end of this book.

Brian: Right. Well, he was very internal, and I think, it was not only a story, but it was meant for us as

well, Mary. It was this idea of God saying, "You probably relate a lot to Jonah in this situation." The same with the prodigal son. The prodigal son, oh my goodness, he comes back, he's restored, but I think many of us really resonate more with the older brother, who's very internal, thinking this isn't okay with me. I don't like the way this is turning out. So, God's trying to take us from an internal to an external.

Mary: Yeah, I was doing a study on mercy. It was actually on the question in Micah. What does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, and one of the definitions of loving mercy means, it's not just forgiving, but it's also showing kindness to the person that you forgave, and a lot of times, we want to put a period after forgiveness, but forgiveness really is an ongoing essay. Imagine if all God did for us, he forgave us, but he remained upset. I'll forgive you, but I'm not going to forget what you did, but he shows compassion with that, and I think that's where the Lord wants us to move in to. Where we don't just forgive people, we love people, and we love showing mercy. It's a high goal, but I think it's one that the Lord wants us to really strive towards.

Brian: Well, you made me think, certainly, we're supposed to forgive, and we're told we're supposed to forgive, but there's so many things that require process on our part, and that's what coaches do. They facilitate a person's internal process, right? I'm angry, so I know I need to forgive, but also, God's bringing to my attention I need to show love and kindness toward this person. That can be facilitated by great questions that bring awareness to our hearts of what's inside of us, what's more important. That's insightful, Mary.

Mary: Well, it's from the Word which is very insightful.

Brian: You're reminding me of another interview I had with David Knauss. I did one with David Knauss, and he would always go back to the Lord there. It's all the Lord. That's such a humble heart, and I appreciate that. Also, there's a couple of podcasts, if anyone's picking this one up, with Jane Creswell, a two-parter. Kind of her story of becoming a missionary to the corporate world, and then becoming a coach, fascinating stuff. I hope people will check that out. So, I also saw that... Go ahead. Go ahead, Mary.

Mary: I was just going to say that Jane is a great person. She has been my inspiration. Great, great lady.

Brian: For sure, for sure. I know that in your book, there are eight questions that nobody asked.

Mary: Isn't that amazing?

Brian: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, you gave an example of the Lord says, "But the priest did not ask," for instance. They did not ask, "Where is the Lord?" So, the Lord's giving us questions that we should be asking. Talk about that a little bit.

Mary: So, as I was making a list of the questions, and I was putting down who asked the question and who it was asked to, I came across these eight questions that the Bible specifically says, "But nobody asked," and the two that you just mentioned are two examples. The priest did not ask, "Where is the Lord," and then a second time, it was the people did not ask, "Where is the Lord?" Another example is in the New Testament when Jesus was at the well with a Samaritan woman, and the disciples went out for lunch, and they came back, and they see him talking to this Samaritan woman which was unusual, a Jew talking to a Samaritan at noon and all of that, and the Bible says, "But they did not ask, 'What do you

want,' or, 'Why are you talking with her?'" I wonder if the fact that those questions are recorded in scripture, if God wants us to ask those questions to ourselves.

Brian: Or of each other?

Mary: Right, right. Go ahead, Brian, I'm sorry.

Brian: Well, I was coaching a client the other day, a leader in a church, and he was frustrated with a lot of things, and the one thing I was realizing I wasn't hearing was any room for God to show up and show off.

Mary: Oh wow. I like that. Let God show off. That's great.

Brian: Where's some room? And I mean that in the best way. Where's some room for God to show up? Nobody's asking that question.

