



EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR MISSIONAL OUTREACH

Practicing the art and skill of coaching: how it can make a difference for you...

***"Success" is...
Discovering
what God
wants you to
do
and then doing
it!***

--Sam Logan

On Monday, June 26, I was making my way toward the airport for one of my trips to another area of Texas. While I was driving, I had the radio turned to my preferred station when I'm in town and alone (my wife has other ideas about appropriate stations!). I was listening to KERA, 90.1. The program that I was listening to was *Morning Edition*. Steve Innskeep was interviewing Martina Navratilova. She was at Wimbledon competing once again, maybe for the last time. She is, after all, about to turn 50 and thinking about retirement(!).

During the conversation, Innskeep asked Martina

about her early days on the pro-tennis tour. One of the things that stuck with me as I listened to the interview was Martina's take on what it was that helped her grow to the point where she has the highest number of women's singles' victories at Wimbledon. She has won 9 times.

Innskeep asked her about her early days, her incessant compulsion to be the best and her way of preparing herself for each match. She named Chris Evert as her greatest challenge and the one person she met in competition that forced her to excel.

Then, when probed about

her success and what helped her achieve the status of play that she eventually did, she said that it was her decision to engage a coach that made the biggest difference in the level of her play.

Now, most of us are familiar with coaches on a sports level. But, there are coaches, and then there are coaches. Martina's coach did for her what Phil Jackson did for Michael Jordan.

It wasn't about technique as much as it was about helping each of these "greats" begin to work through solutions to their own struggles. That's what great coaches do.

Coaching as a biblical example...

Coaching is actually a biblical reality. Have you ever engaged scripture with that thought in mind? I know I didn't until a few years ago. But, truth be known, its there, big as life.

Barnabas coached Saul/Paul and then John Mark. Jethro coached Moses. Moses coached Aaron. Jesus coached the disciples and others. Paul coached Timothy. Mordecai coached Esther. Eli coached Samuel. The list goes on. Hebrews 10 reminds us that we are

to Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds (NLT). If we take Sam Logan's advice to his son identified above, then we have begun to seize the heart of coaching.

Why should you or I consider coaching as a valuable tool for ministry? Well, coaching can help to empower people in their work. Coaching can equip people to take on more responsibility and share the load. Coaching can help us be healthier in our relationships in ministry. Coaching can help us work with

people more effectively, parent in ways that build up our children, set people free to establish new ministries, aid in providing discipleship support for new people in the faith, support your leadership of your ministry teams. Here's the key insight. Investing in people through coaching will actually reduce your own personal workload and multiply the opportunities for ministry in your setting. Yes, it is that good! It is easily learned. The next few pages will talk about the important parts of coaching.

Relationship, the heart of the matter...

NTNL Bishop Kevin Kanouse, in his recent edition of *Life Lines* (Pentecost 2006), writes about the importance of relationships in the life of missional ministry. He is absolutely right on the mark in this observation. In fact, one of the places crises in ministry tends to develop is around the *lack* of a relationship that exists between leaders and people to begin with.

The same thing is true about the coaching experience. At the heart of the matter it is about the relationship. And the way in which a relationship is built is through listening.

Listening is often mistaken for “doing nothing,” but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, in a coaching relation-

ship, the emphasis is on listening and asking powerful questions, not on telling, advising, or instructing.

In fact, try this little exercise with someone with whom you have a continuing relationship. The next time that person engages you in conversation, use some of the questions you’ll find here in this newsletter rather than give any advice or fix their problem for them. Pay attention to the response. Contrast that with your conversation in which you try to fix their problem. See the difference?

Actually, in coaching, the emphasis is always on the coaching relationship, not on the individual him- or herself. Think about that.

In the relationship it is important to focus with undivided attention on the person who is talking, summarizing what your hearing, inviting a person to go deeper or talk more, helping them unpack their resources, and asking for clarification.

Build a relationship by keeping in mind these kinds of questions: What are your passions? What energizes (or drains) you? What legacy do you want to leave? What are your strengths? Where are you gifted? What one thing would you like to change about yourself?

All of these are relating questions. There are more. Keep the focus on the other and the coaching relationship.



Maxim for the coaching relationship and for ministry in general: Resist the temptation to assume that things are going fine unless you hear otherwise!

The power of reflecting: Where are you now?

We all have seen and heard the ubiquitous Verizon guy going about the country asking, “Can you hear me now?” To a large degree, that is one form of the essential quest for meaning that all people seek. In the coaching relationship it is about helping people discern where they are so they know they are being heard. The reflecting part of the coaching relationship is about gaining perspective. In this stage of the conversation, we are seeking to gain a clear, accurate picture of where the person being coached is, where they’ve been, and where they want to go. Key steps in reflecting well include celebrating progress, clarifying direction and values, and recognizing and understanding obstacles. Reflecting helps to identify priorities and appreciate the reality of the situation.

One key cardinal rule in coaching is this: the more people do

or discover for themselves the better. So, never tell someone something they can discover on their own. As soon as you do, you become the “expert” not the coach.

The key questions around the reflect stage are things like: What can we celebrate? What’s really important for you? What obstacles are you facing? Where do you want to go? What outcome would you like to have? How committed are you?

In raising these questions as a coach, it is important to follow the lead of the person with whom you are working. Keep it simple, let them set the agenda. Does this sound like CPE? Well, in one sense it is, but coaching is conversation with a purpose and a focus.

Of all the questions above, perhaps the most powerful one is the question about commitment. One of the most power-

ful motivators for change in anyone’s life is dissatisfaction. We’ve discussed this before in relationship to helping communities of faith move from one place to another. In fact, John Kotter in his book, *Leading Change*, observes that the number one reason change doesn’t happen is a lack of urgency (dissatisfaction) about being in a new place. To be both hearers and doers of the Word, we must feel a sense of urgency (commitment) about what it is that God is calling us to do.

