



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 100: Strong Starts

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[Intro Music]

Brian Miller: I'm Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today on the podcast with the president of Coach Approach Ministries, my friend Mr. Chad Hall. How are you doing today, Chad?

Chad Hall: Brian, I'm having a good day so far, so don't ruin it for me.

Brian: It's May 17th. We're recording this early. I'm going to prophesize. I'm going to guess. It's the sixth month of winter. There's about five inches of snow outside. I don't know. We're recording this early, but the way things have been going, it could be pretty white outside with the snow.

Chad: I feel like I'm in Narnia, and Asland is not on the move.

Brian: Asland is on the move though, as we both know, we're excited about that. I love that picture. Chad, this is a special podcast because this is episode 100. We went triple digits today.

Chad: It's unbelievable. When we started the podcast I thought, well, I'll give it a few weeks. Fortunately, it was in better hands than mine, and Brian, you've done a really good job with this. One hundred episodes, man. I feel like we need a birthday cake or something.

Brian: I'm for that. It is definitely a testament to diligence and resilience because to get to 100, you certainly have to say, "This is going to happen." You have to overcome not having a podcast on Wednesday night when you have one delivering on Thursday. You have to learn some things. I wish they didn't start with episode one because nobody is proud of episode one, and it's always your most downloaded episode. Speaking of most downloaded episodes, we've had over 30 thousand downloads. I just can't hardly comprehend this being downloaded 30,000 times to iPhone, you know.

Chad: Wow. Either your wife Danelle has downloaded it 29,950 times or the people listening to this one are just not alone, there are a lot of people downloading, and that's cool.

Brian: There are a lot of people downloading it, it is exciting and very cool. There's probably 40 to 50 hours of content which is great because there's a lot of great coaching content that people can have access to for free, and I think it's great content. That's something I'm really proud of. I don't feel like it's just the top layer or just off the cuff. I feel like we've really provided a lot of really good information for people.

[Transcribed by Kristopher Mariasy](#)

Chad: Yeah, and that's kind of one of the dreams we've had with the podcast was to sort of create an audio library of great coaching content. Man, we may not be the Library of Congress yet with our 100 episodes, but we're definitely like the city public library. We've got a pretty good collection.

Brian: Yeah, there's a transcript every week so if people want they can search that. They can download that. I love podcasts, Chad. I love listening to podcasts, it is definitely something I do all the time. There are a few unique people, I won't say weird people out there who don't like to listen to podcasts, but they do read. So, everything is transcribed as well. A lot of great content out there, and we've really enjoyed putting that together for people.

Chad: Brain, before we move onto the actual content for today, what's something you've learned about podcasting since you've started this? Because you're really the champion of this, and we may have some listeners who have maybe thought about doing a podcast. I'm not saying give them the full tutorial right now, but what's something that surprised you?

Brian: How the coaching mindset really can be helpful, especially when you're podcasting with someone else. So if you're doing an interview... I remember with one of my first episodes a good friend of mine listened to the podcast. He said, "It was really good," and we were talking about coaching about how the coach talks maybe about 20% of the time, and the client 80% of the time, and then he hysterically started laughing and said, "You talked more than he did." I thought, uh-oh, the interviewer is talking more than the interviewee, and so to get comfortable in asking great questions to set your interviewee, is that the right term? Set your client up to succeed, and that takes a little bit of preparation, not a ton. I don't script everything out, but I want them to look good, I want them to be the expert. When it's just me and you, hey, it's 50-50 man.

Chad: Oh, you're not interviewing me. We're kind of co-doing this together, but that's interesting. When I got into coaching for a long time it just frustrated me to no end to listen to NPR because the interviewers asked closed-ended questions. They're really making statements and then saying, "Hey, talk about that, talk about what I just said." I think you do a great job of interviewing, actually asking curious, open-ended, exploratory questions. It probably makes the podcast a lot easier to do that.

