



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 16: Starting a Mastermind

Published: October 6, 2016

[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, we call it CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by the president of Coach Approach Ministries, Mr. Chad Hall. Welcome Chad.

Chad Hall: Brian, how in the world are you doing today?

Brian: I'm doing great, feel good.

Chad: Good.

Brian: Hey, at the beginning of each month, we like to issue a challenge to our community. We want to urge you to grow in an area of your coaching life. This month, our challenge is to join or start a mastermind. The idea of a mastermind group is not a new idea at all. I know at least in 1727, well before the United States was the United States, Ben Franklin started the Leather Apron Club. Chad, is it time, here's my question to you, is it time to put on a leather apron?

Chad: I don't know what those guys did. I guess he was a printer, so somehow... Either that or they were butchers. I don't know. I try not to wear aprons, but if it's going to be like Ben Franklin, I say we do it.

Brian: There's some conspiracy theory that says he was a serial killer.

Chad: I will not. I could neither confirm nor deny.

Brian: He was certainly one of our great founders and certainly one of the odd characters of history. However, we want to get into this idea of starting a mastermind, or at least being in a mastermind. I think there are so many good things about both. Chad, as we've thought about masterminds, I know that we both like to listen to a guy named Pat Flynn, and a mastermind was a real key part of getting him the success in online business that he was looking for.

Chad: Yeah, I've heard him talk about that several times on his podcast, and I love masterminds. By the way, for people who maybe aren't familiar with this term, I think it was Napoleon Hill, not Napoleon Dynamite, it was Napoleon Hill who first coined the term in his Think and Grow Rich, or one of his books

from the 1920's, 1930's, but yeah, this idea of a bunch of people who get together and help each other think through things. They can bounce ideas off each other. They can challenge. Iron sharpening iron. Pat Flynn, on his podcast, talks about the one that he was in, maybe he's still in it, I'm not sure, but that's been super successful for him. I know I've appreciated being in some masterminds through the years. They're really helpful.

Brian: So I'm still thinking about this. The definition of a mastermind. It's a group of people that probably have similar interests, but maybe not exactly the same as yours. I know that Pat Flynn had a podcasting guy in his. He had a marketing guy in his, some different kinds, but they were all working on their own businesses at the same time. I think they met once a week, and each week they would put one person on the hot seat, and they would just give that person a few minutes to say what they're working on. It's certainly not a coach approach in some ways. It's a grilling, right, of asking really hard questions and making suggestions as well.

Chad: Yeah. Whoever's on the hot seat, they're bringing a topic, and they're saying, "Here's the challenge I'm facing. Help me think through this." The way I imagine it, you think of a server farm, if you're a computer geek. It's one thing to have your CPU processing it and doing all it can to solve a problem, but when you daisy chain those things together, and you get all the processing power of several units, man, you've got all of that brain power working on whatever the problem is that the hot seat person has brought. The difference between a mastermind and a server farm would be that in the computer environment, they all kind of process the same way, but you've got more processing power. In a mastermind, not only do you have more processing power, but everyone's different. Everyone's got different experiences, and intuition, and insight, and just knowledge, and so you're harnessing all of that from the five, six, seven, eight people who are there, and you're focusing all of that brain power on this one challenge, and so you get the benefit of all of that, whoever's in the hot seat, and it sparks a bunch of other ideas for everybody else.

Brian: We've definitely seen this in coach training that you certainly benefit from being coached. You certainly benefit from coaching. You definitely benefit from observing coaching, so not only are there times that you'd be on the hot seat, but there'd be times you're asking questions, but you're going to learn as much by asking questions, making observations as you are by being in the hot seat, or even listening to others make observations and ask questions. So Chad, you were in a formation group that was a mastermind type. Can you give us a little insight about how that was helpful to you?

