



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 35: Why Not Everyone is Wired to Make a List

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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. In today's episode, we want to talk about personality differences and how we need to change our coaching style to adapt to our client's personality. The one area of personality we want to look at can be seen in the Myers-Briggs type indicator. It's the last letter, the P or the J, which assesses whether you prefer to take in information or make decisions. I know for me, especially, the Myers Briggs has always been very interesting to me, but sometimes it feels so complex that I can't figure out what it's going to mean to me, and my coaching, and to my client, but thank goodness, today, my partner, Chad Hall is certified in the Myers Briggs assessment, and he's taught me a ton about the difference between this P and this J, and interestingly because he is off the charts P, and I'm pretty solid J. So, Chad, welcome to this conversation.

Chad Hall: I was going to go do something else, Brian, but I decided I would show up here even though I'm a perceiver.

Brian: You are such a solid perceiver. It only goes to 30, and you're a 31.

Chad: That's right. They had to move the edge of it just to name me.

Brian: You've helped me to understand it. Let's start there because we're probably using terms here... I mean, one of the other ones is thinker versus feeler. I get that. I mean, I know there's nuances to it, but I get the differences between thinking and feeling or introvert and extrovert, but perceiver versus judger. I think they went off the rails when they named these, but help me to understand.

Chad: Well the quick and dirty way I explain or describe Myers-Briggs... Of course, everybody knows you've got four letters, and people get, "Oh, you're an introvert, or you're an extrovert." That's kind of where you give and get energy. The second letter is how you prefer to take in information, big picture or more on the detail level. The third letter, thinker, feeler, is how you make decisions with the information you've taken in. Are you logic, or are you more relationships and emotions as a feeler? This last letter combo is which do you prefer to do. Do you prefer to take in information or make decisions with it? So, perceivers, they prefer perceiving the world. They're always on the lookout for new information, new

experience, that kind of thing. Judgers, it's not that they are judgmental, it's they prefer to make decisions, or they feel more comfortable having made a decision. Perceivers feel more comfortable having yet to make a decision. Judgers feel more comfortable having made a decision, and you might think, "Well gosh. That's a very thin slice of a person's life. How many decisions do we make," and it turns out, quite a bit. So, this dichotomy, this preference dichotomy, boy does it show up pretty strongly in our personalities.

Brian: Oh my. I think so. Certainly, between me and you, but I think, I don't want to speak for you, but I think we've begun to see the advantages that you're a perceiver, and there are advantages that I'm a judger. It definitely helps us in our partnership.

Chad: Yeah. That's one of the misconceptions people have is they either are so in love with their preference, they think, "Yeah, the world would be a better place if everyone was" whatever you are. On the other hand, some people see so many problems with their preference, they think, "If only I could be more like the other person, or whatever." The thing is that this doesn't lock us in. We don't have to always do something just because we have these preferences. They're preferences. We could have stronger preferences or not so strong preferences, but it really does take both of these attitudes, taking in information and making decisions to do anything personally, organizationally, a team, whatever. So, we really do need both of these. We just have to figure out how to manage best our own preferences.

Brian: I can think of we were talking about habits of highly effective people, and we're talking about urgent versus important. Am I saying that right?

Chad: Yeah, that's right.

Brian: So, for me, Chad, I have a list of stuff I need to do every day and that list drives me, and I'll find myself working past 5:00 because I've still got stuff on the list, 5:30, 6:00. In some ways, that's good because I'm determined, I'm getting a lot done, I'm productive, but I can also miss what's important because I have trouble then stepping back away from the list and why we have a list in the first thing, and you sir, are unencumbered by lists.

Chad: I've heard of lists. I've heard that people make them. I've also heard about quantum physics, but I'm not sure what it is.

Brian: I love quantum physics.

