



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 69: Coaching in a Parachurch Organization

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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. 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 right now, so if you're interested go to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/coachnow. I'm Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by Delyn Cole, she is a Chi Alpha Campus Ministry USA minister. She's been with them for 29 years and her title is Assessment and Coaching Specialist. Welcome to the podcast, Delyn!

Delyn Cole: Thank you. Glad to be here.

Brian: Oh, we're exciting to have you. So, Chi Alpha. Give us a little sample of what Chi Alpha is.

Delyn: Chi Alpha is a campus ministry on secular campuses around the globe. I just work with the USA section, but we do have global ministries around the world. So, yeah, secular universities to college universities and campuses.

Brian: Well I just want to say, first of all, thank you for that effort. My wife and I have three children, two of which are in college. One ended up going to InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which is very similar, and the other one just started with Campus Crusade, and I'm just so grateful that folks like you are at those universities to provide an opportunity. It's so hard to find a church when you're away at college to feel like you're at home and find that place, but it's so much easier in a group like Chi Alpha.

Delyn: It's true, I believe it. I have two college boys too, and I believed in Chi Alpha before they went to college, but I really believe in Chi Alpha and other campus ministries for sure since my boys were that age, and they left home and went to school and the influence of the secular university is strong.

Brian: Oh, for sure. So, it's nice to see a group of not only people there but also like-minded students, so you can know you're not the only one who thinks this way or that way. So again, I am just so grateful for the work you do. How did you get into Chi Alpha?

Delyn: I married a youth pastor out in Oregon, right there on the University of Oregon campus, actually, the church was nearby.

Brian: The ducks, am I right? The ducks?

Delyn: The ducks, yes, absolutely. So, that was my initial entry into ministry, and actually when I married my husband, Curtis, I really just thought someday he would grow up and get a real job.

Brian: Youth Pastor's not a real job at this point, for you?

Delyn: Yeah, I don't know why. It just was in my mind that wasn't what we were going to be doing the rest of our lives, but those couple years I really got a heart for ministry, and working with the youth was very fulfilling, and we got invited to start a bible study at the University of Oregon campus in 1988 and I was a student there at the time and my husband ran a bible study on Thursday nights and we began a Chi Alpha group there. We didn't know what Chi Alpha was at the time, we just knew we affiliated with Chi Alpha and that's what we called ourselves, and we've learned a lot about Chi Alpha since then, but that's how we started.

Brian: Yeah, so you married a youth pastor and thought, "This is a season," but then he dove in all the way and joined Chi Alpha and you went along with him and started to find your role there. What was it like to figure out your role alongside your husband in that situation?

Delyn: My husband would always say that he had a real strong impression that he was to be in ministry, and I never had that impression that I was supposed to be in full time ministry. So, finding that role initially was difficult, so that initially was just supporting him and what he was doing. Oftentimes, that meant providing hospitality for the people he was connecting with, and I was connecting with some too, but I wasn't really in any kind of ministry role those early years, and then, in 1991, we moved to Montana to plant a brand new ministry, and that's when I started just studying the word about what discipleship is and what it looks like and what it could look like. I began to dream of what it could look like on the campus at the University of Montana Western. And, at that time then I just started diving into walking out life with others around me, and of course many of those were young college students. I fell in love with students, and it wasn't long before I was fully in my role.

Brian: And what was that?

Delyn: That role was really discipleship. Personal discipleship, one-on-one discipleship, and also group discipleship, and then ministry organization activities, of course you guys know college students are notorious for late-night activities, and so organizing those and hosting them, quite a bit in our home. Also, my husband and I felt that part of the discipleship process would be to have students live with us, so we started inviting students into our house, so our lives became discipleship 24/7.

Brian: Either you're bold for Jesus, or you're a little crazy, or both!

Delyn: I think crazy, but it's changed me. Living with people, you never get to go home and let your hair down, so if I had to have an argument with my husband for example, I had to do it in a biblical way, and I'm grateful for that, because it was being watched by others.

Brian: Yeah, and so, then you already mentioned you had a couple children, so I'm listening to this and I'm starting to see the stress that's probably on its way because you're doing a lot of late-night stuff, and now you've got young children, and you've started to find your role. You talked about an impression. I don't know if you started to feel your own impression there about what God was calling you to do, but now there's children, and late nights don't always work.

Delyn: Yeah, things just had to change, and I remember one time going to my husband and I really just had a sense that I was supposed to be doing a couple things, and I took that list to him, and it was five things if I remember right, and I just said to Curtis, "I would really like to put my time into these five activities in the ministry, and I'm going to have to let the other stuff go for a time," and we just sat down and we looked through those things, and of course my husband's very affirming of me and so he said, "Yep, let's do whatever we can to get you doing these five things." So, a lot of my things were earlier in the mornings, so I would do some of the morning activities on campus even though the students aren't always active in the morning, there are a few. So, I was able to do morning activity things and my husband was able to take care of our two boys until the 8:30, 9:00, 10 o'clock time and then I would come back home and do the rest of my work from home during nap times and that sort of thing. After the boys went to bed, I'd also participate in activities.

