



## Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

### Episode 8: Mentor Coaching

Published: August 11, 2016

**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 Bill Copper, executive director of CAM. Hey Bill. Thanks for joining me today.

**Bill Copper:** Hey Brian. Good to be with you, and good to be with everybody virtually.

**Brian:** Alright. We have a topic today, and the topic is, what are the benefits of hiring a mentor coach? We hear about mentor coaches. When people ask me what the key was for me to get from part-time coach to full-time coach, I have to say it was hiring a mentor coach. First, the final test for knowing I had bought into coaching was that I was willing to spend a good bit of my own money hiring a great coach. That's just an internal shift. I buy into coaching. I want people to pay me, but I don't really want to pay somebody else, and as I wrote those big checks for my own coaching, for my own development, that was a big shift for me. Not just the process of hiring a mentor coach, but there were certainly some boosts to that that I'm going to talk about. Let me just mention five boosts that I really felt like I gained from hiring a mentor coach. The first one was mentor coaching boosted my confidence. That's got to be number one. It wasn't a question of skill. It was a question of just feeling like I can do this, and mentor coaching really boosted that.

Number two, mentor coaching gave me access to expertise I did not have inside me. I did not have this knowledge that the mentor coach had, and that saved me several times. Mentor coaching expanded my options by allowing me what other ways I could generate income. That was, again, for me, something that needed to happen as I went full time in coaching. Mentor coaching's not always for coaches, but many times it is. Number four, mentor coaching gave me clarity about the next six months, and number five, mentor coaching helped me make connects by putting me in a community with another professional coach, and it just so happens that my mentor coach, who got me through this, was Mr. Bill Copper.

**Bill:** Yeah that's why those checks had to be so big.

**Brian:** Oh my.

**Bill:** Brian you mentioned several things in there, some which could be topics for our podcasts all by themselves, and one of those is what you just said about writing checks, and how that made a difference

for you in how you approached the coaching. I remember you coming to those coaching sessions. You were dressed and ready to play because you had invested, and it cost you something, and that's just maybe one little tidbit for people to keep in mind when they're thinking how to charge, how much to charge, whether to charge, those kind of things. For a lot of us in ministry, that can be a sticking point in moving into full-time, or any kind of vocational, coaching. One great reason to do it is because it helps the client. It helped you show up and really get the most out of coaching.

**Brian:** It was a great place to come because I had a lot of expertise at that point. I'd been through a lot of classes and some good training. I think I was a really good coach at that point, but being a coach and doing the coaching was a whole other level. So the idea of mentor coaching, Bill, help me out here, but it's certainly if you're coaching, the coach doesn't necessarily have any expertise in the area. In mentor coaching, the coach probably does have some expertise in the area. How would you distinguish that?

**Bill:** Sure, and it is a clear distinction between coaching and mentor coaching. The word mentor is in the title, and it's part of the process. I think the best way I like to describe it is that in addition to coaching, when I'm providing mentor coaching, in addition to providing coaching, I'm also helping people understand the coaching in real time. I'm helping them process not just the topic perhaps that we're coaching around, but also processing the process itself, if you will. We're kind of taking a look at why maybe I ask certain questions, what the impact was of a certain phrase or insight that I shared. So it's a way of teaching at the same time that we're doing some coaching.

**Brian:** There are just things I still remember, and it's probably been a couple years ago, at least, by now that you did mentor coaching for me. Boy time goes so fast. It seems like yesterday to me, but I remember a few very simple things. I was doing a class. I had offered a class, and I had offered several classes and done very well with these classes, but then I offered a class and no one signed up, and I just remember coming to the mentor coaching conversations with I think I've ran my course, Bill. I think people have figured out that there's no value in this and that I'm a fraud. Whatever. You just think the absolute worst things, and I really had a lot of emotional turmoil built up there, and I remember you said... I said, "Bill, what do I do? This class doesn't look like it's going to make it," and you said, "Oh yeah. That happens. What you want to do is just reschedule it."

**Bill:** That's almost Confucius-like in its vast wisdom of yeah, that happens.

**Brian:** Oh it was mind-blowing for me. I'm just telling you. It was mind-blowing. Welcome to the big leagues, that happens.