Chad: You know, I've been in several through the years. I can remember one when I was in seminary. We had a mastermind group that a buddy and I put together. It was kind of around leadership. We were all pastors of small churches in seminary, so we're all facing these challenges. That was really helpful. Several years ago, of course that was 20, 25 years ago. More recently, I've been in a group of people who are all somehow connected to coaching. Some are coaches, some are just trainers, but we get together over the phone and have a mastermind, and that was once a month, really helpful, went on for years actually. Now I'm in more of a learning community that has a mastermind where each of us bring something. It's about every three weeks that we gather. The neat thing about it is that it's not really around business challenges. It's about our own formation as followers of Christ. So it's got a bit of a discipleship edge to it, but it really does function as a mastermind in that one of us presents, and the

other members ask questions. They offer insight, advice, encouragement, sometimes challenge. All of that really aimed at whatever the person that's presented, whatever that challenge or opportunity is that they have.

Brian: I think my entry into this was 2015. I started a mastermind for coaching culture, so I invited five or six people that I knew that were interested in developing a coaching culture either in their church, in their denomination, in their organization the work. There were several. They had definitely a flavor of non-profit, para-church, church kind of feel to them, so they're very different people involved, but the topic was coaching culture. So I was able to one, bring some expertise into that, and two, I definitely wanted them to interact with each other. I knew it was working because people showed up month after month. We did it once a month.

Chad: That's a good sign.

Brian: It is a good sign. People are busy. People don't show up just because you offer something. I'm just getting all the details out here. I did not charge for it, although I could have as a service, but I did it for the purpose of really, honestly learning what people were thinking needed to happen in their organizations from a coaching perspective. I know about coaching, but I didn't necessarily know what people were thinking was important within their organizations, and so I used it as a learning experience and also a way to, what's the word, I'll just say it this way, to gain favor with five or six people who could help me make connections.

Chad: Great way to build up your recognition by being the person that brings others together. I heard a couple things there, Brian that I really just want to highlight for the listener. One is that pulling together people with something in common, but they're not identical. "Oh to do a mastermind, I have to only find people who are exactly the same. The vice presidents of mid-sized banks." They do need to have something in common so they are able to share and contribute. They don't need to be identical. Then the other thing I heard just to highlight a value from the group is kind of just how do you build connections together with a group? So it's not just we get our problems solved. We get to know each other, we value each other, and that's a valuable thing in and of itself.

Brian: Yeah and I think as we're talking about this, one way to apply this is to be in a mastermind and to learn, and a second way to apply this for coaches, is I think it's a natural way for them to extend a business option, and why I shared that the people showed up, that tells you that there is more value in it. There was plenty of value in it, so by being the expert, and not only being the expert, but what has surprised me in coaching business is just what people will pay for networking, for connections. People will pay for connections as well, not only to you, but to others.

Chad: Yeah, that's a good point. That kind of makes me think of some reasons. Maybe we could talk about the benefits of a mastermind, but maybe before that, some reasons not to join a mastermind.

Brian: Absolutely. What are some reasons, Chad?

Chad: Well one that comes to my mind, and it's related to the value of making connections. All of that's true. Everything we've said about that's true, but a reason to not join a mastermind is it kind of networks in a salesman kind of way. You've got something to hock, and you're going to join this

mastermind so you can get everybody to buy your stuff. I used to be in a business networking international group. I hated it because everybody was just trying to give each other their business cards and try to get business from the other members of the group. That's not what a mastermind is. It's not a place just to network for more business. It is a chance to network and build community, but not networking in terms of handing out your business card, getting a bunch of buyers, or whatever. I also think it's not a place just to go looking, kind of go to the other extreme, it's not a place just to go looking for friends, looking for a new BFF. Mastermind's got a professional kind of quality to it. Certainly you can develop friends in it, but it's not a book club. It's not a bowling league. That's not what it's about. It's we're here for a purpose, and by the way, we also connect with these relationships. Two other things that I can think of for not joining, reasons to not join a mastermind, one, and maybe I've been bitten by this one myself, so this one really stands out. It's not a place to go and grandstand and wow everybody with your amazing insight. There's a fine line between offering advice, giving some wisdom, sharing some insight, and doing too much of that and kind of grandstanding as you prove you're the expert on everything. You're looking for a chance to show a group of people how smart you are. That's not a reason to join a mastermind. Another one maybe, this is the other extreme of that, if you just want to receive, receive, receive, and never give. That's not a good reason to join a mastermind. It's got to be mutual, and for some people, showing up in a sort of mutual way, it's kind of challenging, but you've got to show up that way to be a really good contributor and benefactor for a mastermind.