Brian: So, I want to jump way ahead, then, so then there's the point where the boys are more grown, and is there a point you re-enter into more full time?

Delyn: Yeah as soon as the boys went to school...

Brian: God bless school.

Delyn: We have a lot of families, so things are little bit different maybe for their life, and some of those people that I get to coach are actually homeschooling, but for me, I put my boys in school so that really did free up a lot of time, but it also made my time between 3:30 when they got home and 8 o'clock very special for me because that was going to be our family time. So, I had to shift my schedule once again to be available during the day, and then that early evening until eight o'clock unavailable, and then, we had a lot of meetings at eight o'clock at night so that I could participate in those meetings and our ministry, and we had them at our home too, so we weren't doing babysitting too.

Brian: So, I think there was one more transition that occurred where your husband changed positions.

Delyn: Yes, so two and a half years ago my husband decided to step out of ministry completely, and so then it was just me. It also happened, Brian, at this one time that my boys were going to college, and they were pretty much on their own. My youngest one still had one more year in high school, but they're doing their own thing a lot by then. So, the transition was really a transition into full time, where

home was not my focus.

Brian: Yeah, and then there was a point where your husband stepped out of Chi Alpha.

Delyn: That's the same time there that my boys were going to college, so that's when I just was full-time, and then I just had to figure out what my role then was going to be, and I had to decide was ministry really what I was to do going forward? Or was there something else out there for me? I really feel like there was a place for me in Chi Alpha and there was a place for me to continue in the roles I was in, and so that's what I chose and that's what I keep doing.

Brian: So, as I hear your story I'm thinking about the pieces that I think stand out to be coached. There's a point where you didn't feel the impression to go into Chi Alpha, but you went along, and then it started to show, and your own strengths began to show, and where you needed to be involved started to show. Then there were some, I won't call children "wrinkles," but there were some wrinkles you had to figure out. Specifically, what you we're going to do and what you were not going to do. Even as we get to the end where your husband steps out and you start to think about the fullness of your own ministry, there's questions there about identity, who you are as a leader in Christ, as a minister. There are just so many pieces there that are specific, and you were talking about your children went to public or private school, but many choose homeschooling. There are so many options and thoughts that need to be figured out for one's self, and that's a great place where a coach can come alongside. So, talk about this for a second: you are an Assessment and Coaching Specialist. Talk about being a Coaching Specialist with Chi Alpha.

Delyn: Basically, what my role is, is to recruit and help train and network coaches to our missionary so they're accessible to our missionaries in the field. So, that's technically what that role is, and of course, that's how I got connected with CAM, is just using CAM as some of our training venues.

Brian: Yeah, and so you do a lot of coaching?

Delyn: I do a lot of coaching, yeah. Probably four to six coaching sessions a day, typically.

Brian: A day. Wow, so you are, wow, wow. I'm just trying to do a little bit of quick math. Is that close to 1000 hours of coaching a year?

Delyn: Well, this is a new position for me so it's really just been since January since I've been doing that. I wouldn't say they're all an hour long. Some of my coaching sessions are a half hour. So, those are really all calls and appointments as opposed to maybe coaching sessions.

Brian: Yes, so who's the typical kind of person you're coaching?

Delyn: Right now, I have a series of people that I connect with. A lot of times I'm coaching women and people who have been the same series of situations that I've found myself in over the years. I also find myself coaching support raising quite a bit right now. Then, I'm moving into some more pioneering or ministry planting coaching.

Brian: Right, oh good. So, you and I were talking about this, and we thought a good topic was, because it

came out of your own story as well, is to talk about balancing full-time ministry and family, and so you spend a good amount of your time coaching, in this case women, through this idea of life balance and family balance.

Delyn: That's correct, yes.

Brian: So, talk a little bit about that. What kind of issues come up in the coaching?

Delyn: Yeah, I mean it is so much like my story, and in recognizing that in the setting I'm in, most of the women are young, and may even come into ministry as a single person, and so they're able to just do whatever any time of the day, all day long. Typically, because they're on the younger side, they're ministering to people just a few years younger than them. So, they're fully engaged, 24/7 almost, in ministry and life with those that they're ministering to, but then they marry, and things change a little bit because they're trying to partner with the spouse when they've been on their own in the past, and then as you can imagine when children come, the wives are having to deal with the fact that who's going to take care of this child or these children, when I feel called to full-time ministry as well, so there's places of trying to figure out balance there.

Many times, the women do step out of ministry for a season, or lessen their involvement for a portion of time. So, having to try to work through issues like, "I feel called, but I'm home changing diapers." I think that's a good coaching conversation that we oftentimes have. How do I handle that? Am I really stepping away from God's will for my life to parent? And then, of course, I think one of the biggest issues we face is how does that female minister step back into full-time ministry, or just increase their time in ministry, once they've been out for a few years. So, we're coaching in all of those places.

