**

Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 137: 5 Ways to Coach the Person, Not the Problem (re-broadcast)

Published: January 31, 2019

Brian Miller: I'm Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short. And I'm joined here today by soon to be doctor, but still for today, Mr. Chad Hall.

Chad Hall: I tried to put that on a letter I was writing the other day. And that long kind of intro didn't quite fit. But anyway, it fits on a podcast, that's good.

Brian Miller: I love it. I love it, that's great. Soon to be doctor, but yet today Mr. I crack myself up, so I repeat myself.

Chad Hall: I like it.

Brian Miller: I'm my favorite person to quote. I do it all the time.

Chad Hall: In fact, I just was saying that the other day.

Brian Miller: Chad, when we talk about coaching the person and not the problem, which I love that piece, many times we need some distinctions in order to help draw out the fullness of the client. I think we lump everything into one group.

Chad Hall: Yeah. I think that what ... Kind of beginner coaching is you coach the client to do stuff different. But the client doesn't really change. When you go to sort of a more professional level coaching, really good coaching, the client changes. But we kind of think, "Oh, what's the mean for a person to change? What about a person changes? What's the make-up of a person that we would expect to see grow and develop?" And I noticed myself for years just kind of conflating a bunch of stuff. I've found it helpful within the last few years to start making some distinctions about kind of what is the make-up of a person that we might see develop through coaching.

Brian Miller: Well, one of my favorite things even about coaching itself is it helps me understand distinctions, it helps me think through some finer points of how to approach something at maybe a more surgical level so that we can ... I'm just mixing my metaphors, drill down on a specific area. You and I were discussing it, I've had the same thing, somebody will say to me, "What's a good spiritual gifts assessment?" And I say, "The Bible." I don't find good assessments for such things like that. It's too broad.

Chad Hall: Yeah. And we can assess some aspects of who a person is or what they have to offer, we might think we could assess anything, like spiritual gifts. But one of the challenges I have with spiritual gifts assessments or inventories is they tend to conflate and not distinguish very well spiritual gifts and other aspects of a person, their natural gifts, their wiring, their personality, even skills that they've learned along the way. Well, this podcast isn't the best venue to take out all of our hatred toward spiritual gifts inventories, but we'll do that on a later podcast. Maybe today we should just make some distinctions.

Brian Miller: Everyone in my church had the spiritual gift of music yet no one could sing. I'll stop at that. So where do we start with some distinctions, Chad?

Chad Hall: Yeah, the best distinctions I find is to distinguish between natural gifts and acquired strengths. And what we might just do with this podcast is lay out five different kind of aspects of who a person is, what they have to offer. So the first two that we could distinguish would be natural gifts and acquired strengths. Natural gifts, that's what you're born with, and you didn't do anything to deserve it, you didn't work for it. It's kind of in your genetics or whatever. For me, those are things like some natural talent. A person's IQ, that tends to be ... their cognitive ability tends to be. They just showed up with it.

Brian Miller: IQ seems to be the speed of your neuron firing mostly.

Chad Hall: That's right.

Brian Miller: You can just process faster. And that is ... You can't acquire it.

Chad Hall: Yeah. It's not like a muscle that you could develop and have faster neuron processing. And physical stature, there's very little you could do to be taller or ... I guess or shorter for that matter, if you wanted to be a horse jockey and felt like you were too doggone tall.

Brian Miller: I'm glad you said horse jockey because I think most people were thinking elephant jockey.

Chad Hall: Camel jockey. Now, those camel jockeys, they make big money.

Brian Miller: Apologies on my part for jumping to conclusions.

Chad Hall: You were very culturally insensitive with that, Brian.

Brian Miller: So natural gifts are things you are born with. You can't really change it. You might be able to accentuate it, to hone it, but you're born with it. You gotta start that way.

Chad Hall: That's right. And you could steward it, but you can't acquire it.

Brian Miller: As opposed to acquired strengths, I'm gonna guess that you can acquire them.

Chad Hall: Hence the adjective acquired.

Brian Miller: Ah, okay.

Chad Hall: And so this is the difference between even the StrengthsFinder assessment. StrengthsFinder really is assessing a natural talent. So you have a natural talent theme. And again, I don't wanna make StrengthsFinder all encompassing, but they identified 34 signature talent themes. And those are natural, you just have them. Acquired strengths would be things that you add on top of those natural gifts. So think skills, knowledge, abilities, things that you develop. If someone has maybe a high cognitive function, which is a natural gift, well they might acquire language ability with that, speaking multiple languages. Or if someone had a natural kind of athletic talent, they might add to that ... they might acquire the strength to apply that in karate or being a camel jockey, whatever.