Mary: And especially when we're going through really challenging situations, and I think if the enemy could put a lie in our mind and say, "The Lord has forgotten you, or you're being punished. That's why you're going through this," but if instead we could turn it around and say, "Lord, I know you're everywhere, so where are you, Lord? Show me where you are in the midst of my circumstance." That one stunning thing that I realized in Job, when Job was going through. He's got his "comforters" towards the end of the book. When God shows up, it says he actually appeared in the storm, and I thought wow, that's amazing. Job's going through a storm, and God was in the storm with him. It says, "God spoke from the storm." That had to be an amazing thing. You know, Brian, one of my hopes is when we get to heaven, there will be every Saturday night, if we have dates and time up there, but every Saturday night will be movie night, and God just kind of plays back some of the things that happened in scripture. I would love to see God speaking out of a storm. I would love to see a lot of these stories. I want to know how big was Goliath, and how small was David? That kind of thing, just really see it. Wouldn't that be cool?

Brian: Oh man. You've got me thinking, and not just things that are recorded in the Bible, but plenty of other opportunities where God showed up and moved. I mean, it's going to be there for eternity, so I'm sure there's just an infinite amount of stories that God could show us.

Mary: Oh yeah. I think it was in the book of John, I think it was John. One of those guys in the New Testament said, "And Jesus did so many things, they couldn't be recorded." I would love to see the things that didn't make it in the Bible. Wouldn't that be amazing?

Brian: It would be. The book will be expanded.

Mary: Yes it will. It will probably take eternity to read all that. Which is why that's how long it's going to be.

Brian: So, when you're coaching clients, do the questions that God asked often come to mind? Does that pop up for you?

Mary: I don't think so. Not on a regular basis. There might be something that inspires me or reminds me of an insight that I gleaned as I was writing the book, but no. I think the questions that come in a coaching conversations are usually paperclipped to what they just said, but if there's some insight that

comes, I might share it and say, “There’s this book that I just happen to have,” and I might share that, but not on a regular basis. I can’t really say that I do.

Brian: I was just curious. Okay, very good. So, there’s some other kind of questions that seem to have to do with God calling people to take action in their unpleasant situation. One question is, “What are you doing down on your face?” That was one of the questions.

Mary: Yeah, that’s the one that he asked to Joshua. You can read the Bible, some people, like my husband, like to read the Bible through every year. Start January. I can’t do that because I miss a lot of things. So, as I was exploring this question, it was right after the Israelites had conquered Jericho, and then, you probably know the story, they were told not to take anything, and Achan did. So, when they went out to fight the next challenge against Ai, they lost horribly, and so, Joshua falls flat on his face, and he’s crying out to the Lord. I’m just picturing this in my head, and I think, sometimes, when we face challenging times, the Lord will just say, “Now, Brian, it’s okay. You just be quiet and silent, and I got this,” but I think there are other times God yanks us by the collar and says, “What are you doing down on your face? Get up and move into action.” Then, God instructed Joshua how to deal with the sin of Achan.

Then, as I began to explore it, I thought, “Why would God have Achan punished in front of the entire nation,” and I realized that the extent of the offense will determine how it’s to be dealt with. Like in Matthew 18, the Matthew 18 principle, where if someone... **[inaudible 17:56]** Jesus would, he did open correction. He corrected the Pharisees as a group, in front of the group because the offense occurred in front of the group, and then, Ananias and Sapphira basically, they lied against the Holy Spirit and were immediately struck dead, and I’m thinking, “Wow, that’s really pretty extreme,” but because the sin was performed in front of the church, then the correction took place in front of the church. Because Achan jeopardized an entire nation, then the correction took place in front of the entire nation. I think the extent of the offense will determine the extent of who needs to be part of the correction, and the whole nation was involved in correcting Achan for what he did.

Brian: I think I remember being taught that all sin is the same, and definitely remember thinking, “I don’t think so.” All sin is sin, and it all gets us into a place of judgement for sure, but some sin is dealt with differently by the Lord than other sin.

Mary: Right. Yeah. So, here’s the quote, “The range of the offense determines the extent of the correction, but there are times when God is, he’ll take control, and he doesn’t want us to do anything about it, and we need to be sensitive to that, but God is not going to do something for us if it’s going to keep us from developing strength and character. The Lord won’t enable us. He empowers us, but he’s not going to enable us because he wants us sometimes to get up off our face, and take a stand, and do the right thing, so we can grow from the process.