Brian: Well, my hope is that the listener is asking the same question, and so they're saying, "Man, I'm so glad you asked that question because that's what I wanted to know." That's certainly my hope, and I am curious about coaching and learning. So, more and more I've just trusted the interview process, and that's been fantastic. I've enjoyed it. It's a treat, I think that's how we get to 100. It isn't because we just got through it. It's because I personally love doing it. We would have never gotten to 100.

Chad: Congratulations. Go buy yourself a birthday cake today. You don't have to put 100 candles on it. I mean you can if you want to.

Brian: Let's get to our topic today because we have great topics, I think, every week. This topic is I think especially good, this topic is strong starts. You know, we get this question from coaches all the time, they've got a client, and maybe they've had one session, maybe two, and they think maybe it hasn't gotten off to a strong start, Chad.

Chad: Yeah, it kind of gives that image of like an Olympic runner, and the firing pistol or the starting pistol, whatever you call that thing, sounds, and they kind of stumble. That's kind of the metaphor for

what we hear from some of our coaches is it just feels like they're stumbling off the block, and of course you can recover from that. You can go on to have a good coaching relationship, but what people would really like is to have a great coaching relationship from the beginning. So, how do you get off to a great strong start in a coaching relationship? Not just a particular coaching conversation but the coaching relationship. We get that question so often that Brian and I have put together a, I guess I'm talking to the audience at this point, Brian, Brian and I have put together an eCourse which I guess is a new thing for us. It's several video modules and some other resources along with it around strong starts and I'm pretty excited about that.

Brian: I think I'm excited about it because I think it's going to be a great resource for coaches. They get out there, they've started, they're kind of on their own and they feel like, you know, and we can kind of come along them at their own pace and provide them some confidence and some strong information that will help them to set up a great coaching process for not only one client, but then for multiple clients to keep coming through the same process. I think it's going to be fantastic.

Chad: Yeah, what we've realized over the years is you need a system. Systems make things easier, and I know when I got into coaching, nobody talked about that system, it just was something like out of Harry Potter, you got a client, you wave a wand, boom. You're just coaching at this deep, you know powerful level. I remember for the first year or two of being a coach thinking, where's that magic wand that evidently I need? Because nobody really talked about having a system for getting off to a strong start, so I'm with you, I'm thinking it's going to be really valuable and very helpful, and lead to a lot of great coaching relationships.

Brian: I like the analogy that you are putting forward there. I'm on the starter block, I hear the gun go off, and honest to goodness, I'm not even sure which direction to run. One question is, what do we have as the end in mind, how do we want to finish this thing? That's a way to even think about a strong start is to think how do I want to finish, but also how did I get to the starting block, and how can I setup myself to succeed as I put my feet into that starting block? I think we can go forwards and backwards from that point that people know coaching is this first session, and I think that's the strong start. How do I start that first session well? Really, in this video course we go way back and way forward and really talk that through.

Chad: Yeah, because you don't just end up with a client. Talking on the phone, minute one, oh my goodness. I've got a client. Something happened before that, and what we've learned through the years is that what happened before the first session usually is what to blame, or at least there's a lot there to blame for getting off to a stumbling start instead of a strong start. A lot of things that happened that shouldn't have happened, or things that didn't happen that should have happened, and so one of the things that kind of surprised us I know when we were putting the video course together was like, oh yeah, we need to talk more about kind of the sales process of onboarding the clients. That sets up the possibility, the probability, of a strong start, and I know we're not going to go too deep into this now, but in the video course we talk about having a well defined niche and kind of educating potential clients so that they know what they're getting into so that when they can finally sign the contract, show up for the first session, they already know what coaching is. They know how it works, they're ready to go, they're ready to run with you. To get back to that metaphor, we're going to stretch it out way too far for the course of this podcast.