Chad: Yeah. So, just to help people get the idea of this and maybe how it shows up in coaching, since this is a coaching podcast, judgers like lists because they like to organize things. Organization, being organized is a form of decision making. People who are organized have already made a decision, and now, they're living that decision out. So, when Brian makes a list, when you make a list, Brian, you're deciding at the beginning of the day, what you're going to do for the rest of the day. Now you're comfortable. Now you can operate having made the decision. A perceiver, on the other hand, it's not that we don't get anything done, we have to make decisions. It's just that we tend to put things off, and we feel more comfortable not having made a decision. We're going to tend to be more go with the flow, what do I feel like doing, what seems important, that kind of thing, and especially when it comes to deadlines, then perceivers say, "Now I've got to do it," and the sense of urgency, and we procrastinate

to the last minute, and we tend to work with a flurry of activity at the last minute, pull an all-nighter, whatever. Whereas the judger would say, "Gosh, if only you had scheduled your time more effectively, you wouldn't be rushing here at the end," but we move more with the mood or the moment.

Brian: I'll tell you an area where... Because I think it's easy to beat up on the perceivers, and maybe that's just because I'm a judger, and one of the first stories you told me about the difference between a judger and a perceiver that your wife is a judger, and you are a perceiver, and the way it shows up is the other day, you went to a baseball game, you're always at a baseball game I think, with your boys, and it was a double header. It was just this long thing, and about 5:00, 6:00, you thought, "I'm hungry. What am I going to do about that?" Your wife said, "I packed snacks. I knew we were going to be here, so I prepared." So, it's easy to say, I think, perceivers are silly, but it's not true, and one way, I'm curious how you see this, is you and I both like to write.

We both consider ourselves writers. My problem is finding large enough chunks of time that I feel like I can set aside to write because I've got these lists, Chad, I've got these lists of stuff from 2016 that I didn't get done, that I still think ought to get done. Once in a while, the best thing that can happen with me is I finally want to throw out the list and start over, although it goes very quickly, but I find it very hard to find time to set aside because you can't write for 15 minutes. You have to have a block of one hour, two hours of non-pressure, and I think it's much easier for you to set aside an hour or two and say, "I'm just going to write for a while."

Chad: I will put off other things, again, if the moment hits me, and I say, "I have something to write about, or oh, this seems fun. Let's write about this," yeah, it's not like I miss appointments or those kinds of things. In a way, internally, it rises to the top of my list. I don't really have a list, but if I did have one, it has risen to the top of my list, and here's a thing for perceivers, at least an off the chart perceiver like myself, I really can't focus on anything else, so I'm in that thing. I'm focused on that thing. It matters a lot, whereas, a judger, they're able to focus and almost set a timer and say, "Oh, nope. I've got to do this other thing," and kind of move to the next thing.

Brian: In fact, I would set a timer. I would set a timer to make sure I stayed at writing for a length of time. You might set a timer to make sure you stop writing at a specific time.

Chad: Yeah, and what we are doing, typically, well-adjusted, developing human beings, is we never deny the fact we have a preference, but we do begin to... We're not slaves to our preference, so we begin to find work around. We begin to do things to take the edge off those strong preferences, and so, for a judger, maybe your life gets too in a rut, or you get too list driven. I know judgers who plan away time, or they plan fun time because otherwise, it wouldn't happen.

Brian: That's me.

Chad: It's a simple way to take the edge off of some of the worse parts of that preference.

Brian: And it's even harder because I'll plan away time. I'll plan I'm going to take Friday off, but by Friday, there's still a list, and certainly as, I pastored for 20 years, the number I took off and the number of Fridays I didn't. I worked more Fridays on my day off than I did... Because of this list idea. For me, a

trick would be, and I didn't do it, but a trick would have been to take my day off on Monday because there's plenty of time to work the list.

Chad: You know, honestly, a judger, a J, there's no such thing as a day off. You either have to have a different to-do list on that day, or... The idea of a blank slate day for a J is uncomfortable because what am I going to do with this day, whereas, if you've planned ahead of time what you're going to do with that day, your list can't now intrude upon it. Meanwhile, for a perceiver, God's greatest gift to humanity is an unplanned day. There's nothing on the calendar. I can do whatever I want. The funny thing is, the perceiver can be very productive on an unplanned day because I get to do whatever I want today, and if I want to do something productive, it's going to get done like you wouldn't believe.

