



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 78: Ask or Tell – Scott Gress Teaches Leaders How to Come Alongside for Ministry Results

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Brian Miller: One of the toughest things for new, and not so new, coaches is finding paying clients. You need paying clients to get better as a coach, and especially if you want to be an ICF certified coach. People don't always realize that bartering is an accepted form of payment by the International Coaching Federation. That's why we put together the Coaching Exchange. The Coaching Exchange is your ticket to paid coaching hours with really good clients. In the Coaching Exchange, you get 40 hours of paid coaching experience, and you help other coaches do the same. Experience matters. Go to www.coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange to find out more.

[Intro Music]

Brian: I'm Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by Scott Gress. Scott, I'm so glad you came on the show today.

Scott Gress: It's a pleasure to be with you, Brian. Good to hear your voice.

Brian: Scott, what's your title? Who do you work for?

Scott: I am a coach and consultant. I have my call into ministry through Lutheran Counseling Services of Orlando, but I'm a pastor in Lutheran church, Missouri Senate working full-time as a coach right now.

Brian: The reason why we brought you on is because you got a book out. Your first book, I'm assuming. That could be a bad assumption.

Scott: It's the first one, yeah.

Brian: And it is *A Christian Coaching Guidebook, How to Come Alongside Others for Ministry Results*. For ministry results. I stumbled over that. Oh my gosh, yeah. People don't buy coaching, they buy results. So, if I left that off the title, we'd be in trouble. You can get that book on Amazon. I was about to go on Amazon and buy it, but you just informed me you put one in the mail, so I may have to go out and look.

Scott: Yeah, it's on its way.

Brian: I appreciate that.

[Transcribed by Alyssa Miller](#)

Scott: In the acknowledgements in the front, I certainly want to give credit to Chad who has been my on-again-off-again coach for a long time and certainly also to you and Bill. I just acknowledge that throughout the book, there's probably a good chunk of CAM's stuff that comes through, so that's been a blessing to be associated with you guys.

Brian: It's been a blessing to be associated with you. I know you went through some of our training. You went through our Breakthrough. That's when you and I got to know each other better, and I appreciate that. I just want to say, and I know I'm biased, but I'm not sure I'm that biased, you talked about Chad Hall being on-and-off-again mentor for you. I just think he's one of the most knowledgeable people about Christian coaching in the world today.

Scott: No question about it. Now we can even call him "doctor," so it fits.

Brian: It fits. Dr. Chad. He definitely has that ability to think in ways that make the complex simple. I just think that's the best definition of genius is you can make the complex simple, and he has that ability. Enough about Chad, let's talk about you. Let's talk about you for a minute. You've written this book. It's *A Christian Coaching Guidebook*. It's for leaders.

Scott: Yeah, for Christian leaders. I work with leaders of churches, primarily pastors but also circuit visitors. We call them regional vice presidents, district presidents, or bishops, however they're referred to. So, yeah, Christian leaders who come alongside others, want to help other people, and boy, that's a complicated relationship, isn't it?

Brian: Yes. Oh, for sure.

Scott: And want to try to sort that out for people and help them to navigate that helping relationship. Obviously, having a bias for coaching, but helping to think through that helping relationship. So, how leaders can come alongside others for results.

Brian: I love it. So, let's first talk about your theological groundings for this because I know you put that in the book, some thoughts about how coaching works in a Christian setting. Where should we start on that?

Scott: Yeah, in my denomination, they're very strong in systematic theology, and so, they have, I think, appropriate questions about coaching. Where are you coming from with coaching? Why do we need this new helping skill, and obviously asking some questions about its biblical basis, about how it fits into Christians who are seeking to help. So, I wanted to address some of those questions for folks that I run into, and in that regard, want to just point out that it really begins with the doctrine justification, that we're saved by grace through faith in Christ without any works of ours at all adding to it. So, when somebody is saved, when they're justified by grace through faith in Christ, then that really sets up someone to be a great coach because their self-esteem, they know that they're loved. All that comes through Jesus. You don't have to build your self-esteem off the client, or off the client's results, or off, "I find my value from being a coach." No, it's because I'm a child of God, through Christ. He loves me in spite of my sins. So, I can kind of let go of all of that stuff that I'm going to feel better about myself because of the clients I have, or the results that they have, or how I'm supposedly helping them, or all that. It just shifts the whole mindset, so you can lose yourself in serving the client and helping them. It's all based in that foundational hope that we have in Jesus.