Brian: No, I love it. It also helps to relax our thoughts about what the sales process looks like. We're not trying to call this course Strong Sales, it's Strong Starts. We'll tell you that we start with a sales process, and what we find over and over, especially Christian coaches, do not want to feel icky in the sales process. They want to help, and what we're saying is you can come into a strong sales process with that mentality of here I am, I want to help. Here's some ways I can help, and you can begin to describe one, coaching, and you can begin to describe what you do in particular with your niche.

Chad: Not only can you, but you should. What makes for a very strong sales process is one that is helpful, it is supportive, it's informative to the client. It's helping them determine is this a good fit for me or not, what's expected of me, a lot of those kinds of things that really setup so that you can once the gun goes off you can get going very quickly and very effectively. We get into all the details of that in the degree in the course, but just to know if you're a little bit like eh, I don't like sales, sales might even be a dirty word even for me. It's really not, it's relationship building, it's nurturing that person up so that they're ready for coaching, and they can make the most of it. I like that because it's a generous way to approach the sales process.

Brian: Let me give you an example that I think is helpful because you don't want to explain necessarily of the bat coaching, you want to explain what you can do for the client. Not necessarily what I can do for the client, but what will happen with the client if you hire me through this process. One thing I would talk about in organizational coaching and leadership coaching is transitions. Again, there's so much into that analogy of the starting block. When people think about transitions, they think about the change. Yesterday we were called this, today we were called that. Yesterday we met at this location, today we meet at this location. The transition is so much wider than that. Those changes began to be set up long ago, there are things that were important to people, valuable to people, and I find too, just watching transition processes that on the far end, people spend more time getting rid of the things they didn't want than getting to where they do want to go. So, as a coach I can lay that map out for you and help you to think through that process, and I think that's when a client, potential client... You see I've already started the strong start by giving them a map that can help them to get from where they are to where they want to go.

Chad: Yeah, and I think that's the beauty of a really strong sales process is... You know, the terminology is its content marketing. It's basically giving value to potential clients with the anticipation that they will become paying clients. Why would someone become a paying client? It's because they know, like, and trust you, and they've done the math and decided they'd rather have what you can provide them than the money that's in their bank account. You know, not everybody's going to make that decision. Some people are going to give a lot of value to the potential client phase, and they're going to decide this isn't for me. One of the things we talk about in the video course is you'd love that because if people aren't ready for coaching, it's really hard to get off to a strong start. Part of what you do during that strong sales process is you're informing, you're educating, you're providing value, but you're also helping them discern is this a good fit for me or not? Whereas I think other sales processes you know something that may feel kind of sleazy, or very sleazy, because they think the sales process is trying to convince people to do something they don't really want to do. Trust me, you do not want to coach someone who does not want coaching. That's not going to go well. They will feel they got duped into it, you know they show up for the first coaching session and they're like what is this even? We're not trying to coerce, cajole, or otherwise convince people to get coached.

Brian: It strikes me too that in that very first part where you're in your strong sales process you are identifying the value as the process, and what you're offering and the understanding of it. You are lessening the understanding of it but the value is me personally in the one hour and 40 minutes you're going to get to talk to me every other week. We're putting the value on the process which I think is a really strong start. It takes the pressure off of me as well.

Chad: It lets them know how to show up and that kind of thing. So yeah, through the years we've gotten a lot of questions about, gosh, how do I prepare people to be coached, and we talk about that in the video course, but probably the more frequent question that we get is around what do I do in the very first coaching session? We're recording this before you guys are hearing it, but this week as we're recording it, I've responded to 3 emails where people are asking what do you do in your intake session? Unfortunately, we don't have this video course ready at the recording process so I can't say, "Hey, click here." I create a lot of those emails saying here's what I cover. Maybe that's a good thing for us to talk about now, Brian.

Brian: Let's dive in there, so what's the first line of that email, Chad?