Brian: What I really love about this, is because I think, because what's frustrated me growing up as a leader is that there are best practices for a leader, and this is what you do as a leader, but boy, if you're a high perceiver and I'm a high judger, that list of best practices is completely different. It can be very different.

Chad: It can be very different. I've never met someone, unless it was maybe an artist, or in some sort of different occupation or vocation, but in kind of regular life, I never met someone who wasn't productive, effective, successful who didn't, in some way, organize their time. I think once I learned how to use a calendar, my life has gotten better because I organized my time using a calendar, and I haven't made it so far as to use a list, but I do use a calendar, and while there are differences, what we don't want to have anybody hear, "Oh, perceivers never use a calendar, or judgers are slaves to their calendar." Well no. We're going to find different ways of being productive, but we all have to be organized and flexible. We just have to find different routes to that because we come at it from different sides.

Brian: So, if you were going to coach me on setting aside time for writing and knowing I'm a judger, how would you start with that? What mindset would you bring to the coaching relationship as the coach, knowing that I'm a high J, if I'm trying to set aside time to write, which by the way, I am. If you help me, I would be so grateful.

Chad: We could do a little coaching right now. I would say, first of all, watch your language. Notice that you're setting aside time for writing while all the other important stuff's on your list. I'd say, do you want to write or not? If you want to write, put it on the list. That's how J's operate. My strategy in coaching with perceivers and judgers, this is true for all personality preferences, is go with the flow, or go with the grain is a different way of thinking of it. So, if you're a J, I'm going to encourage you to J. So, if you want to write, let's use your J to get that done. Unless that's not working, and then we're going to have to intentionally go against the grain. If for some reason being organized, and being structured, isn't producing the results that you want, then we may need to go against the grain, and that's going to open up new possibilities for you, but my first place would be, "Hey, where is it on your list?" You might say, "It's not on my list." What's up with that?

Brian: It's certainly on my list, but is there something different about it on my list. It has a different definition, a different importance for whatever reason.

Chad: So, as a coach, I would begin to ask, "How can we make it more like the other things?" So, it may be that you need to be more specific about what you're going to write. Again, if you think of writing as

this time where I have to sit down and decide what to write, you really are seeing that as a pocket of time that is undecided, and that is going to tend to be uncomfortable for a J. The more decision we can make about it, the more we can kind of structure it ahead of time. So, I might invite you to think, what are the three topics you could write about? What's this for? Is it for your blog? Is it for a book? Is it for fun? So, creating these specifics around it is going to tend to be more appealing for a J, and there's going to be this sense of if you don't get it done, there are consequences. It's not like you didn't write, which is this general, vague, who cares. It's oh, I didn't get that letter written. I don't have that blog post written, or that email correspondence, whatever it is you're writing, it didn't get done.

Brian: That's a neat distinction, that I didn't not write, I didn't meet my deadline, if it was a book, I didn't get that thank you letter written that would have meant a lot to somebody. That's a different way of putting it. So, if I was a high P, how would you coach me different?

Chad: That's a lot more challenging, by the way. J's are a lot more organized. All you've got to do is fit stuff into their organization.

Brian: I can't stand P's. I hear you.

Chad: Yeah man. They're trouble. Trouble. You can spell that four different ways because we're perceivers. So, what I tend to think with perceivers. Again, they're very flexible. They're very fluid. The moment strikes them, and honestly, with really strong perceivers, I'm going to tend to think, where is this on your value list? By the way, this has nothing at all to do with thinking and feeling, but it's, what's the importance of it? If we raise the importance of something, it's going to get the perceiver's attention much more quickly. For instance, I struggle with writing. I struggle with finding time to write. I went to a writer's conference, and it stirred in me this importance of, "Oh yeah. If you're ever serious about anything, you've got to write," and that really stuck with me. It's been six or eight months now, and I've been much more regular in my writing. Now, I think for a strong P, you do need to bring in some kind of structure to it. The structure could look different. It's not going to be on a list, like it is for a J, but there's this idea of, where does this fit into the rhythm? When each week could I write? Those kinds of things, or maybe tying it to some other value or purpose is going to be important for a P.

