



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 21: Interview with Doug Foltz

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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 Doug Foltz, the director of project management for Stadia, an organization which plants churches all over the world. Their tagline is, "Until every child has a church." I think that is a great tagline for building urgency. Doug is a self-proclaimed church planting junkie and has been involved with church planting most of his adult life. He helped plant LifePoint Christian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2004 and served as project manager with Passion for Planting before he joined Stadia team in 2010. In his role as director of project management, he assesses and coaches church planters. His passion is to help church planters accelerate their vision to reach the lost. In his spare time, Doug, you have spare time?

Doug Foltz: Just a little bit.

Brian: Just a little bit. Doug enjoys gardening, running, traveling, Illinois basketball, and volunteering in the local elementary school. His greatest supporter is his wife, Amanda. Together, they live in Illinois where they have two kids, Will and Kate. I've met your wife, and I've met your kids. Great family, Doug.

Doug: Thanks, Brian. I appreciate that, and thanks for inviting me onto the podcast today.

Brian: Hey, I'm thrilled to have you. It's a great story of how we came to know each other, and I'm thrilled that it's developed into a pretty solid friendship as well.

Doug: Indeed. Yeah, to give you a little bit of background, I actually didn't like coaching for quite a long time. When I was a project manager with Stadia, my primary goal was to help church planters get things done, keep them on task. Primarily, I saw coaching as an obstacle to that.

Brian: As an obstacle?

Doug: Yeah, as an obstacle. What was interesting about it, Brian, was that as a project manager, I'd be sitting down with the church planter, we'd have our plans, we'd put them together, we'd start to implement them, and then the planter would have a conversation with the coach, and the coach would tell them to do something completely different. So man, a lot of times, a coach was just a thorn in my

side. It was a bit of a headache. What became interesting was I had that opinion, and we kind of had a moment at Stadia where we had some shifts around in leadership, and I was assigned to be director of coaching, and I thought, "Man, this is interesting. I'm really going to have to shift and change my attitudes about coaching if I'm going to be able to do this job." So that's where we got hooked up the first time. You were offering CAM's Introduction to Coaching, 501, in Mattoon. Mattoon was just a half an hour drive for me. So I thought, "Well, hey, it's close. At least I'm not wasting a bunch of travel time. I'll go and see what I think about this coaching stuff."

I came down there and took the coaching class from you, and my first impression was fantastic. If you remember this Brian, I walked away from that being able to do some basic coaching. I came home, and I would practice it on my church planters, and I thought, "Wow. This is a great tool. I can actually get them to get more things done through this coaching stuff." So I got excited about it, and I was describing it to Amanda one night, and she has this unique, prophetic way of telling me things sometimes, and she just kind of says, "That doesn't sound like coaching. That sounds like you're just manipulating people."

Brian: Oh, ouch.

Doug: A little bit, yeah, and so I was like, "No, I'm not manipulating. I'm coaching." I think I even came back to you, and you've always been pretty patient with me as you've helped me in this journey, but I described to you my coaching, and my coaching was, "Hey, I've got these great tools called questions, and I can use them to lead planners to get them where I want them to go. It's awesome," and you weren't quite as blunt as my wife, but you said, "Yeah. That is kind of manipulative."

Brian: Let's go back a second to initially, your planters had coaches, correct?

Doug: Yes.

Brian: But you felt like they were being counterproductive. There was a plan in place, and the coach was feeling very able to come in and just throw the plan out for the planter and put in place a new plan.

Doug: Brian, I'd say that a lot of this had to do with us growing up as an organization in our understanding of what coaching was. With church planting, there's all kinds of research out there that points and says, "Coaching is the best practice." If you have a coach as a church planter, you're more likely to be successful in lots of different areas. Of course as an organization, we wanted to adopt that, but we didn't have a good understanding of what coaching really was, so for us, coaching ended up being having a church planter who had kind of been there, and done that, and had some success. Tell the next guy what to do. A lot of coaching conversations ended up being, "Well here's what I did," or, "No, no. Don't do that. You should go do this," and it really wasn't coaching as much as it was more of a peer mentoring. So that's where I would get the frustration as a project manager. I've since said, and I think I've told you, "If that's how you're coaching, please stop." It's not to say that that's not good. There's some good things from that, but it's just not coaching, so don't call it coaching.