Brian: Mary, I’m a coach, so I’m so curious. When’s a time in your life when God’s said to you, “What are you doing down on your face, Mary?” Did I just open a can of worms?

Mary: That’s a good question. To try to think of one. I don’t know if I can think of one situation, but maybe just sort of a conglomeration or montage. There are times when you just don’t want to make that phone call, or you just don’t want to confront that person or go to them. Tell you what, coaching has really mellowed me. Becoming a trained, professional coach has helped me more than the people I

have coached because it has taught me control, it taught me how to think before I act and speak. I certainly haven't arrived, by any means, but I'm a lot better than I used to be. So, I used to just be really quick to confront without using wisdom, without thinking, without even asking questions, and now, I'm able to ask clarifying questions before I move in to make what might be a false accusation.

Brian: That's perfect. I may be the opposite. I don't like to confront. As coaching important, I've thought for a long time, "If someone would have just called me when I was pastoring," I pastored for 20 years, "If somebody would have just called me once a week and said, 'Who do you need to have a tough conversation with?'" Because, literally, every week, there's probably somebody who you need to have a tough conversation with, and then the next week, ask me, "How did that go?" I think those two questions would have changed my ministry if I'd had a coach just asking me those two questions.

Mary: And one of the ICF competencies is building trust and intimacy with the people that you coach, and I've learned something about those competencies, that they're not just for coaching. If we can apply those in our everyday life, and imagine if we practiced active listening with our spouses or with our kids. It was a number of years before it dawned on me, I'm compartmentalizing this. I'm honoring the people I coach by actively listening, but then I barely pay attention to other people that aren't official clients. So, I've tried to bring those into my everyday life, just asking clarifying questions, and offering direct communication, and really building trust and intimacy with other people. It's really made a difference in who I am and how I communicate with other people.

Brian: I completely agree. The one for me was establishing agreements, clear agreements. Whenever you have a leader, or any kind of conversation, or trying to get someone to participate, really clearly establishing what this is going to look like, what's expected, how this conversation can go. That changed my life. It really did.

Mary: Absolutely, and my husband's a pastor, and there are some people, they just want to bend your ear with really no purpose, but if you start a conversation with them by saying, "I've got like 30 minutes that I can spend with you. Just tell me, when we conclude our conversation, what's going to be a good takeaway for you?" That might completely change the direction of the conversation because now they know they have a purpose for meeting with you.

Brian: Absolutely, 100%, I appreciate that. Let me ask you this question in closing, Mary, what's the next book?

Mary: Actually, I'm working on two books right now. One is a, I'm working with a coaching colleague. She's an attorney and has worked in the business world for a number of years coaching business executives, so we've been asked by my literary agent to do a book on business insights from the book of Nehemiah. Working with another author is a challenge, but we're coming together with it really well. So, she's going to bring more business insights, and then, I'll bring scriptural insights as we walk through Nehemiah. So, we have 20 business principles for business owners and business leaders. So, that's one book, and then the next one I'm working on is called *A Weekly Quest*, and I've got 52 questions, and I've broken each question into 7 segments, so every day on my blog, there's a little devotional that goes out on a different question each week, broken into 7 segments, one for each week. So, at the end of the year, we'll have 52 devotionals.

Brian: Well, those both sound really helpful. So, if people want to find your blog, how can they get

there?

Mary: maryselzer.com

Brian: Very good, and I'll put a link to that on our website with this podcast as well. Absolutely.

Mary: Great. That's very kind. Thanks, Brian, I appreciate that.

Brian: You bet. Thanks for spending half an hour with me, Mary. It's just been a pleasure.

Mary: Well thank you. I really appreciate it, and you're doing a great job, Brian.

Brian: Thank you. So, thanks everybody else for joining us today. You can find more out about Coach Approach by going to coachapproachministries.org and downloading our free eBook *The Beginner's Guide to Christian Coaching: How to Have Powerful Conversations that Really Make a Difference*. We'll see you next week.

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