Brian Miller: Horse jockey, that's what I was thinking too.

Chad Hall: Horse jockey, whatever. No judgment which kind of jockey you wanna be.

Brian Miller: No, no, no judgment here.

Chad Hall: But where natural gifts are nature, acquired strengths are nurture. And so you've done something or someone around you in your environment has helped you acquire these strengths. And they're just different. And so if we try to acquire natural gifts, that's gonna be really frustrating.

Brian Miller: Yeah, so when you're coaching, if you are drilling down and you get to some natural gifts, you certainly could coach around what acquired strengths would ... what's the word I'm looking for? Really accentuate your natural gifts, that would be very custom coaching.

Chad Hall: It would be. And you may hear a client say something along the lines of ... In fact, I was just talking to a coaching student a couple of weeks ago, and she said, "Well, you know, I'm just not very smart." And I said, "Well, that may or may not be true. I don't know. But what I hear is that you actually are just trying to be smart in too many areas. You're trying to do it all. And my guess is if you focus, you'd make the most of the smarts you have." And she said, "I'm just not very good at focusing." I said, "That is an acquired strength. So by acquiring the strength to focus, you could make the most of the natural intellect that you have." That was really helpful for her. And just that simple distinction helped her to know where to focus her time and energy and maybe a different way of envisioning herself.

Brian Miller: Well, that's gonna be true for everybody. I would say most people probably think, "I'm not smart in all these areas," and it kind of messes with our head a little bit. Or, you've got a few people that think they're smart in every area and they're not. And so this could be some help that way too. So you give us two, natural gifts and acquired strengths. There's three more. What's next?

Chad Hall: Yeah, another aspect of who we are and what we have to offer is personality. And this one gets kind of confusing or confused with some of the others because it's both nature and nurture. There's an aspect of our personality that we are just born with, we tend to call that temperament. But then we add on top of that through life these kind of layers of personality. And personality is a way to experience the world and engaging the world based on kind of how you interpret it. One of the best descriptions I heard years ago was it's these patterned ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving. And we acquire that, but we acquire it on top of some natural ways of just showing with people. So personality is things like being extroverted or organized or intuitive. There are these different personality traits. And that can change over time. But there's aspects of it that aren't going to change.

Brian Miller: So I get the nature part. The nature part is I'm either ... Some people are type A, they're laid back, they're hyperactive perhaps. There's different pieces to that that you're kind of born with. It's hard to step away from if you're a type A person, you can't really change that. But tell me more about the nurture part. Where does that come in in the personality?

Chad Hall: Yeah, it's interesting, there's probably far more of our personality that's actually nurtured than we really think. Now, the longer it becomes a patterned part of who we are or how we show up, the more challenging it is to change it. So something even like extroversion, from what I read, people are born kind of leaning toward extroversion. But what happens is they begin to use extroversion as a way of navigating the world. It becomes more, more, more comfortable for them, and so it becomes much more of a rigid pattern for how they show up, interact with the world. So it's hard to change, and we don't even realize it was a nurtured part of who we are. However, when you put somebody in a really different circumstance for a really long time, you begin to notice those patterned ways of thinking, feeling, showing up, they begin to change. The patterns aren't as rigid as maybe we thought they were.

Brian Miller: Yeah, I like to think that I was born sarcastic.

Chad Hall: That's an acquired strength not a personality trait.

Brian Miller: But it's a personality trait because of the family I was born into, it was hard not to be sarcastic. But I like what you said earlier, it is a pattern of experience. So sarcasm becomes a pattern through personality, through nurture. It's who I am, it's personality, but it's through nurture. And you can change that.

Chad Hall: You can. One of my favorite books recently has been Ian Cron's book on the Enneagram. It's called The Road Back to You.

Brian Miller: Well, the Enneagram is popular today.

Chad Hall: It's hot. It's hotter than the Golden State Warriors.

Brian Miller: No, no, no.

Chad Hall: Well, it's probably not that hot. Never mind on that. But anyway, one of the things that Ian Cron says in there is that personality both protects and imprisons you. So we develop personality to protect us, but then we get later in life and we realize it's kind of imprisoning us. We can't not show up in these ways even when we would like to show up differently. And so part of really understanding and developing who we are, maturing as human beings, is recognizing the imprisoning parts and choosing to do something different. And that's where we just say thankfully it is nurture so we don't have to be imprisoned. It's not genetic that we are ... have certain personality traits.

