



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 66: How Paul Developed a Coaching Niche with Worship Leaders

Published: September 21, 2017

[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. Our podcast today is sponsored by our certificate in Christian leadership coaching. This is a nine-month, ICF approved, coach training program that will prepare you to coach those around you to set goals, take action, and reach new levels of success. We have a cohort forming in October, so if you're interested, go to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/coachnow. I'm Brian Miller, strategic director of Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by Paul Ramey, and Paul, I looked at your Twitter bio, probably the classic place to go to find a bio, and it says four things here, I think: Husband to Meredith; father to Noah, Evan, and Jonah, two of which are biblical characters. Evan, being the middle child, a little weird right off the bat. Worship and arts pastor to Imago Dei Community, and Portland dweller. What else do we need to know about Paul Ramey?

Paul Ramey: That pretty much sums it up. Portlandia is where I live, so go watch the show, and you'll learn about that.

Brian: Did you grow up in Portland?

Paul: I did not. No, I moved up in '94 when I came up to go to college.

Brian: Moved up from California?

Paul: Yes. I'm from northern California and moved here to go to Multnomah University.

Brian: So, me being a Midwesterner, you're thinking, "No, I'm not Portlandia. I was northern California before that." I'm thinking, "Okay. Maybe not as far a move as you might think it is to me." That's funny. That's funny. Why we wanted to talk to you is we know you got started in coaching, and why don't you give us a little history of how you got started.

Paul: Yeah. I've been in ministry for quite some time, over 20 years, and was wrapping up my program at Western and was trying to figure out what track. I just had some electives I could take and some other ministry courses. I decided to take the coaching track, not the whole thing initially. I took a class from Chad, and it shifted everything for me, not just in terms of coaching, but in terms of pastoring.

Brian: What kind of things shifted for you? From what to what?

Paul: Honestly, I'll try to wrap and nutshell this.

Brian: Best you can. No pressure.

Paul: Being a sixth-generation pastor...

Brian: Oh my.

Paul: Right, exactly. Which, there's good that comes out of that and, obviously, a lot of bad as well. Obviously, being around a lot of pastors, I'm going to generalize here, I don't think this about every pastor, but I do think by and large, there is a pattern in terms of how we pastor. You walk into a pastor's office, and you see a lot of books first which basically implies, "I've got all the answers," and you sit down and they just start talking, and basically, before you know it, the pastor's talking most of the time, and the person's eyes glaze over halfway through, and they leave with more frustration and questions than answers.

Really, a lot of times, it doesn't happen again, and it wasn't helpful, and largely, I think, and this is maybe going to hit hard, and I don't mean this, I'm not nagging on all pastors here, but I think a lot of pastors pastor for their own ego more than anything, and we so need a win. So, we end up talking most of the time and really not helping the people even though we might give a lot of great theological information and biblical backing, all of that, it just doesn't help. I saw that as a pattern, so when I say something shifted, I mean I really started to notice the way I pastor, and it changed. As it changed, I started to see absolute, just a difference, a different kind of transformation happening, obviously different action, more clear action, and accountability, and it shifted everything in that way.

Brian: I love that. So, you moved from, one way we might say it, you moved from telling to, we say, asking, but a conversation. Not just downloading my expertise and hoping that changes your life. That's the way we've set church up typically. The pastor speaks from the pulpit, and they download, and there's not a lot of time for interaction, and there's just a lot of studies out there that show that people don't just take what somebody else says and say, "That's what I think now." It's just not the case.

Paul: Absolutely. It's so true. I've noticed that through the years. I've just had no good answer for it until this, and honestly, especially with artists, I pastor artists, and they say they want to listen to somebody else, but when it really comes down to it, they're going to listen to themselves a whole lot more than they're going to listen to me, so if I can help them with their own answers, that's huge.

Brian: That's true for everybody, I think, that they want to think it through. I've also thought that if you want to, and I don't want anybody to use coaching as manipulation, but if you want to change someone's thinking, just finding a way to directly tell them is not effective. So, in the church, it is our business to affect the way people think and believe, but I just find it's a much more effective way by bringing them into the conversation.

Paul: Absolutely.

Brian: So, you started out. You got some classes. You thought you were taking a blow-off class to finish your... I'm making that up.

Paul: No, no, no. That's very true.

Brian: Your degree, and it changed your entire way of thinking. There was something that happened that showed you the fruit of coaching.

Paul: Yeah. So, as part of the class, Chad has us coach other people, and some of that was our classmates, but I had a project where I had to coach somebody else, so I asked one of the artists in our church if I could coach him. He's a few years younger than me, not far from the same age, and we had multiple meetings before, pastor to person that I'm pastoring, and they were fine, but in typical meeting-with-a-pastor fashion, they last a long time, an hour and a half, two hours sometimes, and in this one, I said, "Would you get together? I want to coach you. I'm going to record it," and he said, "Sure." I met with him, and when we get to the end of this... I asked him before, I said, "What do you want to talk about?" He said, "I want to talk about my relationship with my brother and my father who live out of state," and I said, "Okay, we'll do that."