Brian: I think the people you're looking for could best be defined as hungry. They want to develop something. They want to move something ahead and they're more than willing to help you move ahead as well as they get to move ahead, but if it turns into anything that gets in the way of all of us moving ahead, whether that's maybe even too much friendship or too much networking or too much showing off, they don't really have any appetite for that.

Chad: That's great. That's very well said, Brian in your opinion what are the reasons to join. If we think about some reasons not to join. What are some benefits of a mastermind?

Brian: Well I'll tell you one, it's accountability. You can't just keep saying, "Boy something I really wanted to do..." I think the group will push you and say, "You said you were going to take action on this. Either take action or quit talking about it."

Chad: You know, that's a great one Brian, I'm thinking about the one I was a part of for years, and I had an idea for a book and finally one of the members said, "Listen, you talked about this last time it was your turn to go, and that was upwards of like six months ago so stop wasting our time." Very challenging, Stop wasting your time. Either you're going to take the value of this and the benefit and run with it, or you're not. And if you're not, then you're kind of wasting our time. And man, talk about accountability. I had that book done in like a month with that. It was huge to have that kind of accountability and again he wasn't mad at me. He was just like, "Man, we believe in you, and we helped you with this, now get on with it."

Brian: You made me think, I was teaching our personal coaching class at Western Seminary in San Jose, California this past week and I went back through the skills, the six skills, and one of the skills is encouragement. And one really nice lady said she's been told she encourages too much, and I stopped and I said, "Well, I don't think that's possible." And I stopped and thought about it for just a minute, and

Transcribed by Alyssa Miller and Cayden Miller

there's a little spectrum I've seen that shows on a graph, horizontally it's encouragement, invitation, or actually that would be up and down. And then across is challenge. So I quickly drew that out, and said, "It's not that you're encouraging too much, it's that you're not challenging enough." And that was just a huge "A-ha" for her so certainly challenge is broadened in mastermind. There is a feeling of "We're here for a reason" and it builds that accountability. Yeah, that's great.

Chad: I think what you're getting at there, Brian, is know there's of course being a part of a mastermind, contributing in a mastermind. It's not the same thing as coaching, but boy it's a sibling, maybe a cousin, but maybe even a sibling to coaching because it's got that sort of balance of challenge, kind of an aggressive challenge, and a nurturing encouragement as a part of it, and if you don't have those it's probably not really a mastermind.

Brian: You definitely want both, and I don't want it to have that feeling that it's the most stressful thing you'll ever be a part of. Hopefully not, but if you're not used to challenge, it'll probably bring a bit something that you've maybe not seen as much, and I think that's definitely got to be a part of it. What's the second benefit of joining a mastermind?

Chad: I think it can help you recognize some of the key challenges that you're facing. It's one thing to present a topic and talk around it the way you see it from your perspective, but recognizing those key challenges, maybe the blind spots, others can help you see that. Even when it's your turn to be in the hot seat, having something to bring, you have to think about "Gosh, what am I going to talk about today?" And that just really brings things, I think, to the front burner that maybe you've been putting aside or not necessarily have been willing to recognize. Just that recognizing key challenges is huge.

Brian: The key challenges for sure, and I think things get too close to us Chad. It's like looking at your hand, but it's right up against your nose and you can't tell how many numbers you've got up there and to be able to pull it back, I think others can help us to see what's going on and what fits.

Chad: By the way, I often remember that I have five fingers, but I think I get the point you're making.

Brian: Well I'm glad you're tracking with me. As I've looked at our podcast demographic, there's a lot of six phalange'd people out there, and I think maybe you've just lost half our demographic.