Brian: That's really accurate, and I remember, you flew me down to Atlanta to teach coaching to some of your leaders, and we actually, from my tribe, had a church planter there, and she told me she already had some coach training and some experience, and then she took the class, and said, "What I got before wasn't coaching at all. It was just permission to tell people what I wanted to tell them," and we're seeing

that all over the place. People are using the word “coach” completely inaccurately. They want to be a consultant. They want to be, maybe, in charge. They want to be the boss for a little bit. I’m not sure. They’ve stated throwing around the word “coach,” and that was initially how your organization took it, apply coach as a term to someone who’s further along, maybe a mentor, but not a coach.

Doug: Yeah. Absolutely, and it’s been a long shift. It takes time within an organization to be able to shift that mentality. It was probably a couple year process for me, Brian, going from being that, “Okay, I’m thrown into that director of coaching role, and I don’t even really like coaching,” to I think I read a couple of coaching books and thought, “Man, this is kind of different than what I thought it was,” to taking the 501 class and going, “I’ve got this great new set of tools,” but really still not coaching. Really the thing that flipped the switch for me, Brian, was...

Brian: Hang on a second. Before you flip the switch, I don’t want to go on to the second part. So you took the class, and you found some tools that you actually were able to use. You were just using them for evil rather than for good, but they did work for evil in a sense, right? Can you tell me what it is about the tolls that... You said, “I have these things called questions,” but I think it was even more than that. How were you beginning to use it, so people can even identify their place along this same journey?

Doug: So I was still approaching coaching like a project manager. I had a destination in mind. I knew where I wanted that planter to go, and so rather than coming right out and telling them, I began to use questions to lead them in that direction, and it was effective. I could, a lot of times, get a planter to go where I wanted them to go, but again, I was leading them. I was directing them. I was taking them on the journey. They still weren’t at the place where they were creating their own next steps, where they were having a high level of ownership of those things. It was just me using coaching tools to direct them and get them where I wanted to be.

Brian: That’s the big one I was thinking of was ownership. You were kind of in charge. You were telling them what to do by asking questions. I think the planters reacted pretty well to that, though, didn’t they?

Doug: Yeah. I think they received it positively. I don’t think any of them would have recognized this is what’s going on. I don’t think they felt like it was inappropriate, and again, as a project manager, it was working. It just wasn’t working as a coach, and I think that was the key difference that I still had not learned was that there’s values in all these different roles. There’s values in a projects manager. There’s values in a consultant. There’s values in a counselor, and there’s values in a coach. You want to be able to know, though, when I’m using these tools, what am I using it for? Am I using this to coach somebody, am I using it to counsel somebody because counselors use a lot of questions too, or am I using it to project manage and try to get them to go somewhere? So I had been given a new set of tools, these questions, but I was still project managing.

Brian: And I bring that up because you’re about to flip the switch. You’re about to flip the switch into the side of what coaching really is and the power of coaching, and the interesting thing is that your church planters actually didn’t respond to it as well. They would have actually preferred to go back to Egypt and had you misusing coaching with them or maybe even going back to having someone who could just tell them what to do strangely enough.

Doug: Yeah. We can get into that too, but what flipped the switch for me... I did the 501 class, 502 class, and then I did the mentor coaching, and that's where the flip switched for me. In the mentor coaching, what you had us do was to practice coaching each other, and then we'd do some evaluating on it. I can remember I was getting coached, and I thought, "Okay. You know what, Brian just keeps telling me, 'Trust the process. Trust the process.' Maybe I'll just give it a try, and I'll trust the process." I remember I had brought up my marriage as part of the coaching session and said, "Hey. I've just been trying to figure out how can I love my wife even better? What are some things I can do to demonstrate that to her."