Thirty minutes later, he had an action plan. He was going to go buy a ticket when he left my office, and he was going to go where his father and brother live, and he was going to take some steps to restore that relationship. An amazing story, honestly. At the end of that session, he said, "What did you just do to me? I feel like you just Miagi-ed me." I was just as surprised as he was, first of all, at how quickly the meeting went. It was a half an hour, and secondly, how much we got done, and how much he decided to do, and how much he had committed to what he decided to do, and had already put some steps in place for accountability, and man, he went to his father's house, and a week later, his brother gave his life to Christ, and a month later, his father gave his life to Christ. Their relationship was restored, and it was amazing. I know not every situation is like that. That, to me, it was sort of just this shining beacon on a hill, just like this is a good thing here, and it should not just be siloed into coaching, but it can find its way into your pastoring, your relationships, your relationship with your kids, all of that. These principles are huge.

Brian: For sure. I love that. So, you Miagi-ed him. Wax on. Wax off. But I find when people have a chance to pick the topic, I think that makes pastor-types nervous. "They're going to pick the topic?" I find, they pick the most important thing in their life to talk about. Whenever you let them pick, you always talk about something really important, and I personally love that. I love that we get to talk about the deep stuff. If they're just coming into my office, we don't always get there. So, what were your next steps in coaching? What happened after this?

Paul: Then, obviously, I had more classes to take, and I decided I'm going to take more coaching classes and see where it takes me. I fell in love with it, and I learned that I have a bit of a knack for it as well. In terms of just, I find that comfort in coaching and how we set the tone matters more than we give credit to it. So, I just really fell in love with the whole approach and decided to take more classes. I think I've taken six or seven of them now. I wrapped up this summer with my program, but I plan on finishing up that track at some point in time, but from there, I've been in Portland for a long time. I network. I get together with a bunch of worship leaders once a month, which is unique in and of itself. It's great. In Portland, there's just a lot of unity among churches and kingdom partnerships. I lead out with hosting a worship leader meeting once a month, and that has just resulted in a lot of younger worship leaders coming to me and asking me to meet with them. I used to say yes all the time until my supervisor said, "Hey man, you're meeting with a lot of people. It's taking a lot of time." So, that was a difficult one

because I had to then go back and redefine some of those relationships that had just been meeting together, but I did, and now I'm in the process right now of kicking up my website and starting a coaching practice specifically for worship leaders, both in Portland and outside of Portland.

Brian: So, what does it look like? How is the relationship different between I'm meeting with these people, and now, I'm in a coaching relationship with these leaders?

Paul: I think the expectations are different up front. I think when I'm just meeting with them, it takes on a little more of a conversational tone. Not that coaching isn't conversational, it's just way more intentional. So, I try to mix that in, obviously, in our sessions, but I think the thing that's different is definitely the expectations on both sides. It is interesting, too, it's not that I'm not friends with these guys, I am, but it has defined the relationship as well. There is a reason why you want to meet with me. I've got enough friends. That's not an arrogant thing. I'm 43. I've got my friend group, and so, this relationship is more about you finding something that you want to glean, which is why I think a lot of people ask for a mentor. That's mentoring, gleaning something. So, when they ask for that, I try to figure out what exactly are you looking for, and maybe you don't even know what you're looking for because I think a lot of ministers, worship leaders especially, they think they just want advice, and I think what they need is something that maybe they don't know that they need, and that is, something to help them to clarify and accomplish their goals and become a better minister, pastor, father, theologian, leader, creative, all of those things.

Brian: Because you don't have to be an expert, and in coaching you want them to be the expert of their own situation, however, in this situation, you are a noted expert in the leading of worship, and so, how do you balance, you're talking earlier about all these books, the pastor's the expert, how do you balance your expertise with the coaching relationship?

Paul: That's a great question, and that's one I don't know that I've got a comprehensive answer to that. I will say, what I'm finding is that my coaching practice is centered more around content-rich coaching than it is... Here's the reality, that worship leaders, there is a lot of things they don't know. So, there are some bible things they need to know. There are some theological principles they need to know. There's some advice that I do need to give. The way I've been working that recently is more, sort of, in line with when there is something that I need to say to you, I'm just going to stop, we're going to take five minutes, I'm going to share that, and then we're going to jump back into that coaching field so that they just kind of know the expectations there. They know that when we jump back into the coaching thing, they're driving it, and when there's something that I have to bring to the table, I can just interject that when it's appropriate, and that structure seems to really help. Put them at the steering wheel, and I can still throw in what I need to. Does that make sense?

Brian: Oh, absolutely. Chad's helped me to think about this. We make a distinction now. We would call that framework coaching in that there is some content, but it's typically not necessarily my content, but best practice content. The essential thing that's got to be so in place, and you said it, I have no idea, but you said, "I take five minutes and explain it." Most pastors have never said anything in five minutes ever.

Paul: That's for sure. Yeah, that's for sure, right? That's it. That's the problem.

Brian: You give them five minutes, and then you take the expert hat off and you let them deal with it however they want to deal with it.