Brian: Yeah, and so does it become an issue, especially the way you describe it, you've got young women who've went in and they've been pioneers, they've done a lot of ministry, they've probably taken a lot of leadership, and then as they get married, a question of how to partner well, and that's a great podcast question right there, "How to partner well," whether it be in marriage, or any other situation as well. Maybe the women find themselves actually having more strength and leadership, or speaking, or teaching.

Delyn: This is a very common topic where the spouse may be a stronger leader. We would look at the DiSC profile or some other assessment, and of course, when the female has more of those dominant characteristics as well as potential even better speaking ability, and then also maybe organizational abilities are stronger. So, that is a huge place of tension in the marriage, but then I think too when the female has to step out, it leaves a real vacuum in the ministry, and that piece right there is a huge place of how is the spouse that is stepped out supporting, when the stronger one is the one out.

Brian: Yeah, wow. Typically, the husbands, are they already in Chi Alpha ministry, or did they join Chi Alpha ministry, or are they often doing something else?

Delyn: I would say there are a few that the men are outside of Chi Alpha. For the most part, our marriage couples are in ministry together.

Brian: Oh, for sure, and currently I'm being a worship pastor and I feel very much like I'm partnering with my wife. We're co-leaders of this, but not everybody in the church always recognizes co-leadership. Even when I feel very positive that in many areas she has a lot more strengths than I do but not always recognized that way, to try to learn to how to work together, not only understanding each other, but understanding the context of what surrounds us. That's a lot of tension for any marriage.

Delyn: Yeah, absolutely. I think this is why this is such a great place of having coaching sessions because I think on the female side, when I'm with the female it's really goes back to identity sometimes. Are the spouses just wanting position, or is it really about becoming more Christ-like? Our identity coming and being in Christ instead our performance or our behavior. Sometimes it becomes a real spiritual place, this whole idea of identity. When I'm coaching men, it's actually very similar conversation about just having them recognize their own maybe insecurities and why tension may be happening in their relationship.

Brian: So, as you're coaching someone through any of these stages, let's say especially when there's children and trying to figure out how to balance some things, or even in the reentry time, when the children are older, and if it's the case that the female is stepped out, to learn to step back in. As a coach, what are you thinking as you approach that client. What are some of the things you just want to get real clear up front with the client as you enter into that conversation?

Delyn: I think the first thing is always what is that they feel like the Lord really wants them to do. And I don't usually start with "do," I usually start with "be." Who do you feel like the Lord wants you to be? And so, this really helps because it helps us understand. We usually end up talking about values, and we talk about personality, and that all comes out in that, "Who are you created to be, and who has God called you to be," and that's been really helpful.

Brian: I would assume you as a coach are thinking to yourself, "I have to balance speaking to them from a biblical point of view and drawing them out and asking questions that create awareness for themselves." How do you balance that?

Delyn: I feel like that honestly is a hard balance for me because most of my ministry has been mentoring, so I have that tendency to want to speak out, but it's very much in the front of my mind that I'm not moving into the mentoring stage. So, I think I can just ask the question, "Who do you feel like the Lord wants you to be," and I just say that means your character and your personality, and I think the conversation goes pretty smoothly from there.

Brian: You oversee other coaches as well, is that right? What are two or three pieces of advice you're often giving those coaches you oversee? Did I lose you for a minute Delyn?

Delyn: I think so, yeah. Sorry about that.

Brian: I apologize, that was the internet, wasn't you. You don't owe an apology, the internet does, and I want it right now. I asked the question, out of those coaches you oversee, what are two or three things you find yourself repeating to them? Not because they aren't listening, but because they come up so

often as a coach. What do they need to hear?

Delyn: I think just the thing that I really try to impress in the coaches that I'm working with is to really encourage who their talking with. I think, sometimes, because we're talking about problems usually in this kind of coaching situation, either the husband's defeated or the female's defeated, or they're just feeling like they're not living up to what God wants them to do, so they're maybe not clicking on all cylinders. So, I just really push the encouragement. I just think those being able to affirm and encourage what people are doing that is moving them forward, is a really important piece, just bringing joy back into the conversation is also another big piece for me.

Brian: That's great, those are good pieces of advice for all coaches. I appreciate that. So, we appreciate everyone listening to this, if you want to know more about Chi Alpha, you can find it on their website at chialpha.com. Did I get that right?

Delyn: Yes, that's it.

Brian: I'll put the link on the website, as well. Thank you so much Delyn for joining us today.

Delyn: You're welcome, well thank you.

Brian: If you don't want to miss any of our podcasts, I invite you to subscribe to our podcasts at iTunes or Google Play. Next week, I'll be talking to Chuck Gohn about creating a coaching culture in your church. 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. We have a cohort forming right now, so if you're interested go to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/coachnow. We'll see you next week.

[Outro music]