Brian: If I'm a denominational leader or a missionary, and I'm concerned. I can't get it out of my head that I want this to be fruitful so that people think I'm doing well. So, not only do I have the agenda of my client, but I also have my own agenda because I want to be successful. I want to do well, but starting with this idea of the justification through Christ, I'm not performance based. My value is not based on success or my fruit. I wasn't expecting you to say that, and as soon as you said that, it resonated immediately.

Scott: And that also frees us up for having to try to fix the client, or fix them, or try to impose something on them. We see them as somebody for whom Christ died, so we can be patient with them. We can love them unconditionally. We can understand that yeah, they're imperfect, but we can work with them and love them in the way that Jesus loved them. So, that whole truth, what Lutherans call the material principle, what matters most, the teaching that we're saved through Christ, that just shifts everything for the client, understanding how we view the client, but also how we see ourselves. We're just freed up to serve the other person and do what good coaches are supposed to do, guard the client's agenda, and serve them, and listen to them instead of what might be bouncing around in our own heads.

Brian: Yeah, I know that one place, we teach Christian coaching, one place that Christians bump up against the definition of coaching by the International Coaching Federation, I can't just quote it verbatim, but there's a word in there that we believe the client is whole. W-H-O-L-E. They're whole, and we stop and say well no. They're broken. So, there's a lot there to do with justification and this understanding of we don't have to fix them. I hear you saying that. What thought have you given toward this understanding, or maybe what's the Christian understanding of believing the client's whole?

Scott: I would say that they're whole in Christ. So, we view them as much as we can in our own simple nature, but redeemed of course, that we see them as people for whom Christ died, so for me anyway, it helps make that shift to compassion, and patience, and servanthood, and all of those kinds of helpful, and ultimately productive, differences.

Brian: Certainly, that's the right mindset, through what Christ did for them and what Christ did for me. Now, that is really helpful, Scott. I appreciate that. What else on the theological part did you find?

Scott: Yeah. In Lutheran theology, we differentiate between law and gospel. I suppose there are other denominations that do too, I'm just not as familiar. The law, the 10 Commandments, the things that tell us what to do and how to be, really has a way of making us feel guilty, but also, when we hear the law theologically, it kind of makes us, at times, resist. It's that whole truth that's found in Romans 7 that kind of goes like this. Sin sees the opportunity afforded by the commandment produced in me every kind of covetous desire, and as I was working with some seminary professors this past August and teaching some coaching, I just wanted to double check with some of the systematic profs and say, "Hey, this is what I'm seeing. That if you tell somebody what to do, which is the opposite of coaching, right? If you tell somebody what to do, you could trigger in this sinful nature sort of resistance that suddenly I don't want to do it because you told me to do it." That's so true, and it's also another theological argument for the blessings of coaching that, sure, there's a place for telling, and informing people, and teaching, and communicating truths and information, but as we try to direct people, you may indeed, in your telling, trigger kind of a law response where people just become resistant because they're being told by somebody else what to do. I think that's helpful to get a grip on as a Christian coach working with people that there's also this reality in folks of this reaction to being told what to do as a theological

basis. So, that becomes really practical because we don't want people to resist, whether it's covert or overt, or we don't want people to just have this passive obedience either. The blessings of coaching as we ask questions, they start answering. It's a whole teaching that you guys with CAM have, and I think it's an e-book, *Coach the Person, Not the Problem*.

Brian: Yes. I'll just put a plug. You can search that on Amazon. It's Chad Hall's book, and I think it's just profound.

Scott: It's brilliant. So, as you coach the person, they then come to the new awarenesses and discoveries to tell themselves what to do, and they own it more fully and completely, and so, they can lean into it and pursue it more passionately. I'm kind of preaching to the choir here, but what a blessing that coaching is to steer away from that law response that kind of hardens our hearts to the one that can pursue what's God-pleasing because of Christ, and because through the coaching, they owned it and came up with the insight themselves as we coach the person and not the problem.