Brian: That's interesting to me because this writer's conference, which you invited me to go with this year. The fact I'm going with has allowed me to say, as a J, I want to have X amount written, I want to have certain things done before I go to that conference. So, that conference for me is an end game to help me think about how to write. For you, if I'm understanding you, it was a beginning. So, you went to the writer's conference as a P, it set you up to write.

Chad: It stirs something, and I don't know that that's true for every perceiver. That's where the other three letters come in and really change the dynamic between some perceivers and others, but yeah, for me, as a big picture person, which is a different letter, it really did that for me. I don't know if we're going where we need to go with the podcast or not, but with writing, I will just say this, and then we can move on to a different aspect of this topic, writing never gets done unless you're sitting in the chair, or if you have a stand up desk, but you have to actually do it, and so whether you're an off the chart perceiver like I am, or not, you still have to do it. I'll just say this. One trick I've found for me is that place

really matters. I do a lot of writing at the coffee shop because that feels like I could do anything. I'm actually not writing, I'm at the coffee shop. However, I actually do a lot of writing there.

Brian: Perceivers a blank for me a lot, so I think that's helpful for me to get a feel for how a perceiver thinks. So, in an organization, I think there could be a tendency for people to think they wanted to hire a lot of J's because they're more efficient, they're going to get stuff done, but that's, I'm sure you need a mix. How do you need to think in an organization about the people that are P's versus those that are J's?

Chad: A real simple way is, if you're going to take in any new information, that's the perceiving function. So, if you've got perceivers, they're the ones who are going to help you. We mentioned in another podcast about being externally oriented, or even just being alert to what's going on that might need to be different, and yet, perceivers are just going to take in a lot of information, and hopefully try to make sense of that. J's on the other hand, they're the people that once they know what to do, they're going to go at it. Myers-Briggs is really clear. They say this is not a personality assessment to help you find the perfect job, but you can kind of imagine, some jobs are going to be easier for perceivers than for judges and vice versa.

Brian: Are there more perceivers or judges? Do you know?

Chad: It balances out pretty evenly across at least western society. Although, western society, at least in the business world, from what I understand, does tend to favor judges.

Brian: Yeah, I can see that.

Chad: The same way that they tend to favor extroverts, and those sorts of things. I think it may be helpful for listeners to think in coaching, if you just want to look for some quick tips on how to flex your coaching to fit these personality preferences, one place I would look is that in that coaching itself, creating awareness is a perceiving function. So, for judges, you're going to have to hold that space for them more powerfully so they can see something new about the topic. On the other hand, perceivers can see a million new things. For the topic, getting them to hold on to one and actually turn it in to action is the real challenge, and if you were coaching a perceiver, and they say they will do something, they are lying. Just know, they don't mean to lie. They are lying. We talk about nailing things down. With a perceiver, it's got to be nailed down, glued down, a couple of screws in it, and clamps to put on it. In fact, it's better for them to just start it in the coaching session because a decision is just always written in pencil, or dry erase, or just is. J's, on the other hand, if they say they're going to do it, that tends to mean they are going to do it whether they should or not.

Brian: As a J, when I have something new to my list, I'm probably lying too, but it's because my list is so long. I mean it, but I mean I'm going to put it on my list, but my list gets too long. Chad, that was just a great example of how to coach to make sure you keep judges in the awareness phase longer because they're not going to want to stay there. They're going to need to stay there, but then to make sure you turn the corner with a perceiver into the designing the action. That's gold right there, if you ask me.

Chad: That's what I'm here for Brian.

Brian: I know it, man. You're the gold maker. I don't know. There's got to be a great one. I'm not good at making stuff up on the fly. Thanks so much for joining us everybody. We appreciate it. 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*. We'll see you next week.

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