Brian Miller: I don't know if this is what you're talking about or not. I see people who run everything through the pattern of victimization, that, "There's no way I can get ahead because it's rigged against me." They see things like that, and that's a pattern of thinking that becomes part of your personality, but you can change that.

Chad Hall: Yeah, and so they may be born with kind of a temperament of kind of that melancholic temperament. But they begin to add on top of that these layers of personality of maybe avoiding, blaming. I tend to think victimization is kind of a blame game, blaming others for things being bad. And so the good news is you don't have to stay there. And so a coach might really help somebody unpack how their personality has led to some of these assumptions that are beginning to imprison them, or maybe have imprisoned them for a long time. And the client can begin to choose his or her way out of that prison.

Brian Miller: And I think coaching can also allow some better awareness. Because sometimes you are victimized. I don't mean to say you're not. But if you're always processing everything like that, it's hard to know, well, that is being victimized and that's not. That's just me thinking it is. So coaching can help make those distinctions as you think about the part of personality that's not nature, that's more nurture. That's interesting. I love these distinctions, they definitely help me think about how to ask better questions.

Chad Hall: Yeah. Well, another distinction, and this kind of gets to your intro with the spiritual gifts inventory, I get this all the time at church and in certain classes I'm teaching, "What are spiritual gifts?" And what I tend to see is people confuse spiritual gifts with all the other things we've talked about so far. So someone says, "Well, I'm organized and so that means I have the gift of administration." No. It means you're organized. A spiritual gift, and we're talking to Christians here, a spiritual gift is what God gives a Christian to help grow the church, either grow it bigger or deeper. That's it. Let's be really clear. In the New Testament they talked about spiritual gifts, they're God-given, and they're for the good of the church. So, when you think about spiritual gifts in terms of, "Well at work, I'm really good at project managing, so that means I have the gift of administration." No, it probably means you have the natural gift of being organized, it may be part of your temperament to be more organized. That's not a supernatural bestowing of God's spirit within you to administer something.

Chad Hall: And so scripture gives us really clear lists of spiritual gifts. I'm not sure those are exhaustive lists, but they're certainly [inaudible 00:16:09] lists. And so I think when you consider that God has given me a gift to be used in his church, that really changes it from just hey, it's my personality or something I learned in school as an acquired strength, or even a natural gift.

Brian Miller: I heard some of what's not a spiritual gift. Give us an example of what is a spiritual gift and you've seen it used in the church for the growing of the church.

Chad Hall: Yeah, I think a good one for me would be an act of service. I am not naturally a compassionate person. That's probably a surprise to you, Brian.

Brian Miller: No, you are not.

Chad Hall: I'm not.

Brian Miller: Good self-awareness there, Chad.

Chad Hall: Well, actually that's called wife-awareness. So there's an assessment you can take, it's called getting married. And you learn all kinds of things about yourself. So I'm not a naturally compassionate person. But there have been times when God has just gifted me with the ability to act and to serve in ways that meet specific needs that grow the church, again, either wider or deeper. And so I can think of several instances along the way. And my personal theology about a spiritual gift is just because God gives it to you for a time doesn't mean it's permanent. So think of it like a tool. God puts a tool in your hand to get something done that God needs done, and needs you to do it. And it's like he's letting you borrow his tools for use in his church. And so yeah, for me, the times when I have been gifted with acts of service, I can kind of stand back and say, "Well, I know that's not from me. That's not Chad-generated act of service."

Chad Hall: I think where it gets confusing is God also wants us to use our natural gifts, our acquired strengths, and our personality in God's kingdom. But that doesn't make all of those things spiritual gifts.

Brian Miller: I do think we sometimes confuse spiritual gifts with superpowers. We're such a comic book hero, I can fly-

Chad Hall: That's only you, Brian.

Brian Miller: And also have heat vision. It might be, I don't know. But I don't think ... Out of these five, I think sometimes we elevate spiritual gifts to such a level of the others don't matter. But I think coaching is ... I think developing people is more helpful when we think of some of the distinctions and help them in a lot of different areas to understand what's going on, as opposed to [inaudible 00:19:15] your spiritual gift.