Chad: I always say the first conversation we have as client and coach is predicated with they have completed some kind of intake packet. We're not starting from literally just zero. I know a bit about them. They know a bit about me, and we've covered kind of the niceties. We've probably even had a couple of phone calls beforehand. What I share in the email is I say I have a process that I follow every time because that intake session is really valuable, and I don't want to show up thinking oh gosh, what do I do? So, I have a series of questions, and these are the questions I ask, and why I ask them. So, my first question always is, what's your story, where are you in life, and how'd you get here? I usually give a little caveat of maybe 5 and 20 minutes to respond. Now, most people don't talk nonstop. I've had a few that try to, but they don't talk nonstop for 15 minutes giving me their autobiography, but that's kind of the first part of the conversation. There's some questions, responding, but I'm trying to get a feel for how they see the story that they're in, and where are they in life, and just some of that background. That surprises a lot of people, because gosh I thought coaching was all about moving forward, you know, not about the past. Well, that's true, we're not talking about the past so we can fix it, we're talking about the past because really the person you're coaching is the accumulation of where they've been, what they've done, what they've experienced. So, we're really getting to who are you with that story question. It's some rich stuff, you also learn a lot about people about what they don't talk about. Some people just give you the resume response, and other people include their family. It's really interesting. People are interesting, so I love that first question.

Brian: I think it's an awareness question for most people. They're just thinking about the moment, where they're at, the problems they're facing today. By pushing back a little bit into the past, and I don't even think it's about a past question. This is about what's their story? What's their map? Where do they find themselves headed? What have been some of the obstacles that have had to be overcome in that past? That's probably going to point to what kind of obstacles they're going to see in the future. It's a great question to help setup an overall coaching strategy.

Chad: It gives them a sense of, who am I, what's going on, and of course how does this coaching fit into the story that I'm living? The second question I always ask, is when you look at your story, what have been some of the strengths, or kind of the good aspects of who you are that have helped you make

progress in your story? This is usually where people talk about if they've done strengths finder like they still hear that word strengths and go for some of the ideation or some of what those 34 strengths are, but most of the time they just talk about you know things like I'm a hard worker, their intelligence, or their stick-to-it-ness, or sometimes they talk about luck. I love that. Again, you're doing an inventory of what they feel like they have going for them, and since us as coaches we're really trying to tap into the resources that our clients have. It's good to have an inventory of those resources. Some people know themselves better than others, so sometimes they don't say a lot about that question, but they begin to recognize and have some strengths, and I need to be aware of those.

Brian: Yeah, a great follow-up question for those who don't recognize it, or maybe they're too humble, is what comes easy? Because they don't usually recognize that as a strength. Anybody can do that. We hear that all the time, Chad, oh, anybody can do this, and you and I both know, no, not anybody can do this. You have a natural bent for it. You have a natural talent for it.

Chad: There's something special about you that makes you distinct, and that's worth noting, and kind of holding onto, and not just celebrating, but putting to use later. We're going to put those strengths to use later in the coaching relationship. My third question is, so we talked story, we talked strengths, then we go to struggles. Can you tell I'm a struggling Baptist pastor?

Brian: Yes, I can tell, you may be even back-slidden right now. You may be slidden, all the S's going on there.

Chad: Don't even go there. The 4th question is about sin. No, it's not. What I'm curious is about what they know about themselves that have caused them to trip themselves up or created static or friction as they've tried to make their way through life's story. Again, people tend to be more aware of this category, the problems, and we just want to highlight those and kind of keep those in mind, so if they procrastinate, or they can be overbearing, or they're just not good with people, or they're too good with people, we just give them a chance to talk about what you already know about yourself in terms of what you kind of wish would work better?

Brian: Gotcha, what's the fourth question?

Chad: The fourth one, and it's funny I was asked this last week, I had an intake session last week, and when I asked this question the client said, "Oh, I love that question. That's so hard," but the question is, who are your heroes?

Brian: Yeah, that's a good question. It's an interesting question to see how people answer that, and even how different kinds of people answer that question.

