



## Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

### Episode 32: Setting Goals

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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 Bill Copper, the executive director of CAM. Welcome, Bill.

**Bill Copper:** What do you know, Brian? Good to be with you.

**Brian:** In today's episode, we want to talk about setting goals. Coaches help people get from here to there, and goals are a great way of clarifying where there is. In this podcast, we're going to talk about how to determine your goals, how to sharpen your goals, and how to plan action for your goals. Bill, where do we get started with goals?

**Bill:** I'll be honest with you. One of the first things I try to help people understand is why you need them. Why have goals? Why not just be flexible? Why not just do the best you can? I think back to a previous life. I used to be in the television business. My dad, and my brother, and my brother-in-law, and I, we ran a small chain of television stores, and at first, we had a few stores, and I was in one, and my brother was in one, and my dad was in one. Our goal, every day, was to sell as many TV's as we could, and we met that goal every day. Every day we met that goal because whatever we sold that day, that was as many as we could, and we expanded and bought a couple of stores, and it required us to hire some managers for those stores. I'll never forget this guy we hired who had some experience in the business, had been in some other stores and came to work for us to run one of our stores, and I remember one of the first questions he asked was, "So, what are our monthly sales goals?" I said, "Sell as many as you can," and he said, "No. I've got to have some goals, got to know what those goals are."

Thought about that for a bit, and we looked at some history and some tracking and worked together with him. We established some goals, and son of a gun, if he didn't work to meet those goals. In the other stores, we didn't go with that, and we became believers after just a few months because he was selling a whole lot more, even more than we had sold in some of those stores in the past. So, we began to develop sales goals for each store, for each month, and we didn't always meet those sales goals that we met, but we always exceeded what we used to do when we didn't have any goals at all. I became a believer in you've got to have something to shoot for. You've got to have a target or a goal in mind so

that you know whether you got there or not. You know how close you are. You know specifically what to do to meet those goals. It makes all the difference in the world in terms of becoming effective and getting what you want.

**Brian:** Bill, my biggest problem with goals, and I've been an abuser of this as well because I think I was taught this, is figure out what you think your goal is and then double it. I think leaders have used goals as a club to try to get their followers to overachieve and maybe unrealistically.

**Bill:** Yeah, that kind of gets at how do you go about setting a goal? What's important when thinking about establishing or setting goals? So, some of the things that we look at, some of the characteristics of a really effective goal, number one is, does it get you where you want to go? Is this goal relevant and meaningful to your life, to your purpose, to your vision, to the company's goal, or the organization? Does the goal help you get where you want to go? Secondly, does the goal itself, is it specific? So, do we want to sell as many TV's as we want? That certainly met the first test which is, yeah, that'll help us reach our vision, but it wasn't nearly specific enough to matter. So, make sure the goal is specific. Make sure it's measurable. We talk about these SMART goals. I'll talk about that. Measurable is it helps you understand whether you got there or not.

**Brian:** So, let me stop there a second. For instance, at our church, we decided to do shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, and we had put leaders in place, and she set a goal of 25 boxes, and when I heard 25 boxes, I thought, 25? How about 125? How about 200? That's a goal, but I was a smart enough leader to let her run her own show which is what I had asked her to do in the first place, and the exciting thing about it was that she met 25, and did it well, and then they upped the goal the next year, and they got to a point where they were doing 200. She started at a reasonable place, and I think a lot of leaders out there are just so excited. They want to go for 200 in the first place. There's failure, and then it kind of loses momentum.

**Bill:** I think that's a really important thing when we're setting goals is to think about it being attainable. So, if a goal is so far out of the realm of possibility, as you say, people just give up, they fail and they give up. As a leader, we think, "We'll help push you." What we can do is we can get it to the point where it's so far that the person who's trying to accomplish the goal gives up. I grew up here, in Daytona, and out in the parking lot of the Daytona International Speedway, at that time, was the Daytona Beach Kennel Club where they did the greyhound racing where the dogs raced around. Every year, they would bus all of us school kids to the race track on one day per year, but they didn't allow any gambling. They brought us there to show us how the operation worked. They showed us kennels. They showed us how the dogs trained. It kind of was an educational thing that was really just to get us used to coming to the dog track.