Brian: This has just been on my mind as we approach Christmas. For thousands of years before Christ, the law was clear, and people were resistant, and they didn't. God's reaction to that. Certainly, this is a question of how you would pose this theologically, but he came closer. He became more intimate with us. He made his presence more available to everyone. Instead of amping up the law, he introduced the gospel. So, what an interesting theological aspect of Christian coaching that we approach our client openly, with presence, and with Christ in that presence. It's interesting, I definitely hear pushback too. People say, "Well, if you don't tell them, if you just let them come up with whatever they want, don't they just tend to come up with awful, selfish stuff?" What's been your experience with that, Scott?

Scott: Well, you know, that's possible, I suppose, but in the intake session with clients, we talk about having the same agenda, or same perspective, in terms of being Christians. We want to do what's God-pleasing. We want to fulfill what he has instructed us to do in the scriptures. So, when it comes to designing the action, it's totally within the realm of a Christian coach to ask the question, "Is this what God wants? Is this how you understand the scriptures instruct us?" So, I think as you set the table in the orientation of your coaching relationship with that, and you both have a Christian outlook, that's probably not going to happen, but I've had clients who've said, "Be on the lookout for me if I do that." So, they give me permission to sort of guard that for them. It's a good thing to keep in mind.

Brian: I've just found that when I let people really... I challenge them to think very deeply, and create great awareness with Christ in that awareness, that time and time again, they come up with good and righteous things. Chad's told me that that doesn't always happen, but my experience has been that that is, and with the permission to be able to say to someone, I think very hesitantly, "Whoa. You might need to..." Chad likes to say, "I'll tell you if you're driving off a cliff. I'll tell you," and I think that's our role as Christian coaches to say, "Whoa, whoa," but I just don't find that happening very often with the tool that's available. So, let's switch gears here. You talked about a theological underpinning to coaching, and man, I appreciate some of the insights you've shared with that. You also have, in your book, which you can get on amazon.com, and they're available for Christmas, I'm assuming. I would urge everyone to... And actually, somewhat seriously. If you're a denominational leader, buy this book for some of those people that could really use this insight. Bring Scott in to do some training, but anyway, you have a ministry coaching pathway, and what I wrote down is, you're going to have to help me with this. What I wrote down is how to mix telling and asking. You certainly didn't learn that from Coach Approach, I

don't think. How to mix telling and asking. We mix telling and asking by separating telling outside the door, but no, talk about that for a second. I'm really curious about your ministry coaching pathway.

Scott: Well, just starting the whole idea that ministry might not be a solo sport. We are in it together. So, that's why I used the subtitle, "Come Alongside." That really points to the biblical word "paraclete." A word that's used to refer to the holy spirit. We see Jesus sending disciples out two-by-two, and we see God forming churches and not just solo acts. St. Paul was always with somebody. So, there's always this discipling relationship, one helping another, and it's always a partnership and a whole body of Christ thing. So, in a ministry coaching pathway, we're acknowledging that people are on all kinds of personal development pathways, that they start at a place, whether they're new in a role on a board committee, or even leading a church as a chairperson, or president, or whatever. Maybe they're just a new Christian. Maybe they're new in leadership for the first time. Well, in the beginning, there's probably a lot of up front information or knowledge of content that they need to know. This is the way we do it, this is the way we approve things, this is the way we get money approved. There's just that necessary stuff.

Brian: They don't know. They truly don't know because they haven't heard it before. There's procedure or process. There's information they need.

Scott: Yeah, and so on the left side of a continuum, it's content heavy, but as you move to the right, or as you kind of move down that pathway in your experience as a leader, or a Christian, or whatever your particular role happens to be, there's going to come a point in which there isn't going to be a whole lot of huge new chunks of information, but rather, it's going to be, how are you going to integrate that into your life, or your way of being, or your way of leading? That's where coaching really kicks in, and there's probably certain transition points along the way where they transition from beginner to practitioner to maybe leader to maybe expert leader or leading others, and there's also maybe those unpredictable places along the way where people are just thrown off whether it's something internal that happens with them, or their families. Maybe something external happens. Your church gets hit by a hurricane. I'm working on coaching a pastor right now in Houston who went through some of that. That's also a place...

Brian: Joel Osteen? Are you coaching Joel Osteen? You're just trying to not name drop?

Scott: No.

Brian: I was just checking. I was just checking.