**Bill:** Yeah, you mentioned those boosts, and I think that first one you were talking about, in terms of confidence, I think that's a huge piece of why we do mentor coaching and a huge benefit for mentor coaching is that, as you said, you'd done a lot of coaching, even some training, you'd taken training, you'd delivered training, and you were shaking and baking when it came to coaching, but there are these things that happen along the way that make you wonder.

**Brian:** Oh absolutely.

**Bill:** Am I doing this right? Am I on the right track? And working with a mentor coach can help you really boost your confidence. A mentor coach can help you see here's what you're really doing well, here's how you can take it to that next level, helps normalize some of the things that might be fearful for us, like you just mentioned, the fact that class didn't make. You get to combine the wisdom and experience

someone who's doing the same thing you are, like a mentor relationship always is. Combine that with coaching so they then quickly turn it back to you to say, "So, what do you do with that insight? Where are you going now?" It's distinct from a mentoring relationship just as it's distinct from a pure coaching relationship in that it is the combination of those two. Mentor coaches understand that there's value in sharing their wisdom but also then in shifting the conversation and response and focus back to the client so that they can apply it in the way that makes sense to them, and figure out what to do with it.

**Brian:** There was a... I'm just thinking about various things that happened during our mentor coaching, and I know one was, I don't know if you remember, I was just thinking so deeply about this and then running so many things through my head and trying to figure so many things out, plan so many things ahead, and the fact that that was happening, kind of communicated to me, you don't know what you're doing. That was my internal thought about this, and I don't know that, surely I'll forget at some point, but I have not forgotten, you said to me, "Brian, I don't know anyone who's thinking more deeply about this stuff than you," and I don't think you were blowing smoke. And I'm not saying that just to say hey, say something nice about me. It gave me a sense of where I was in the profession. So that was really helpful to know what level I'm playing from somebody who would know.

**Bill:** And as you said, sometimes, one of the other boosts that you mentioned was your access to this community, it put you in community with another coach.

**Brian:** That's right.

**Bill:** Yeah. Sometimes we feel like we're a lone wolf. I hope our CAM community provides some of that, but a mentor coaching relationship really helps us get insights into, "Oh here are other things that are going on. Here are other things that coaches are experiencing, and wow, I'm on track, or maybe I'm ahead of others, or maybe there's some lessons I can learn because of what others have going on." So it provides all those things. I think was for me, and you can express how you experienced it, the single thing that helped me to grow the most in my coaching was hiring a mentor coach. There's no question.

**Brian:** Really? What were some of the key things there?

**Bill:** I think the first thing was when I did the training, most of it was in my head. I understood it. I thought about ways that I might use it. When I hired a mentor coach, I began to see those principles actually being played out in just a great, natural way. I think maybe the first lesson I learned was how to make my conversations much more conversational and natural rather than sounding stiff. My mentor coach was so smooth. We just talked, and yet, when we would replay the conversation, you could see the intentionality that was in that really smooth conversational tone, and it just a great lesson for me to figure out how... A model for me to figure out how I want to have conversations with people, and there's a great intentionality to it, but there's also just a natural give and take conversation to it.

**Brian:** So by being coached, something a mentor coach can do is you'll have the opportunity to, hopefully, hear really good coaching.

**Bill:** Yeah, you know, mentor coaching takes a few different forms. When I mentor coach someone, we do something different all the time. There are three or four different approaches that we take. Sometimes it is just that I coach the person, and hopefully, they're hearing some good coaching, they're experiencing some good coaching, I'm modeling it, and then we take about it. In addition to them benefiting from just getting coaching on whatever their topic is, we also talk about the coaching process

itself. I might share why I asked a particular question or ask them what kind of shifts were happening during some of those times, so we talk about the coaching in addition to just coaching. Other forms that it can take, sometimes it's directly coaching someone about their growth as a coach, and so the mentor coaching, a lot of times that's what it was with you and I when we were coaching. It was coaching around challenges you were facing, opportunities you were exploring about coaching itself. That's another way that mentor coaching plays out.

