



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 27: Building Better Accountability

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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 the CAM leadership team, Chad Hall, the president of CAM, and Bill Copper, executive director of CAM. Today's episode is a bonus episode that comes from our CAM leadership team's Q&A series. In these Q&A's, we try to go below the surface of the questions. I'm always disappointed when I get access to a favorite author or speaker in a breakout session, or on a podcast, and they simply rehash the first chapter of their book. We want our answers to give you a true insider's look to the world of Christian coaching. Today's Q&A considers building better accountability. We hope you enjoy it.

All right. Welcome to Q&A Podcast, and we're glad you're here today. The challenge for February is building better accountability. So I just wanted to dive deep with the CAM leadership team, Chad Hall, Bill Copper, and myself, Brian Miller, on some examples of where you really felt like you built some great accountability. We're going to do a webinar on it that will be available here pretty soon. Guys, when I say building accountability in coaching, what comes to mind, but I'm really hoping to get some examples before we go.

Bill Copper: Just earlier today, Brian, I led a class where we talk about some of the competencies, and we had talked about this particular one, about accountability, and I think that maybe the switch that went off for a number of folks, even in that conversation today, was how building accountability in a coaching conversation, coaching relationship, is something that happens as things are being developed, and that's different from holding others accountable which often happens on the back end. That's maybe a quick insight that occurred to me today.

Brian: And my insight would be the best accountability that I felt like I've had built into my own being coached has been accountability that didn't try to push me over the line, but it felt like it was pulling me. It felt like it was drawing me forward as opposed to maybe the other way. It just didn't feel like I was being dragged. It felt more like motivation, propulsion. Maybe that's a horrible analogy, I don't know. It has a different feel to it for sure.

Bill: Conversations that we've had, we talk about different ways that people are motivated and build in accountability. The more that we think about that as something that is part of the design rather than part of the assessment, or the follow-up, I think would be more successful.

Chad Hall: I tend to think of it as if it feels like something the coach is doing unto the client, you're probably doing it wrong. It's almost the coach's agenda is accountability, and that's getting it way out of whack. The way to approach it is that this really is a partnership, and like you guys were saying, we built it into the relationship, and it's not something I'm doing to you as a client. It's something we are doing together as far as the coaching relationship, is creating accountability. I don't know if this metaphor, or this example, is going to work or not, but it's kind of like when I go to the dentist, and we've moved around as a family, that I've got to experience a lot of different dentists in my life, but the ones, not only dentists, but dental hygienists, that I absolutely despised are the ones who remind me that I need to be flossing and they give me all this...

It seems like it's their agenda, and I feel guilty for not having flossed enough. The dentists and the dental hygienists who remind me to floss and invite me to do it, and they just have a really different tone and presence about it. It's like, "Oh boy! I get to floss!" I've started flossing years ago because I had a dental hygienist who put it in very different terms, and I think that kind of relates to accountability for coaches. The tone we use, making it the client's agenda really will make a difference in the way they experience accountability.

Brian: I totally agree. I'll give you my example. I was being coached as I was doing some mentoring, and so we were training some folks to coach, and my topic was that for exercise I had been running, and I had been doing really well, and now it was becoming winter, and it was below freezing, but I still wanted to run. We had to go through a lot of, "Well isn't there something else you could do?" That's not my agenda. I really actually do want to run, and when we finally got to that side of okay, the accountability being built was much more around, "Well don't you want to feel like a man?" The fact that you're not so weak that you can't run when it's a little cold outside, and honestly, that was not motivating. It just made me mad. It just made me mad. You're calling me a sissy. That's the accountability we're building in here?

I ended up building my own accountability into it. The coaching helped me get into the mindset, and the accountability I had was that I made a deal with myself that I could listen to an audiobook but only when I'm running outside. It was just something I'm like, "Oh man. I really want to listen to this book, and it's an audio book. That sounds like a good deal for me, but I didn't want to pay for it, the monthly fee," but I would pay that monthly fee if I listened to it outside. That built an internal motivation with something completely different than exercise or running. It combined two things that really worked for me, and I told myself earlier this winter that I would just go out and re-subscribe to this audio book so that this would begin to happen, and I didn't do it, and I've not been running outside. I just felt like that was such a great, built in accountability, but the thing is, nobody could have suggested to me, "Well what if you only let yourself listen to audiobooks when you ran?" You're like, "What?"

Chad: You know Brian, here's the thing with that example that you're using; we talk about that clients are creative and resourceful. You demonstrated a lot of creativity and resourcefulness in designing that accountability, and I don't know why sometimes we assume clients aren't creative and resourceful when

it comes to accountability. We're going to have to bring that up for them. What we really want to do with accountability is tap into their creativity and resourcefulness to design accountability that really fits them. When we do that, it becomes a fun thing, a good thing. Not I'm going to shame you into running.

Brian: Right, "You're a coward!"

Bill: Chad, as you were describing your dental hygienist, this feeling came over me from my own experience from a dermatologist who, in looking me over, his goal was to try to get me to use sunscreen and wear a hat, those kinds of things, but what he did was made me feel guilty about having grown up in Florida and gotten sun on my back and face and freckles and all that stuff. Almost told me my mother didn't love me if she allowed me to do that when I was a kid, and it not only did not motivate me and provide me accountability for me to do that, but I fired him as a dermatologist and went to find a different one. I think you're right that that kind of motivation was not for me, that was not a way to hold me accountable. I wonder if there are others and others of our clients for whom that would be exactly the right kind of motivation, is more stick than carrot.