I really didn't have any expectation that this coaching stuff was going to give me anything new. I'd already been trying some things. I'd already known what worked in the past. I was pretty confident I had things figured out, but I was going to trust the process, so I did, and I don't even know that the coaching that I got that day was particularly good, but it was coaching. We were all rookies. We're all green, and I was asking questions. They weren't leading questions. He wasn't trying to get me. They were big, exploratory questions, and what I found was, boom, these new ideas keep popping. I'm like where was that before, and it wasn't anything that the coach had said. It was all stuff that I thought of on my own, and so it just generated these three or four gems out of even this rookie conversation with a coach. That flipped the switch for me, and I went, "Ah. Okay. Now I get it," and I owned those things.

I did all those things. That was the other big takeaway. If that coach had just sat there and said, "Hey, you know what I think you ought to do is you've got to put down on your to-do list to send your wife a little love letter once a month." I never would have done it, but that idea sparked in that conversation through those exploratory questions that coach was asking was like, "I'm doing that." That was a big shift in change for me in that moment.

Brian: So your switch got flipped, and this is interesting though the process, by being coached.

Doug: Absolutely. That was the first experience, but what that did for me, Brian, was that it made me trust the process, so now I coached differently as a result. Then, as part of that mentor coaching, I had to coach somebody, and I think we even had to coach somebody offline, if I remember right, and you'd given us different models and things to try. I was trying a model with a guy, and it was just amazing that the same thing happened. It wasn't me sitting there being the expert, being the consultant, project manager type saying, "This is what I think you should do." It was just me working the process that you had given, and I think that particular one had been a bridge. How do we bridge today to the future? And it worked. The person that I was talking to was, again, generating all these great ideas on their own, and I just almost got a little bit addicted to that. It was like man, this is good stuff, and really when you start to coach and you do that and the client begins to come up with ideas, they'll come up with ideas that are better than your ideas.

Brian: Yeah. That's for sure.

Doug: It was like with that and it was better, and then you just start relaxing into and going, "I am going to trust the process."

Brian: I love that. So you flipped the switch. First of all by being coached, and I've seen that happen before. I remember a recent training that I was explaining not to ask why, and one of the students

thought that was just stupid, and then he was being coached, and the coach asked him why, and he immediately understood why you don't ask why. He felt judged. So you can learn so much by being coached as well. That's a great piece, and I love that. So you flipped the switch, and then you go back to the church planters, and how was that received?

Doug: It was new for them. They were used to having somebody tell them what to do, and because we are the church planting organization and we're perceived as the experts, I would have times where planters would be like, "Quit asking me these questions. Just tell me what to do." A lot of what I had to do in the early days was just try and help them to understand the value. So a lot of times, Brian, the thing that I would say was like, "Hey. If you just want an opinion, I can give you an opinion. I'll have one, but my guess is you've probably already got a lot of people in your life who give you opinions, and you've already got other people who are speaking in, and if you need help just brainstorming ideas, they're going to tell you what you need to do. I'm not really interested in that because you've got so much of that already in your life.

What I'm interested in, I'm interested in expanding your **[inaudible 16:50]** and help you to process through all of that to figure out what is it that God is telling me that I should do with this?" That's a shift. I have to put down my expertise when I do that because the first big chunk of my career was leverage your expertise, help these guys forward, tell them what to do. So I have to set that to the side and go, "No. You know what? Hey, they've got plenty of that already. Let me just help them to expand their thinking and figure out what are God's next steps for me in this journey of church planting?"

Brian: The nice thing about coaching in that situation is nobody else is doing that for them. There are a lot of people who will tell them what to do. There are books they can read. There are blogs. There are podcasts. There are consultants you can hire. You've got project management, but you don't have anybody thinking about helping you think more deeply about how to apply this to my context and who I am as a person to implement this.