By now, a trend might be appearing as you read these words. Coaching is about asking good questions. Its never about telling. Every stage of the coaching relationship is centered on questions. Remember, good teachers don’t tell, they ask and thereby challenge us to learn.

Refocus: The need for bi-focal vision...

A third part of the coaching relationship centers about the issue of both far- and near-sightedness. I, like many people, am experiencing the signs of advancing age. I've worn glasses for about the last 18 years. My need for glasses comes about as a result of both myopia and presbyopia. Myopia impairs my ability to see clearly things at a distance. Presbyopia impairs my ability to see things up close. Many people have one or the other condition, not both.

Unfortunately, people often have both or one of these conditions when it comes to working with people in mission. The purpose of the re-focus stage of coaching is to provide corrective lenses for people so that they can begin to see clearly once again.

Myopia in mission is an impaired ability to see the larger picture and the vision of where it is God wants us to go. Presbyopia is an impaired ability to pay attention

to the details of what has to happen in mission in order to advance our community of faith toward God's larger mission.

In one sense, refocusing is the planning stage of a coaching relationship. This is the opportunity to give the vision that God is giving us some definition, specificity and clarity. Part of refocusing involves helping the person being coached to create a game plan along with concrete steps that can take that person and ministry where God wants that person and the ministry to go. In this sense, refocusing provides a bridge between good intentions and the actualizing of those intentions. In order to do this, it is important to keep shifting our eyes back and forth between the horizon and the individual steps along the way. This is akin, in one sense, to what it took to put an astronaut on the moon. The vision of going there was one thing; the steps in be-

tween the initial dream and getting there required refocusing all along the way.

Some folks object to planning. Common arguments against doing it include the belief that planning constricts the work of the Spirit; or that it hampers the creative process; or even the unspoken fear of failure (failure to plan is a plan to fail...self-fulfilling prophecy is realized!). None of this, along with other objections, is true. After all, Noah had to plan and be focused as he built the ark!

Powerful questions for refocusing include: What do you want to accomplish? What are some possible ways to get there? Which path will you choose? What will you do? How will you measure your progress?

The insight? Deep, lasting change doesn't just happen. It requires planning, strategizing, and keeping our eyes focused bi-focally.

Resourcing for mission...

We all know that having the resources you need to do a job means the difference between success and failure, accomplishment and frustration. The right tool at the right time is critical. Resourcing, in the coaching sense, is more about helping people connect with what they already have rather than providing solutions for them. Remember the cardinal rule on the previous page.

How do we, as coaches, determine if and when someone needs resources? Don't laugh at this. The simple truth is, if

you've done your work in terms of the relationship, people will just ask! But, they may not be quite so direct about it. Often, expressed puzzlement about how to accomplish part of their plan is a clue.

The healthy questions to ask in this stage include: What resources will you need in order to accomplish your goals? What resources do you already have? What resources are missing? Where will you find the resources you need? What can I do to support you?

Two things are important here. First, resources are legion: time, money, connections, knowledge, experience, personnel, support, training, curricula, music, websites, PowerPoint presentations, opportunity for discussion, feedback...get the point?

Second, God never brings us to a place for mission without providing the resources we need to do what God asks of us. Its Parable of the Talents time. Mostly, its about making connections and helping people see what they have.



*Life is not a
problem to be
solved;
Life is a
mystery [gift]
to be lived.
Thanks be to
God!*

(from embroidery in my
office, alternative wording
is mine)



EQUIPPING LEADERS
FOR MISSIONAL
OUTREACH

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Texas Center for Mission

Purpose statement:

"...do justice...love kindness...walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6.8

Solicitation is sought for additional articles to be included in this publication. Submissions to this newsletter will be considered when they follow the above purpose statement as well as the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Please submit requests for inclusion in this publication to

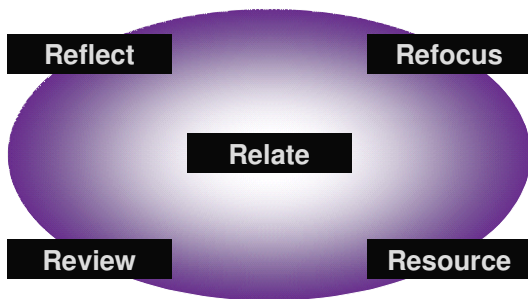
Rev. Stephen C. Kanouse,

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This is the model for the coaching relationship. Note what is at the center of the model. Relate. We always come back to relating as the center and the energy for continuing in conversation.

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Coaching Process



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Celebrate! Celebrate! Dance to the music...

The last stage of the coaching relationship is about reviewing. And there isn't a better description of what reviewing is all about than the word "celebrate!" The reviewing stage allows for a time of looking back at what has been accomplished. We can ask at this point, What have you accomplished? Its tempting to skip this stage, but don't. After leading the people in the wilderness for 40 years, Moses climbed to the top of Mt. Nebo and God showed him the Promised Land spreading out before him. God allowed Moses the gift of seeing the end product of his labor. God was faithful.

But know this, the reviewing can happen in intermediate steps as well. The questions to be asked at this stage are things like:

What's working? What didn't work? What are you learning? What needs to change? What remains to be done? What's next? What further training would be helpful?

The purpose in asking these questions is to help people realize they are on a journey. It helps to avoid stagnation. Also, when we celebrate, we validate our legitimate sense of accomplishment. In addition, we encourage an awareness that we must keep changing and growing or die. "I have arrived!" is one of the first signs of decline. In this stage, we hold the future (God's gift to us) and the past in tension with the present. We all need time to catch our breath. This stage allows us that perspective.