Chad: Okay, so I think what I've heard, just to review, the benefits include accountability and recognizing key challenges. There are probably two or three other benefits. What's another one?

Brian: Well one is you get to be around other people that are smart or smarter than yourself, which may sound odd. But my suspicion is whether it's smart or smarter, calculating that by IQ or whatever, I at least have found in my own life, I am typically a person who is thinking as deeply about the subject as anybody. So I really need some other people that are thinking as deeply as I am to bring some challenge to me, otherwise I can just get mired in my own thinking.

Chad: We do a lot of work with that, and I think everybody listening can benefit from being in a mastermind. If you're pastor, this right here, if for no other reason, is one of the reasons you want to go out and create or join or find or whatever, and get into a mastermind because they're pastors. They think about things more often and at a deeper level than the people in their church.

Brian: Absolutely.

Chad: And what frustrates the daylight out of them, is the people in the church who aren't thinking about these things the same way. So they're not as helpful, it's not as much of an iron sharpening iron on some of these things that come along with leading a church. So get in mastermind with some people who are as smart or smarter than you. Thinking about things in the same way in terms of on the same wavelength as you can be really beneficial.

Brian: Or if you want to start a coaching business, and Chad, we know a lot of people who want to start a coaching business, people don't think along those lines generally so you need to find a group of people that are thinking more along those lines. I don't think it would hurt to add a few other people who are wanting to start a coaching business in particular, and/or a counseling business. There are a lot of people who want to go into counseling and start their own business. Just anybody that has some kind of service oriented consulting, but if you can get into a group of people who are hungry and thinking deeply about... The problem is not "How do I give my services?" The problem usually is "How do I get my clients?" So all of these people are thinking about how to get clients.

Chad: And that, really, is how the mastermind works. Everybody's kind of thinking about the same sorts of things. And it's "Here's something I've found that works. Here's the way that worked for me. From what I know about you, maybe you could try this." And it's just all a bunch of collective brain power together, but they've got to be kind of in the same arena. You've got that in common with each other versus just asking some random stranger off the street what are they thinking. When you've thought about it way more than they have, it's not that helpful. Not any old person, that's what makes it a mastermind. You've got something in common. Ben Franklin hung out with other people who wore leather aprons. They had that in common, whatever that means. I don't know what that means.

Brian: Well, he was smart guy. He obviously was a genius kind of guy, and he found it beneficial to hang out with other people in similar professions, not exactly the same, because it made him think in different ways, gave him insight, there's no doubt. A fourth benefit is that you get to help someone else make progress.

Chad: Yeah, I think that's huge. You may think, "Well gosh, how does that benefit me?" Well it does. For one, you're going to be the someone else that others are helping make progress at some point, but two if you don't enjoy and find value and a sense of satisfaction helping others make progress, you're in the wrong line of work and you're probably in the wrong species. We like humans who help other humans make progress.

Brian: A fifth, and maybe not final, but another one we talk about is it's a place we have fun. It shouldn't necessarily be just for friendships, but it should have camaraderie about it that's enjoyable.

Chad: I think the part of that that I've found really beneficial, to put it in even more professional terms, sometimes you just really feel like you're alone. Whatever you're pursuing, whatever you're trying to make progress on in life, it can feel alone, and you think, "Gosh, I'm the only one facing this, I have to do this myself." It's just better to have some sense of community, partnership, being together with others. God created us not to be alone, and so even if you're a solopreneur, even if what you do for a living is your own thing, this is a way to have some companionship in it, to have some partners. Not in the

technical sense, but at least in the relational sense, you have some partners and you're partnering with them. God created us for that, and so that's just better.

Brian: Even if you're an introvert, I think there's real benefits that for me, and I'm not an extreme introvert, but as a slight introvert, something I like about the mastermind, is it has a format. Whereas as an introvert where I get lost is when there's no format and it's all over the place and no process.