**Brian:** They passed out cigarettes.

**Bill:** But one of the neat things in learning how it works, and I'll never forget this, there's this inside rail, metal rail that goes all the way around the track, and at the time, attached to this rail was a little cart that a man sat in and extended out from that cart was a long pole, at the end of which was a fake bunny rabbit, and that thing extended out over the track. So, when the dogs would race, this guy would drive this little cart around the inside of the rail, and then they would turn the dogs loose, and they were actually chasing after the fake rabbit at the end of the pole. This guy's job, he had the most important

job there because he had to keep that thing out there at just the right balance so that it was far enough that they couldn't catch it, but not so far that they didn't give up. If you got out too far, the dog will say, "Ah, I'll never catch it," and he'll stop, but if it gets too close, then the dog actually catches it and realizes, that's not a rabbit, and he'll never run again. So, he had this incredible pressure on him to keep that thing just in the right balance, and sometimes, I think that's our role as a coach and as leaders, is to keep the goals out there, attainable, meaning, "I can get there," but not so close it's easy to do. We've got to find that right balance in there for goals that keep people motivated, but not so far that they give up.

**Brian:** I appreciate that. So, you're going through SMART. Is that the A?

**Bill:** Yeah. A is attainable meaning, I can get there, but it's going to be a challenge. Attainable doesn't mean easy to accomplish. Attainable means I believe that I have the resources and the capability to accomplish this goal. The R is relevant. In other words, I think we already talked about this, that the goal actually gets us where we want.

**Brian:** That makes sense. I think a lot of people push back against goals. As soon as you bring up vision or goals, with a lot of people in the church, for instance, they're like, "Oh we have vision and goals for business. It's meaningless, and we don't want meaningless." So, it shouldn't ever be meaningless.

**Bill:** Unfortunately, the goals that we sometimes set can either work counter to our vision, and mission, and purpose, or they can at least be neutral and not really get us toward our mission and vision. So, we have to be clear on what we're trying to accomplish, and then tie those goals specifically to accomplishing that mission or vision.

**Brian:** I was just thinking about... I've been through several insurance agents. Not because I've changed, but because they've changed, and every time you get a new insurance agent, your phone starts to ring off the hook because they've set some goals, and they really want to sell the stuff they make a lot of money on. When you were saying that, I was thinking, that is not relevant to me, and it doesn't build me up as a customer at all that you're calling me to get the gravy before giving me some potatoes.

**Bill:** As leaders, as coaches, when we're helping others to set some goals, it's really important for us to tie those goals to what they want to accomplish, to their mission or vision for a lot of reasons. One is, that's part of where the motivation comes from. If I can see how what I'm doing leads to where I want to be, then that keeps me motivated. Patrick Lencioni wrote a book, one of his books in his series, was *Three Signs of a Miserable Job*, and what he talks about there is the things that keep people going, keep people loving their job. One real key is that you understand how what you're doing serves a purpose, that it meets a mission or a vision, and if you don't really understand that, that's where people get miserable is that they do things over, and over, and over in their job, but they don't see any relevance to their company's success, to their customer's success, to their own success. So, really important to help people set goals that are relevant to them to help them to accomplishing that mission, or that vision.

**Brian:** You really struck me there. So, a coach would be so helpful with setting a goal that is good for the company, that's good for the manager, that's good for the employee, that's good for the customer. So, when you were using the TV analogy, I don't know if you did this, but I thought one, you want a goal for the company. We want to sell this many TV's so the company makes money. Then, we want to sell so

many TV's so that it benefits the sales person, and then I was thinking, we also have a goal that the customer loves that TV so much that they just can't wait to tell their neighbor that they went down to Bill Copper's TV store, and bought one. That would be a goal too that the customer loves their TV. I think those are the perspectives that I've missed without a coach, trying to set my own goals. Not relevant to everyone involved.

**Bill:** That's a key. Helping people understand the relevance of this goal to the overall vision, mission, to everyone involved, this is why you do it. That's what keeps people motivated. That's what keeps people pressing on because they want to accomplish that vision or that mission.

**Brian:** So, I think you've got SMART goals right now.

**Bill:** Yeah. The T means time-bound, or timely, and what that means is that my goals are not infinite. My goals are accomplish this by this time. So, I want to accomplish this goal by this time, and what that does is it adds some accountability. Again, the motivation. It helps me understand and keep in front of me that I need to do something. So, when we begin to design actions, we need those goals. Those actions need to be time-bound as well.

**Brian:** Does that also help you to chop it up into some achievable... So, if you have a five-year goal to take over the world, that's kind of the way my visions have been in the past because I kept doubling them. You know, what if you add a zero to that? I think that's just some of the worst advice actually there is. I know what they're trying to do, but... So, if I break it down into a six-month goal. Where do we need to be in six months? We know we can achieve that. I think that's really helpful.