Brian: Especially shaming, I think about high school sports and my coach, who knew the sport brilliantly, but his only motivation was shame. Honestly, I think it worked on me the most, and I would run faster for twenty seconds, but there were so many guys who I think were very talented who just could not play. It did not motivate them, it demotivated them. So when you say it might work for some, you definitely need to be open to the agenda and listening to what might work for folks. I don't think the opposite is necessarily true. To just say, "Hey, I think you can do it!" I don't think that works for everybody either, but to be really creative and come up with something. Just the other day I just had a bunch of stuff to do, and I find myself getting distracted, especially at the computer. So I put this really ugly orange hat, it came out of coaching, this was the accountability, this really ugly orange hat, I hung it on the screen. It was in the way, and I couldn't get it off until I got done. That's what I needed. Was that shaming? It was just a thing, it just worked. Are there examples that you guys think of? I like the idea of talking about examples, something concrete.

Chad: I can think of a good example. I guess it's been about four years ago now, I was completing my application to become master certified in coaching. Honestly, I was kind of dragging my feet about it. It was important, but I was still dragging my feet. That happens, but with the help of a coach, came up with an accountability where I was going to donate 500 dollars to the political party that I do not support. So I gave myself a deadline. First of all, deadlines, for me, are very good forms of accountability, but it needs to be a deadline with teeth. I created a deadline, and then the teeth that I put to it was that I would donate 500 dollars to my unfavored political party, and then to put some more teeth to it I was going to tell Bill that I was donating because Bill and I are both in the same political persuasion. It reminds me accountability is not inherently good. Accountability has an instrumental value. It's only good in that it gets you to do something. The good that it did was that it really motivated me, and I got that application in.

Brian: What did it create inside of you? That feeling, what was it?

Chad: It was "This matters." It was "This matters. I care enough about this." It wasn't really that I was going to punish myself if I didn't get it done. It just upped the ante, it said, "This really matters." It held it

front and center, and it was going to cost me something and it was a little bit fun too. Honestly, telling Bill about and saying, "If I don't get this done, I want you to help me, I'm going to have to give 500 dollars, and won't that be bad?" It had to be enough that it would be almost equal to how significant this was in my life.

Bill: And Brian, what I think was the key to that, was not the disincentivem, or the penalty, if we can call it that, not getting it done was something Chad didn't want to do. The key to all that was that the task itself was something important for him to do. In other words, it meant something for him to accomplish this, and so because that meant something to him, he wanted to put something in place that continued to motivate him to do that. I have to confess, I was torn on whether I wanted him to accomplish it or not because it would've been a lot of fun knowing he had to write a check to this particular party, but it was an interesting dynamic that was going on because all the accountability did was remind him to do something he'd already told himself was important to do.

Brian: That would've been fun because he probably would've gotten a handwritten note from the candidate, he'd be on the list that "this guy's good for some major cash."

Chad: "This guy's got 1,900 more dollars he can donate." Brian, to the question of just some examples, one thing I've noticed a lot of coaches struggle with, and sometimes I struggle with it, is really even just having the language to bring up accountability. Some things that we can say near the end of a conversation, once a client has identified an action they want to take, an outcome they want to achieve, we don't have to use the word accountability to bring it up. We can. We can say, "What's a way to hold yourself accountable on this?" or "What does accountability need to look like on this commitment that you're making?" But we can also say, "What's a way you can make sure you're doing this?"

Brian: I think that's exactly it.

Chad: It doesn't need to be anything fancy. I think of it as our goal or our responsibility as a coach is to bring up the topic of accountability. It's not our responsibility to design it, it's not our responsibility to give it the good-housekeeping seal of approval. It's our responsibility to bring it up and to facilitate the client in generating an accountability structure that's going to work for them. That takes the pressure off.

Bill: It's also not our responsibility to be it, and so we do bring it up. We don't design it, we're not responsible for it, and it's not our responsibility to participate in it. I see a lot of coaches who think they bring an extra layer of service by loading their clients a catapult, by being that accountability partner. Honestly, I cringe when I see that because I think our goal as coaches is to build capacity in others rather than build dependency on ourselves. One of the things you talk about in coaching is a peer-to-peer relationship, and something changes about that peer-to-peer when I become the person to whom my client has to answer for whether they did or not. I love the way Chad puts that, that we are responsible to raise the issue and to notice when progress and accountability aren't there, but it's not our responsibility to design it nor to be it. Brian, I thought your example of listening to those podcasts only when you're running is a great example of why we shouldn't be in the designing business for that. Nobody could have come up with that as a way to legitimize the way in which you're holding yourself accountable.

Brian: Nope, that's right. People are sometimes surprised when I don't ask people if they did what they said they were going to do from the last meeting, but I just tell them, "I'm in the business of raising up independent responsible people," and so I don't think that's part of the system I want to create, to make them dependent on me for their accountability. So any way we can not do that is a benefit to them. Guys I appreciate you stepping in and going deep on this question. We'll look forward to seeing you next time.

Bill: Great, good to be with you Brian.

Chad: Thanks Brian.

Brian: Thank you so much for joining us. You can find more out about us 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*. See you next week.

[Outro Music]