Doug: Yeah, that's very true, and one great example that I can give you is most every church planter has to fundraise, and it's tough. Fundraising is really difficult, and we can put systems and processes to make all that easier. We give them training so they have the know-how, but I've had the same conversation with several church planters where we're talking, they're not getting results. At the end of the day, it's really not because they haven't had the training, or they haven't read the book, or even if they don't have the system or process in place. It's really because there's a heart issue there. A lot of times in the coaching conversation around fundraising, it will come to identity questions. It will come to heart questions, and I don't care how much you know about a process.

I don't care if you have ten steps outlined perfectly. If you go execute if your heart's not in the right place, and you have beliefs that are preventing your action, you're never going to be able to implement those things. That's what I love about coaching. It doesn't just start off and say, "Here's the things you've got to do," but through that coaching process to be able to explore with them, what are the real obstacles that are in the way, asking them things like what is it about your relationship with Jesus? If you were just sitting with him right now, what would he be speaking into you? And listening to how God speaks to them through those questions, and often times, those are things they've never thought of before, and I really think the Holy Spirit uses that conversation to really help them to identify, here's

maybe an area where I'm prideful, or I'm sinful right now, and I need to repent. That may sound like I'm moving into being a pastor, but really I'm not. I'm still in that coaching seat and allowing God to use that in that process to speak to them in it. Like I said, at the end of the day, I could consult, and I could project manage, and I could say, "These are the steps. Just go do this," but if they don't have their heart in the right place, or they've got a sinful barrier in their life, they're not going to do it anyway.

Brian: That could sound ooey-goey. You talked about it sounds like a pastor. Is your heart right? But the real thing about coaching is that it does bring results, and I assume you have the ability to know whether those fundraising results got better through the coaching.

Doug: Absolutely. We track all that, obviously. We can see where they are before and after and those sorts of things, but sometimes results we want to look at it, and we want to just say dollars with fundraising, and that is the primary result, but you can't even get to the dollars if the planter is paralyzed towards action. So the next call when you're on with them, and all of a sudden you find out the guy who couldn't make three phone calls in a week has now made 20 in a week, that's a result.

Brian: That's a result. What's another result?

Doug: I would definitely say just their attitude. That they're approaching it with joy in their heart and not with drudgery is another result, and then of course certainly at the end of the day that they have more dollars in the bank to fund the vision is a result as well.

Brian: We'll definitely hold within confidentiality here, but I remember you sharing with me, you were just so excited because you had a planter that just wasn't making it financially. You did a little coaching with him and then the money started pouring in, and I don't want to overstate that, you know, but it's certainly accurate.

Doug: And it was such a small thing. That particular planter, as most planters are, very visionaries, high level thinking. With fundraising there's an element of detail, and follow up, and setting up meetings, and all that kind of stuff, and through the coaching process, what we learned, or what he learned, was that he actually loved to pitch. He loved to sit down and cast a vision for this is what we're doing. What he hated was scheduling the meetings. That came out in almost like a "uuurrrhhh" kind of experience where as we're working through the coaching, and I said, "Well, who do you know that could schedule the meetings? Who's wired that way?" He's like, "Oh. You're right. I don't have to do that." It was just a subtle little thing, and his wife is wired that way. She basically took over his calendar. She would schedule the meetings for him, set everything up, and he would go and pitch, and that's what he was good at. They went from having about 20% of what they needed to fund the church to about 85% of what they needed within about three months, and then they hit 100 within a couple months after that. The funny thing about it is you still feel like fundraising. It's like man, I kind of like it now.

Brian: He could have just been turned off to it, never want to do that again, and coaching helped unlock it for him. The process was still the same. There's a process to fundraising, and he didn't reinvent that or get told to do it differently. He unlocked it for himself, made it his own, and not living strongly into it. You don't have to have another conversation with him next week saying, "No really. You've got to go out and talk to 10 more people." You can't hardly get this guy to stop talking to people.