**Bill:** The time-bound part is whatever chunk of time that it helps you to keep you motivated. I don't get terribly motivated by a five-year goal because I don't see how that relates to what I do today because I can always say, "I've got five years. I'll wait until tomorrow for that." If I can set a part of that vision, I would call that five-year deal more of a vision piece, but if I can set my goals, not so far that I can't see the end of it, breaking it into those smaller time periods can really be helpful.

**Brian:** Well and you've got to leave room for God to act too. Even if I want to take over the world in five years, in one year, I've got to have taken over Germany, or something, but it's too big, so you've got to leave room for God to act. You can make your goals achievable and timely for what you can do. Then, leave room too for God to act. So, I'm just curious, as you were talking about that, in our experience, because you've had a lot of administrative experience in a lot of different areas, did you find that the different timeframe was important? Whether it was a week, a month, a day, did it depend on the goal? Did it depend on the people?

**Bill:** Both of those. I can have a goal for today which is to accomplish these things that are on my list. I can have a goal for this week and this month, and I can have a goal for this year. The important thing is to understand how those are related to each other. My goal of accomplishing today will help me with my goal for this week, and for the month, and for the year. There are certainly people that I coach and topics and goals that they might set that are different from that. The key is, what is the goal that is going to help you from a time standpoint, stay motivated to work toward it.

**Brian:** That's helpful.

**Bill:** The other piece that we haven't mentioned here is that there's also a timeliness to the consequences of that goal. I use consequences not in a negative term, but it could be positive or negative, but making the consequences, if their negative, making them tie closely timewise to meeting the goal or if they're positive, if there's a reward to meeting that goal, but it needs to be, timewise, close enough to the accomplishment of the goal to keep the motivation there. If the penalty for me not meeting my goal doesn't accrue for five years, that's going to have very little effect on keeping me on the go. Same with the reward. If the reward for me meeting this goal doesn't accrue for five years, that's not very much to motivate me, but if the consequences, or penalty, or the reward is closely tied timewise to the accomplishment of the goal, that's a motivating factor.

**Brian:** I wonder if there's, and I'm sure you can speak to this, whether there's such a thing as formal and informal goals. I know that, maybe even a couple months ago, well anyway, so we're doing this at the end of 2016, recording this, and I know the last four months of 2016, there was so much I wanted to accomplish. I had a list of things I wanted to be done, and I was just feeling sick about it. I am buried. I just don't know how to get out from under this, but exactly what you said. I don't even think I set one week goals. I set one day goals. Here's the things I want to get done today. I really didn't just spreadsheet it out to see that if I did those five things today and every day. Would I be done by the end of the year? I just knew that's what would stretch me. It gave me something to look at that didn't overwhelm me. It stretched me. It pushed me, but just looking at what I want to do by the end of the year was just hurting. So, I think I set informal goals every day? Does that resonate at all?

**Bill:** Yeah, and I would even say the effect of it was just the opposite. The informal turned out to be, here are kind of the things I want to accomplish by the end of the year. The more formal things were I'm going to do these by the end of the day. Actually, those formal, making my list for today, and this week, helped me in reaching that more nebulous goal because I want to accomplish these kinds of things by the end of the year.

**Brian:** So, a formal goal, I don't know, I'm just thinking in my head, I wrote it out, I crafted it, I went through all the... I spent fifteen minutes on the S, a half hour on the M, you know? Do you find that in real life, I guess, how are goals typically crafted? How specific?

**Bill:** It's all different for everybody. Just like in coaching when we help people understand what their actions are going to be, it's different for everybody. Some people need this for motivation. Some people need that for motivation or accountability. Same thing with goals. So, what I do find is there needs to be some intentionality about it. Whether your intentionality means I spent this much time on this, and I wrote it out, and I did a spreadsheet. For some people, yeah, that's what they're going to need. For others, intentionally thinking about the specificity, the measurability, the attainability, the relevance, and the timeliness of the goals, so intentionally thinking about their goals in these different areas, that's what makes it a good formal goal. For some, it means they've got to write it out, some need to talk it out. Others, they just internalize it. The importance is there's that intentionality about setting goals.

**Brian:** We talk a lot about coaching the person and not the problem, and if we're the coach in a goal setting scenario, it'd be easy for us to get caught up in the goals which is really the problem, but what I hear you saying is we want to get caught up in the person. How can the person best set goals? What

kind of goals do they need? What kind of goals should they set? How should they go about thinking about setting goals? How have they faced goals in the past, achieved and unachieved?