You know, some of the times, particularly around this area of confidence boosting, some of the most valuable mentor coaching I do is I have the client coach me, and I bring a real topic. I ask them to coach me for a period of time, and then we talk about it. I'm able to give them some specific feedback really tied to those ICF core competencies, to help them know, here's how you can go to the next level, here's what really worked well, here's where you're at, give them a really true picture of their level of competency, and then give them some things they can do to grow to that next level of competency. I will tell you that's a honed skill being able to be coached and at the same time notice the coaching and be able to give feedback. Sometimes another approach at that is to observe the other person coaching a third party. So have them coaching somebody else.

**Brian:** I'm going to go back. Hang on to that one. I want to go back because it was so funny to me. I had somebody say to me the other day because I was describing that you'll coach me, and I'll give you some feedback, and this person said, he's just kind of taken aback, and he said, "You guys must be really good to be able to do that." It was a little dig, and I just said, "We are that good," but you're right. It does take some mental shift to be able to be coached and not to... As a coach, it's hard not to coach yourself sometimes, so you don't want to be... There's a little bit of a trick to it, but I'm going to say this. What I wanted to say, really, about this is that the key for me to go from part-time to full-time, I think, was getting a mentor coach, a personal mentor coach, but for me to move like from an ACC level coaching to a PCC level coaching, the absolute key was being in this group mentor coaching where I coached and got feedback, or I listened to a ton of people coach. So the two things that have moved my coaching ahead and my business ahead were both mentor coaching.

**Bill:** Yeah, and in that group setting that you're describing, you not only benefit from getting feedback when you're coaching, but you're also listening with that same ear because you're giving feedback to others, and you're hearing others feedback of someone else, and all of these different approaches into coaching... When you're listening to someone else coach, and you're listening so you can give them some feedback about their competency, man, that grows your own competency. It really does because you're really having to pay attention there so that you can observe and give feedback about what really worked and some constructive help to grow to that next level.

**Brian:** So it improved me as a coach just by mentor coaching as well. That's what you're getting at? It's like you know the bible stories, but then when you have to teach a class, all of a sudden you learn more than they do because you really feel like you have to get it.

**Bill:** I think that's the key to any coaching relationship. It's particularly true in mentor coaching, but if we just take that one concept that, I think that's huge Brian, that one concept of I'm coming into this as the coach, coming into this conversation to learn. You get to learn not only about coaching, but about yourself, the topic. When you have that perspective that says, "I wonder what's going to happen here. I'm curious about what's going to happen here," I'm going to be a learner along with the client. This may be the only relationship where that's true. I think that's what makes coaching really work.

**Brian:** The next one where I cut you off, you were beginning to say to client coaches a third party, and the coach listens, and I'm coaching a couple of coaches in a group who want to be better coaches. That's what they want, and one thing we do on a quarterly basis is they record a session with a client, with permission, they make sure it's clear, and then I listen to it, and then I give them feedback in this group setting, and this last time, the date got ahead of us, and they did not have their recordings, and I thought they may just say, "Let's go ahead and do it. Let's don't reschedule it," and honestly, they said, "That piece where you look at our coaching, talking about the recording, that's so valuable to us, we want to postpone this so that we cannot miss that opportunity."

**Bill:** I think you're right. It's one of my favorite ways to deliver mentor coaching, and I like listening to the recording live with you, and then stopping the tape along the way and saying, "Where were you headed there? What would have been a better question there? What do you think the client was thinking there?" And it just opens up because in real time, not just observing, trying to get the coach to remember back when they had this conversation, but in the moment of the coaching when they're listening to themselves, we can stop the recording and get some feedback and stop you right there, it's just really powerful.

**Brian:** There's some pieces that you almost have to hear yourself doing it because you don't think you're doing it, so if I'm listening to that, and I say, "You know, as I'm listening to that, I'm pretty sure you're already thinking about a solution to the problem. Listen to the questions you're asking. You're looking for a solution which is not your role at this point," or I really don't think it was the client's agenda on this. I think it was your agenda, and, "No, we don't do that. It was what they wanted to talk about." Well listen to this, and hear it. I don't see the path where it was there agenda.

**Bill:** Yeah, the recording acts as a mirror, and then our role is the Windex on the mirror to clean it so they can clearly see their reflection.

**Brian:** Goodness, goodness. That's a good piece. So where would you go next with mentor coaching? If you're talking to people about the value of this, what would you do to encourage them?