Doug: We can use him now to tell that story to other church planters as well.

Brian: So, I've worked with you through this, and it's been an interesting transition for you. There's been a few other times that planters have just not embraced the coaching relationship, and you've done some different things to help them get into that relationship. Can you tell us about some of those other practices?

Doug: Yeah. Again, for some of these guys, this is the first time they've ever really been coached, so one of the things that I found up front is to really take my first session, really help lay the groundwork of here's what it is, here's what it isn't. In the process of that, I've got some intake questions that I ask that help me get a feel for who they are, and then one of the things, too, that I've found is beyond just that opening conversation where we're really setting the tone is to be able to come back to that in the conversations. So there'll be a lot of times where they'll want to... Because it's new. Being coached is new too, and so they'll come back to they'll ask questions. "So what would you do in this situation?"

Let me tell you, is it ever tempting to just tell them. "Here's what you should do!" Is what I want to say, but I just go, "You know, I could tell you what to do, but that's not what coaching is," and what I always tell them is I say, "Look, I recognize I've got some expertise in this. You want to have access to that. So there may be times when I just need to take the coaching hat off, and we can do that. That's okay, but I'm always going to tell you I'm taking the coaching hat off," but what I also tell them is trust the process, and I'll say, "Look, I'm not going to let you do something crazy here."

One of the extreme examples I use is I say, "Hey. If you come to me, and we're talking about marketing for the new church, and you say, 'I've got this great idea. I'm going to go stand out on the busiest highway, naked, with a sign saying come to my church on Sunday,' I'm going to let you know that's not a good idea. I'm not going to let you go dive off the deep end, and experience a lot of pain, and sit there as the guy who is the expert in the room, and go you're going to fall flat on your face." Even just letting them know that gives them a little bit of comfort to go, "Okay. Let me try to trust the process," and the more they do that, the more they trust the process, the more they start getting in the rhythm of it. The guys who are really good at being coached, I barely have to do any work for anymore. I come into the conversation, and they'll say here's what I want to talk about, and sometimes they start asking themselves the questions which is kind of fun to watch.

Brian: Right. You create a coaching mindset, and they begin to coach themselves. It's a little disconcerting for a coach because they think, "What am I doing wrong. I don't feel like I'm coaching anymore," but you've created a mindset, and people fall right into it. So now, Doug, you are an ACC certified coach with the International Coach Federation. Congratulations on that. What's next on your coaching journey?

Doug: Thanks. For me, what's next is to just continue to coach church planters, to be able to coach church leaders, and I've begun even to use that outside of my job. I've used it with my kids even, at times, as a parent to be able to use a coach approach. Now sometimes, you need to just tell them what to do. I'm a parent after all, but sometimes coaching's a great tool. I'm going to continue to learn, Brian. You've been my coach now for a couple of years, and I value that relationship because not only do I get good coaching from it, but I learn how to be a better coach by being coached, so I'll continue to do that.

I will continue to take classes to learn more. It's interesting, you know, even as an ACC level coach, I still feel like a rookie. I still feel like I'm learning. Every podcast, I listen to. Every article, I read. Every time I'm coached, I feel like I pick up a little nugget. I think one of the best things I'm doing right now is myself and Craig Whitney and I, who do a lot of coaching for Stadia, once every three months, we have you evaluate our coaching, and then we get together and we all talk about it. I can tell you, when the mic is on, I'm a whole lot better coach because I know someone else is going to listen to this. I really do need to stay in this seat, but on the flip side of that, I get the feedback from both you and Craig. Here's some things you did really good, and you kind of stepped out of the coaching hat right here. Those things have helped me continue to refine the craft and get better at it as time goes on.

Brian: Doug, I appreciate you coming on and telling your story today. You are a blessing to me, and I know you're a blessing to Stadia. I appreciate all the hard work you're doing.

Doug: Brian, thanks for the podcast. It really is a great resource for us.

Brian: We want to thank all the people joining us today, and 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]