**Bill:** I think that's an excellent insight that our role in the goal-setting process is not to help them figure out this step and that step. Our goal is to help them figure out themselves. What works for them? What does intentionality look like for them? The result of that is that they actually create these steps, and these actions, and these goals.

**Brian:** Bill, certainly thinking about 2017, early in 2017 here, I'm thinking about what my goals would be. If you were my coach, and you are, how would you lead me into such a conversation.

**Bill:** I would first ask you to articulate for me what that vision is for this year. Who are you? What are you meant to do this year? Then, as you're able to articulate that, then to work back and say, how would you know if you accomplished that, and what are some goals you can set kind of from the big picture to accomplish that? From there, what are some interim goals. We'd start big with mission, vision, and then work smaller to what are some overall goals? What are some specific goals, and then from there what we have them talk about is what are some actions that you're going to identify to accomplish those goals?

**Brian:** A year or so ago, you led me through that. I think you used the one-page business plan. Is that something you would advise?

**Bill:** That's a tool that does exactly that. It says what is my vision? What are half a dozen ways that I can articulate that in bullet point form? What are some goals I can set to accomplish those, and then what are some actions? So, that's one tool that you can use. There are others. The idea is that if we're going to be smart about our goals, we start with where are we headed, vision, and work down to how are we going to get there? It's like planning a trip. Where are we headed? I'm headed to Yosemite. What are all the ways to get there? What are the means to get there? What are you going to do when you get there? You don't get the maps out until you figure out where you're going to go. Once you figure out where you're going to go, then you start determining how you're going to get there.

**Brian:** I think that book it written by Jim Horan.

**Bill:** That's correct.

**Brian:** When people look this up, they get confused really quick because Horan's got twenty books. He's got the *One Page Business Plan for Surfers*, *The One Page Plan for Donut Dunkers*, but the basic plan of how he does it is the same, I think, in every book. I think I bought the one for busy executives, but I don't think it matters a ton which book you get. The basic concepts of starting big and going towards the small pieces... I found when you coached me through that, I found that extremely helpful.

**Bill:** The benefit to having a structured system like that, a tool like that, is that it gives you some language to spur your thinking. A coach can do that just in the coaching process, but having a tool that might be specific to the person you're coaching can sure be helpful.

**Brian:** Bill, what else do we need to know?

**Bill:** I guess the last thing is it's not enough to have goals. You've got to then begin to articulate actions that the client will take to reach those goals, and so I think for a lot of us, that's where we fall short. We're satisfied, and we feel thrilled by the fact that we've helped them set some goals, but we miss the fact that we haven't articulated anything to actually help them accomplish those goals. So, when we're thinking about actions, we want to think about some of these same concepts. They need to be specific actions. They need to be measurable. They need to be relevant to what they're doing. The one thing I would add to us figuring out about actions in terms of their relevance is that the action need not only be relevant to goal, but it also needs to be relevant to the person. So, if the action will sure enough meet that goal, but it's so far out of who I am, I'm not likely to do it. So, we want to add this to our SMART acronym. We want to add part of relevance, when it comes to actions, is that the action actually fits me, my personality, my preferences, my strengths, my gifts, so that I'm more likely to take the action than if it's something so far outside of who I am.

**Brian:** I think I remember you talking about, at one point you had set up a goal of losing weight, and so an action step you were going to take was to get up at four in the morning and go work out, and then you realized, I've never been successful at getting up at four in the morning and doing anything.

**Bill:** It was an action that was definitely relevant to the goal. If I did that, it would work, but it wasn't relevant to me. I did it once, and there was no way I was going to continue that. That was an action that didn't take into account who I was, and what I prefer.

**Brian:** So, this is where a coach can really earn their money. Pay attention to is the action relevant to the client, and then you can just, I think, use accountability. Really take the time to build not just who you can be accountable to. What's going to drive you through to the end of this? You know for sure, at the end of this year, you're going to have taken those actions.

**Bill:** The most powerful accountability doesn't come externally, it comes internally. It comes from building the actions that really fit the person. It really ties in well to our focus on coaching the person, and not the problem. So, let's not come up with steps people can take. That's not the focus. The focus is on helping people understand who they are, understand what drives them, understand how these actions fit that. We can help them align that. Boy, you can't get better accountability.

**Brian:** Bill, thanks for taking some time to get us set up for a successful 2017.

**Bill:** I look forward to seeing how the year unfolds. Good to be with you all.

**Brian:** Thank you so much for joining us. You can find more out about us by going to [coachapproachministries.org](http://coachapproachministries.org) and download 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]**