Paul: That's it, and it's interesting that you say that. Framework coaching. I had thought about it that way. I know an example of framework coaching would be like Financial Peace University, or...

Brian: We would call those formula coaching. It's the next step to the right, if you will. I don't know if it has to be to the right. In Portlandia, I don't know how right you could go. We call that formula because Dave Ramsey doesn't go, "Here's five minutes." Dave Ramsey goes, "Here's how you do it. Tell me how you're going to do it." Church planting can be the same way, can be, doesn't have to be. Here's exactly how you're going to do it, but you're just giving a five-minute piece of content, and then you're taking your hands off. You're not saying that's how you have to do it. I'm just giving you information, and now my hands are off. That's framework, and then to the left of that, we call familiar. I'm in worship as well, so I'm familiar with it. You don't have to explain to me what a bridge is, I know.

Paul: I think along those lines, I think another thing distinctive, I guess, coaching and how it's shifted some of that relationship, is also there's so much more that gets done afterwards. When I'm just a guy meeting with the worship leader, we're just having a cool conversation over coffee, and some neat things are shared, but really, no one's going to remember that. I'm not going to remember it. That person's not going to remember it. We're going to walk away, and we had a great time. Yet, with this, it's just so different and so much better because there are action steps that are taken. There's accountability, and that's when real transformation happens. I started to feel so much more effective, and strategic, and excited about what I do because it seems like it's now making a difference, whereas before, it just got caught in some sort of cloud somewhere in their brain.

Brian: For sure, and the problem in the pastor's office in that situation you just described in the beginning is I walk in, he or she talks to me for 30 minutes about some they're an expert in, and the main thing I walk away with is, "Boy, they're a lot smarter than I am." So, if you're not careful, you could have your clients walk away going, "Paul sure knows his stuff," and that's not what you want them to walk away with. You want them to walk away with some action, and you do, and I applaud you for that.

Paul: Yeah. It's been a really neat thing. It's new for worship leaders. It's not something that they're used to. There's a lot of ambiguity to a worship leader's role and job because there's nothing mandated in scripture to have a worship pastor. It's a western invention, really, when it comes down to it to have somebody in that role. So, a lot of guys are super confused about what they're supposed to do, and yet, they don't really talk about that because, "Well, I don't want to lose my job, or I don't want people to think I'm not doing anything, twiddling my thumbs, or just playing my guitar in my office all day," when really that is the case sometimes. Honestly, this is a soapbox of mine, but you're familiar with the worship leader wheel, or not the worship leader wheel, but the wheel of life. You know that. It's a catalyst to get the conversation started within coaching.

When I use that with worship leaders, but I provide sort of a framework there, six different categories: liturgical, pastoral, theological, creative, leader, and then personal or spiritual. I take those six categories, and it gets the conversation going. Sometimes worship leaders don't show up with, "I've got this problem. I want to fix it." So, it helps us to begin to get there in terms of shaping what the coaching relationship is going to be for. What I've found is that they're truly, we're in the middle of, what I would call, almost an epidemic problem in America in the worshipping church. You just have this culture of worship being so connected to just music, and I think you've got a lot of worship leaders in America who they're underwhelmed with their job, especially if they're in it for any length of time. So, I think the

coaching that I'm doing is helping to bring a more robust view of the role of a worship leader in the church and expanding it to those six categories.

Brian: I love it. Whether it's worship leading coaching, that's your niche, or it's anything else, I think you've described how a framework could be set up, and how I could operate as a coach. I call myself a leadership coach, and I have some five-minute pieces, but then it's back on them, and they have to figure out what to do with it. Yeah, I love what you're doing, Paul, and I'm so glad you've figured that out and are helping so many people. Are you only helping people in Portland or all over the world?

Paul: No, no. You know, I don't have my website up and running yet. Very soon. I met with my guy yesterday...

Brian: I heard you say, "I met with my website guy," and then I lost you.

Paul: I met with my website guy. We're going to have that up and running very soon, but yes. Most of the people I meet with right now are local, but I do have a few clients that are outside of Portland, and I would love to do more of that as well.

Brian: So, if people want to get ahold of you, what's the best way for them to do that, Paul?

Paul: My email is, of all things, rameytime@gmail.com. My last name and then T-I-M-E. You know, like, it's Ramey time.

Brian: It's R-A-M-E-Y. Am I spelling it right?

Paul: T-I-M-E.

Brian: I knew how to spell time. Thanks, Paul, but Ramey, I wasn't 100% sure. rameytime@gmail.com.

Paul: Yes, and like I said, I don't have that coaching yet, but if people want to get ahold of me. I'm rameytime at Twitter, and Instagram, and all of that as well, so you can find me there.

Brian: Hey, thanks so much Paul for taking time, and thanks so much to the listeners for joining us. If you don't want to miss any of our podcasts, I invite you to subscribe to our podcast at iTunes or at Google Play. This podcast was sponsored by our certificate in Christian leadership coaching. This is a nine-month, ICF approved, coach training program that will prepare you to coach those around you to set goals, take action, and reach new levels of success just like Paul. We have a cohort forming in October, so if you're interested, go to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/coachnow. We'll see you next week.

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