Chad: Yeah, and I usually give a little bit on a description when I say these can be people we actually know or have met, they can be real people. They can also be fictional characters from a book or a movie, or something from the Bible. Who are the people you admire, and would kind of like to be like them in some way? By the way, people who are really great coaches are probably thinking right now, man, those are not concise questions, and I get that, I'm intentional about not asking super concise questions during the intake session because I'm trying to help the client have a little bit of an expanded territory in which they can paint their own picture. So, yeah, I ask that and probably one out of ten times I ask that the client doesn't have anybody. That's not like, oh, so they're a psychopath. That's not initially a problem,

it's just oh, they may need a lot of time to think about that, but usually people have two, three, maybe four, five heroes.

Brian: I'm finding that people under 35 are more likely to say nobody, and as you try to dig into that, they still come up with nobody. I think it's a great question. It's really served me well on several occasions, but I would also add, don't get freaked out if they're don't. Like you said, they're not necessarily a psychopath. Although, there's a good chance they are.

Chad: Yeah, that's why they're working with you. I have a little sort of follow up question through the years of when people really struggle. I don't sort of have any heroes, sometimes I'll ask, if you did have a hero, what kind of quality of characteristic would they have? That's really what I'm going after, it's not the name of the hero so much, as it is what is it about them you admire? I admire that they worked as a team, or you know they were bold, or whatever. That helps them still be able to answer the question and get some new awareness, without having a specific person in mind.

Brian: What you just did there has just recently been so helpful to me, to think about the question I want to ask, and then to back up and say, what am I getting at? So, what would be a good word for that? But, you took the question, who are your heroes, and it didn't quite work for you as well, so you distilled it down to what you really want to know, or what you think is important, and you back the question up a little bit, as opposed to going forward with it, to me. I don't know if that's in the weeds or makes sense, but that's helpful to me when a question doesn't work, that I can distill it back into something that I really wanted to know without leading the client on.

Chad: Yeah, and the thing about having a named hero is the named hero is the handle by which you can carry qualities and characteristics. So, for instance the client last week I got started with, she mentioned that Harry Potter was one of her heroes. She's loved those books. There's a team, and all this stuff. If you get a name, that's great because then later in the coaching relationship you can just say Harry Potter, not work together as a team, you know all those characteristics and qualities, or you can say, how would your grandmother handle this? Instead of naming all those qualities and characteristics, but you know if you don't have the handle to carry all of those other content I guess about what the question was trying to get at.

Brian: One of my favorite responses was Katniss, from Hunger Games, which gave you a real sense of this lady was determined, you know? She's not going to lose this.

Chad: By the way, some people are a little freaked out through the years, I've noticed that not clients so much, but coaches are like well, wait a minute. Movie characters? Book characters? I say they are caricatures. You take qualities and characteristics, you accentuate them and kind of erase all the mundane stuff from this person, and that's what makes for an interesting, compelling character. They're not real, of course they're not real. They're caricatures, be okay with that, that people will begin to gravitate towards fictional heroes because the real-life heroes are people who they know the struggles, the weaknesses, so I'm okay with that.

Brian: Chad, you've given us four questions. I'm going to stop you because we're out of time, sadly, but if you want, there's more questions I know you have put together, and you know what, thank goodness. We put it all together in one video eCourse.

Chad: That's a very smooth transition.

Brian: Was it? I meant it. Yeah, so we'll certainly give you more information on how to get that course. Is there anything else you want to say about that course before we close off our time, Chad?

Chad: I would just say our mission in creating the course is, of course you would get off to Strong Starts because we want you to have strong coaching relationships. Not only because we care about you as a coach, but you really care about your clients. People hire coaches because they want to get somewhere in life, and our hope, our prayer, our expectation is that the video course is going to help your clients get where they're going in life more smoothly, more effectively because you are a better coach whose more capable during that start process. Hopefully, you'll help us fulfill our mission by getting the course and applying it.

Brian: Thanks so much for joining us, don't miss any of our podcasts. Subscribe to our podcast at iTunes, Overcast, Stitcher, or Google Play by searching for Coach Approach Ministries podcast. We'll see you next week.

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