**Bill:** I think the two things that you talked about boosting our confidence in terms of our competency as a coach, that's one level for mentor coaching. The other real valuable side of mentor coaching is how do I grow this coaching thing? How do I grow my business? Whatever that looks like for you because coaches in addition to helping you learn to coach, also bring in expertise and some experience in the ways of coaching, in the business, in the practice, in the kind of shifting to a more vocational, professional approach to coaching, and just some valuable lessons that can be learned in there. You can certainly dig deep and learn about through a coaching relationship, but there are some things that just aren't there. Coaching is good for drawing out what's there, and a mentor coaching relationship allows you to simultaneously draw on the experience and wisdom you don't have, and then immediately then be invited in to process that in a way that it works for you.

**Brian:** I can immediately think of three things you told me about exactly that. It's just so valuable, and I still have those. I can name the three if I can keep my train of thought. One was the idea of using coaching as your sales technique. Instead of going in and trying to explain what you can do, help draw out of the potential client where coaching would be most useful, and help them to discover. That's a great coach approach. Another one that you said... You have a good way of saying pithy things. Talking

about Confucius, you could put most of your stuff in a fortune cookie, and that might be a good way for you to deliver some of your truths, Bill.

**Bill:** I'm exploring that.

**Brian:** We have a patent on that. We have the copyrights out, but you said, "People buy results. They don't buy coaching. They don't buy the process, and that has been so uppermost in my mind whenever I'm trying to market my own coaching. That is the first phrase. People don't buy coaching. They buy results, so that's been a huge piece. The other one was, I remember you talking about instead of going after one client at a time, go after groups of clients at a time through organizations and such. Like you said, that was so easy to give me because you knew it, because you're ahead of me in this game, and that's been a real key. Several of my client situations come from larger groups now. I didn't come up with that. You informed me of that. You gave me that truth.

**Bill:** Yeah. In a mentor coaching relationship, you'll share a truth, and then the coach quickly turns back to the client and says, "What's that truth to you? Where's that lead you? What do you do with that? How does that fit with where you are?" As a mentor coaching client, I have not had many that take those things and internalize them the way that you did. I guess writing those checks really did make a difference for you because you really did take advantage.

**Brian:** Well there are two kinds... There are clients that it does make a difference, and I'm sure that had a value to it, but I think you know, I wanted it so bad. I like to think it would have been the exact same for free, but maybe I wouldn't have taken action. I would say that's true that once you've got money in the game, it's not that I wouldn't have been as interested, but to pull the triggers. I've already invested in this. I've got to make this work. That was huge.

**Bill:** That may speak to one of those bullets, the boosts that you talked about, about giving me clarity about the next six months. Part of the mentor coaching is not just theoretically what should I be thinking, and doing, and what should I learn about this, but what should I do today? Tomorrow? And sometimes that skin in the game helps fast forward the action you were going to take.

**Brian:** You're right. There are three kinds of conversations I remember. Some of them where you literally just coached me, and that felt like a coaching session. There were times when you gave me some truth, and then you took, maybe not pure coaching, but a coach approach to making sure I'm drawing out how that's going to work for me, and then there were a few sessions where you just spoke into my life, and you just taught me the whole time, and I think those are all very valid mentor pieces, and I think if it's mentor coaching, those should all be there. If it turns into just let me talk to you for 45 minutes, that turns into a lecture and teaching. So all three of those are great areas for mentor coaching.

**Bill:** Again, it's not coaching and it's not mentoring. I think it takes the combination of those two, and it really gives good results.

**Brian:** So Bill, I appreciate you joining me here today. I love talking to you. Again, I just want to say thanks for cashing those checks and taking the time to work with me. You were one of the definite keys to me moving into, what I believe, is what God has really, truly called me to do, and I appreciate that.

**Bill:** You're welcome grasshopper.

**Brian:** Thanks for everybody else for joining us as well. You can find out more about us by going to [coachapproachministries.org](http://coachapproachministries.org), and downloading our free eBook, *The Beginners Guide to Christian Coaching: How to Have Powerful Conversations that Really Make a Difference*. We'll see you next week.

**Bill:** Take care.