Chad Hall: Yeah. Where I've found spiritual gifts to really come in big time in coaching is when a person is facing something as a part of their walk with God and their inhabiting of God's kingdom, and they are trying to rely on natural gifts, acquired strengths, maybe personality. That's not enough. And they say, "Well, I guess I'm not supposed to do this," or whatever. And in coaching, I say, "If you had a spiritual gift that God could give you just for this, what would it be?" So maybe it's a gift of mercy, gift of evangelism, whatever. Evangelism's a big one. "I'm not an evangelist." Well, that's why God would give you a gift of evangelism because you don't have it. It can really help people pray for a gift, recognize the need for it, or even find somebody to partner with who has that gift that God's given to them as a way to move forward.

Brian Miller: That's an interesting piece. I think spiritual gifts have a lot to do with where you're at in the body of Christ. It tends to be something you can use well on a team. And that's why I talked about it being more like a superpower, "I can go out there and just use this and whack down the bad guys," or whatever it is. But it really needs to be thought of in a team situation. So there's one more. You've teased us, you've got four and we've got one left. What's the big reveal on number five?

Chad Hall: I don't know that I left the best to last. The fifth one for me is character. Character is just what kind of person are you. And my own definition of character is what kind of person are you based on your virtues, your vices, and your values. And so virtues, positive patterned ways of showing up that lead to life. Vices are negative patterned ways of showing up that lead to death or separation, or Hell if you wanna be ... I'm in the South, I can say Hell. And so it's that combination, virtues, vices, and certain values that make up kind of who you are as a person. It's the character, it's the mark of who you are. Are you honest, are you prideful, are you courageous, are your slothful, greedy? Those are aspects of character that are both natural ... Let me say not they're both, they are all three, they are nature, they are nurture, and they are supernatural. All of those feed into kind of who you are, what kind of person are you.

Chad Hall: And for me, the character is really what's happening when you're being transformed into the person of Christ. Each of us is being called to be more like Christ. That's a character project. It doesn't really matter your personality. Introverts, extroverts, they can all be formed into the person of Christ. Dishonest people, that's not Christ-like. There's the distinction.

Brian Miller: Right. So you're coaching a client and you're hearing some things, and you're thinking, "This would be a good time for distinction." What are some clues to know which of these five you should dig into?

Chad Hall: It helps me to think of these in distinct ways, because if I hear a client trying to pick up one to use it in a way that's really the other. I'm gonna invite a distinction and maybe draw out the distinction. So just for me, having it as a framework first of all is really helpful. So again, if I hear somebody talking about a personality trait as being un-Christ-like, that's probably not true, it's probably a character trait that's un-Christ-like. And that's something that can be formed. And so it just helps to put it in the right category. What's the first step of wisdom is calling something by its rightful name. So just know what you're dealing with.

Brian Miller: There's lots of places you could use this, but one place I hear you saying is as you're trying to help someone become more like Christ. There are some distinct areas we can look at, and that'll help us to help them see clearly to design actions that will specifically work well in that distinct area.

Chad Hall: Yeah. Another place would be in our relationships. People are always navigating relationships in a coaching relationship. And so if you have a client who says ... they're talking about maybe their relationship with somebody at work, and they say, "I think my personality just rubs them the wrong way." And you begin to hear what is the personality you're talking about, you might say, "Actually, that just sounds like you're full of pride. That's a vice not a personality trait." We may not be that direct with a coaching client, but we might be. It just helps them to know what's really going on here.

Chad Hall: Another place would be in terms of when they're trying to get something done. Which of these aspects of who they are should they look to leverage in order to get that thing done? Are they looking for a natural gift? Do they need to acquire some more strength to be able to get it done through nurture? Do they need to kind of go off track of their personality for a while to try to get it done? So it just helps them to know where to look for in terms of the resource to be able to move forward on something.

Brian Miller: That's good stuff, Chad. I really appreciate you bringing these five distinctions of kind of the human person to us and helping us think these through.

Chad Hall: Brian, it's been fun. And hopefully we're gonna have a resource on this. I'll let you tell others about that maybe in the closing.

Brian Miller: Chad wanted me to make available a one-page breakdown of the seven heavenly virtues. You can download this helpful resource by going to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/virtues. That's www.coachapproachministries.org/virtues. We'll see you next week.

Brian Miller: A community of coaches exist who have the same heart and same struggles that you have. They love seeing people get their "Aha," and they hate the idea of marketing themselves to get clients. We want to invite you into this community. This is a group of practicing coaches working on all aspects of building a coaching practice. They have full access to each other and to the CAM leadership team. New members are only welcome twice a year, one week in January, and another week in September. An open window is coming soon. If you'd like more information about the community or to sign up for our waiting list, go to coachapproachministries.org/membership. There is nothing like belonging to a like-minded community. Coachapproachministries.org/membership.