Scott: Right. But it's a special coaching opportunity, so as you move through that, what I call, ministry coaching pathway, you understand that content might diminish, but opportunities for coaching do increase with those transition points you kind of have to be aware of and with those unpredictable things that might also pop up that are special opportunities for coaching. Does that make sense?

Brian: Absolutely. So, if we're talking to the leader, there is a time to tell. I think sometimes when we talk to leaders about coaching, they can get really confused because there is a time to tell, and there is a time to ask, and I like the way you talk about a continuum. I think it starts with telling and moves towards asking. That's really helpful, and I think it also depends on what it is. I don't think you can just say, "Well, this person is now I should be more asking." I think with this person doing this task, or in this

area of development, I need to judge whether I should be telling or asking.

Scott: Yeah, in a good coaching fashion, the best thing to do is ask them. Ask them a question. Check in with them. How's it going? What might you be struggling with? How can I be helpful? Rather than, oftentimes, I think there's this sort of default more for leaders who are trying to develop others to just kind of assume, I've got to come in with a new nugget of information, or I've got to come in and tell them what to do, or correct, or fix, or give them feedback, and that just... I don't know about you, but when I work with a supervisor like that, or a supervisor like that, I just kind of clench inside, and I don't necessarily want to listen because that's not the kind of help I want. I want somebody who's going to be supportive, and listen to me about where I'm struggling, and will help me to grow and develop, so it's not so much about the key is new information, but the key is processing what I know to discover how to use what I know, but then also to find out what I don't know, and then to coach through how am I going to learn what I don't know? Is it a class, is it somebody I can talk to, is it another resource, is it trial and error? What is it, but you can coach through all that.

Brian: I think that's really helpful. Self-awareness, context-awareness. There's truth, but it applies differently in your context with your strengths.

Scott: Exactly.

Brian: I may not be administrative. I may not be overly relational. I'm not like you, so how do I personally use this tool, this truth, effectively in my leadership. There's just not enough of that, too much cookie cutter stuff, and I love how the coaching is more customized, and I think that's the future of everything, to be honest. Scott Gress on the cutting edge, ladies and gentlemen. No surprise here. So, Scott, with a few minutes left, is there a story you could tell of how you've seen this take effect in a leader's life or in a church?

Scott: Oh boy. I don't know if one is coming to me at the moment. Well, I do remember one particular client who just always saw themselves as a servant, and they saw themselves as someone who was so happy to serve, and they ended up doing it for everybody. So, they kind of anesthetized the whole church from doing anything because they were so willing to do it themselves, and they wanted to be a servant. Through coaching, what happened was this particular person shifted to serving the other person in their growth and development, and therefore, empowering other people to do more rather than doing it for them and sort of making them numb to the need for them to be involved, and do it, and not have any ownership, et cetera. That just was so much fun for me, but it was even more fun for that person that they could see others flower and develop. I often refer to it as Aaron and Hurr, holding up the prophet's hands. That's kind of the way I see myself, and maybe it's also a good image for other Christian leaders that they can hold up other peoples' hands to do the work, and grow, and develop, and boy, what a thrill to see that happen and others come alive in their serving.

Brian: What a great story. What a great story, and so many people need to hear this. You can find out more about Scott at www.scottgress.com. The book is *A Christian Coaching Guidebook, How to Come Alongside Others for Ministry Results*, and you can get that on amazon.com. Scott, thanks so much for joining us today.

Scott: It's my pleasure, Brian. Always good to hear your voice and look forward to seeing you in person.

Brian: And thanks so much to those who are listening. Don't miss any of our podcasts. Subscribe to our podcast at iTunes, or at Overcast, or at Stitcher, or Google Play by searching for Coach Approach Ministries Podcast. We'll see you next week.

One of the toughest things for new, and not so new, coaches is finding paying clients. You need paying clients to get better as a coach, and especially if you want to be an ICF certified coach. People don't always realize that bartering is an accepted form of payment by the International Coaching Federation. That's why we put together the Coaching Exchange. The Coaching Exchange is your ticket to paid coaching hours with really good clients. In the Coaching Exchange, you get 40 hours of paid coaching experience, and you help other coaches do the same. Experience matters. Go to www.coachapproachministries.org/coachexchange to find out more.

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