

COACHING FACTS

What is coaching?

The first time it was ever used, the word *coach* described a horse-drawn vehicle—a stagecoach that would get people from where they were to where they wanted to be. A modern bus does the same thing, and often these vehicles are called coaches. Most often today, coaches are people who help athletes and teams move from one place to another that is better and where they want to be. Even Tiger Woods has a coach to help improve his game of golf.

But coaches also help musicians, public speakers, and actors, who rely on coaching to improve their skills, overcome obstacles, remain focused, and get to where they want to be. Coaching is very popular in business and corporate settings around the world where “executive coaches” help managers and other business leaders deal with change, develop new management styles, make wise decisions, become more effective, cope with their hyperactive lifestyles, and deal with stress. Executive coaches work with people in business to help them move from where they are to levels where they are more competent, fulfilled, and self-confident than they would have been otherwise.

In summary, coaches guide people from where they are toward the greater competence and fulfillment they desire. *Christian* coaching is the art and practice of working with a person or group in the process of moving from where they are to where God wants them to be.

Why would anybody want a coach?

Coaching helps people who want to:

- Get unstuck
- Build their confidence
- Expand their vision for the future

- Fulfill their dreams
- Unlock their potential
- Increase their skills
- Move through transitions
- Take practical steps toward their goals

How does coaching differ from counseling?

Unlike counseling or therapy, coaching is less threatening, less about problem solving, more about helping people reach their potential.

- Coaching is not for people who need therapy to overcome painful influences from the past; coaches help people build vision and move toward the future.
- Coaching is not about looking back; it's about looking ahead.
- Coaching is not about healing; it's about growing.
- Coaching focuses less on overcoming weaknesses and more on building skills and strengths.
- Usually coaching is less formal than the counselor/counselee relationship; more often it is a partnership between two equals, one of whom has experiences, perspectives, skills, or knowledge that can be useful to the other.

What do coaches do to help others?

- **Coaches stimulate better skills.** Good coaching helps people anticipate what they could become, overcome self-defeating habits or insecurities, manage relationships, develop new competencies, and build effective ways to keep improving.
- **Coaches stimulate vision.** Many individuals and churches have no clear vision. They keep doing what they have done for years, without much change and with little expectation that things will ever be different. Coaches work with individuals and organizations (including churches) as they think beyond the present, more clearly envision the future, and plan how to get there.
- **Coaches help people grow through life transitions.** Whenever we encounter major changes in our lives—such as a new job, a promotion, a move, the death of a loved one, the launch of a new career, or retirement—we face uncertainty and the need to readjust. Experienced coaches better enable people to reassess their life goals, find new career options, change lifestyles, get training, reevaluate

their finances, or find information so they can make wise decisions.

- **Coaches guide Christians in their spiritual journeys.** Many believers understand the basics of the faith and aren't looking to be disciplined. But they need focused time with somebody who has been on the spiritual road longer, who models Christlikeness, can point out the barriers to growth, and can guide the journey.
- **Coaches speak the truth in love.** Good coaches know that sometimes the best way to help is by refusing to ignore harmful behavior patterns. Instead, coaches nudge people to deal with attitudes and behavior that should be faced and changed.

What happens in coaching?

Coaching is a relationship that most often is client centered and goal directed. Every coaching situation is unique, but usually coaches will begin by *exploring the issues* that the person wants to change. In what areas does he or she want to grow? Sometimes the person wants to be a better leader, better self-manager, or someone with a clearer perspective about where to go in the future. Christians in coaching may seek to determine where God appears to be leading them to go.

There is also the need for better *awareness of where the person is at present*. What are his or her strengths, weaknesses, abilities, interests, passions, spiritual gifts, values, worldviews, and hopes? Often the coach will use assessment tools to enable people to learn more about themselves.

Then comes *vision*. Coaches might assist people, organizations, or churches in formulating life-vision or life-mission statements. Coaches might ask, for example, "Considering your gifts, abilities, driving passions, and unique God-given personality, what is your life mission?" It takes time to answer a question like that, but without a clear vision, people, churches, organizations, and even governments tend to drift with no direction.

At some time, coaches will help people set *goals* and plan ways to reach these goals.

When *obstacles* get in the way, coaches challenge, encourage, and give accountability so the person can get past the obstacles and experience success. A coach can help you remove the blinders, allowing you to see what you may not recognize and give support as you move forward. A Christian coach is there for you, prayerfully listening to your concerns and asking questions that will give you clarity on your situation, get you past your own blocks, realize your God-given potential, and challenge you to be your best.

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