Chad: That's a huge point Brian, before we leave it, not only just for introverts, but for those who are not as extroverted as others, having the format, having the structure, having a role to play, all those are really important. The super extrovert, they go out there and they do this on the fly. They just kind of naturally make this happen, however. The rest of us, the other 90 percent of the population, having the structure, a set time and a pointed agenda, somebody's in charge, all of that's just incredibly valuable.

Brian: The book I would suggest for people that are struggling with introversion, I just even recently heard a couple people saying maybe they felt like they needed some counseling, they were such extreme introverts, and I doubt that's true. Just as a resource, *The Introvert Advantage* is a book that really is helpful in understanding what it means to be an introvert and how to process through that. So that's something I would, if anybody's struggling with that, encourage them to pick up that book, *The Introvert Advantage*.

Chad: That's a great resource, but you know Brian, maybe we should do a podcast sometime on introversion.

Brian: I would, but I just don't really want to expose...

Chad: Don't want to put yourself out there.

Brian: I'd have to do it in private probably, I'm just kidding. It's a good idea. Introversion versus extroversion.

Chad: I think that's a sign that we should wrap up this podcast very quickly.

Brian: I'd like to spend a couple minutes talking about considering being the facilitator of a mastermind as a coach. Most of our listeners are coaches, and I think this could be an opportunity for them, so let's just give them a couple of bullets on how they could get started forming a mastermind that they could serve as the coach. The process piece is a big piece, so we talk about this all the time, we're not coaching the problem, you've a new eBook out called *Coach the Person, Not the Problem*. I think there's another piece to that, which is we're expert at the process.

Chad: Yeah, I think the biggest thing that maybe some of our listeners who are coaches are going to have to do, even before you put the mechanics together in putting together a mastermind, is give yourself permission. You might think, "Woah, I'm a coach, I'm not a mastermind facilitator." The truth is, you are a coach, but you're also a lot of other things. You are helping people solve problems. You are helping people make progress, and coaching's one of the ways you do that. A mastermind is a very similar way of doing that, and you've got the skills and the tools and the techniques perfect for really doing this as a coach because you understand process. So you're inviting a group of people into a process by which they can get some solutions, they can form some answers, and they can contribute to

other people doing the same. So just give yourself permission. It's okay to form a mastermind, and what you do in that mastermind is not going to be coaching. It's going to look kind of like coaching, but it's different. So just go ahead and be okay with that.

Brian: There are some facilitator process skills that I think coaches more naturally have, and I would want to be a part of a mastermind that has a facilitator who lets everyone check in real quickly, but knows whose turn it is to be on the hot seat so we don't spend too much time, but we spend enough relational time but we definitely get into the issues so we don't just have fifteen minutes left to actually do what we said we were going to do. And make sure everyone's asking questions. Everyone gets a chance to respond.

Chad: And I love, Brian, the part where you say everybody. The person you do not want leading a mastermind is the person who says, "Let's hear from this person, let's hear from that person, let's hear from the third person, and now that everyone's spoken I will tell you the truth." You don't want that person leading the mastermind, you want a coach kind of person who can help the person on the hot seat to be the expert. And say, "What part of what you've heard do you want to move forward with? What part of the advice you've been given can you really own?" and all of that. And really, it's that facilitating skill set that's really needed.

Brian: I might want that introvert, that doesn't feel like they need to say something every time something's said. That's been an annoying piece for me is when somebody shares and then the facilitator shares another five minutes on that issue, and then someone else shares and the facilitator... Yeah, we're not looking for that person, and I think coaches just naturally have that ability to listen, to pull stuff out. There's so many skills that are going to carry over. Chad, thanks so much for spending thirty minutes with me just thinking about how to challenge our listeners. It's certainly our desire for them to get some growth. I appreciate you taking some time out of your day to invest in them.

Chad: Well it's a pleasure and I think we have some resources on the members only website around this challenge, so we've got a blog article and people can get on The Facebook, do we call it The Facebook? I think I just did that. The Facebook...

Brian: I'll get on The Google and check. Hey, thanks so much for joining us. You can find out more about us by going to www.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.

[Outro Music]