

Life Coaching

"A life coach is someone that looks to empower others by helping them make, meet and exceed goals in both their personal and professional lives." Is this our aim as we lead others in our churches and mission agencies?

Three words can be used to describe what a life coach does:

- 1. Guidance** - a life coach provides the tools and support for someone to broaden their perspective and open their mind, hence enabling them to reach their goals.
- 2. Empowerment** is to a large extent down to the individual to realise their own worth, which may have, for one reason or another, diminished. Life Coaching can really help here.
- 3. Improvement** - an individual can be helped to go from where they are now to where they want to be through Life Coaching.



Training
Brief

Building up the
body of Christ

We had a visitor at our church a couple of Sundays ago. She had not been involved in this kind of meeting for many years and wasn't sure what to expect. She was asked what she thought about the meeting (a risky question?) - her response was interesting. "It was like life coaching". What do we make of this? Do we coach people through their lives? This Training Brief reflects on this with a few thoughts about Life Coaching.

Biblical Life Coaching?

Some would argue that the whole bible is a Life Coaching manual, as God's word has much to say about how we can live our lives and make the most of the one precious life we have. Here are just a few bible verses that describe the need for and relationship of Life Coaching:

- As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 27:17)
- For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:10)
- I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. (Ephesians 4:1)
- I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Philippians 3:14)
- So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Katartismos

Does Paul give a mandate for Life Coaching in Ephesians 4:11,12? "these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.."

The Greek word *katartismos*, translated "equip" is also translated "prepare" or "perfect" in other versions. It could be said that the word describes coaching – the aim of which is to bring others to the a position where they can complete their role within the body of Christ.

Katartismos is one of the best New Testament words to describe the essence of this enabling and empowerment element of coaching. And reflects the role of coaching as mending, restoring, and inspiring, which all contribute to the body of Christ being built up. Coaching is an essential way to *katartismos* leaders. Coaches help leaders fulfil their God-given purpose and make their ultimate Kingdom contribution.

Coaching Skills

Here are some ideas of how to coach others (from www.makingbusinessmatter.co.uk)

- **Never Skimp on Building Rapport**
- **Establish Goals**

If your coachee hasn't got goals, you're not coaching them. Don't move forward with any more questions until the goal is clear.

- **Be Content Free**

Try to focus on being 'content free' when you are coaching; you don't need to be clear about all the details – only they do.

- **Trust Your Intuition**

All coaches worry about what questions to ask next. Just use your intuition and go with your curiosity – develop your own questioning style.

- **Don't Ask 'Why?'**

Avoid using the question 'Why?'. You can, however, replace it with 'What?' which opens up people's desires and motivations.

- **Highlight Interesting Behaviours or Language**

If you are noticing something that you find interesting in your coachee's behaviour or language, call it out. This kind of feedback can be very powerful.

- **Stay on Track**

- **Dig Deeper**

The issue that first presents is never the real issue. When you can dig deep and help your coachee figure out what the real issue is, you have reached the real gold dust of coaching.

Building up the body of Christ

I attended a seminar about preaching recently where a fascinating question was posed, it was something like this – who are the people that we naturally don't listen to and who are the people we more naturally listen to? Two of the answers were: we don't naturally listen to politicians and we are more likely to listen to comedians. In this Training Brief I want to take some time to explore this and see what we can learn from it. I'm not sure what conclusions we will make, but I'm looking forward to finding out what you think about this if you have time to respond.

Politicians!

We don't listen to politicians for a number of reasons (not just because of Brexit!) – here are a few reasons given during the seminar, please forgive the generalisations – there are exceptions to the rule:

- They toe a party line
- They lack credibility under questioning
- They have an ulterior motive
- They will personally gain from achieving power
- They lack integrity
- They lack empathy
- Someone else writes their speeches
- They are attacking
- They manipulate the truth for their own benefits
- They are out of touch with normal people
- They are hypocritical – say one thing and do another
- They don't want to negotiate or compromise
- They are corrupt

Maybe we took it too far during the seminar, but I feel sure that some of these comments are reasons why we don't listen, even if the comments are not true. There is a prejudice regarding some politicians.



Training
Brief

Building up the
body of Christ

Comedians!

If you have seen the observational comedy of people like Michael McIntyre, Jo Brand, Sarah Millican, John Bishop, Peter Kay, and maybe Jasper Carrott and Billy Connolly, will know they are easy to listen to.

Although there are other comedians we cringe to listen to! What's the difference? Here are some reasons:

- ❑ They speak about the truth – audiences laugh because they know that what has been observed is true. It is true about the comedian, and it is true in our own lives.
- ❑ They are real. Good comedians are comfortable with who they are and don't try to hide it. They are happy to talk about the own vulnerabilities, and audiences love that.
- ❑ They know who they really are and how they really think. Comedians know how they are perceived and accept this – they are not frauds.
- ❑ They plan and prepare all that they do, they give their comedy serious thought.
- ❑ They don't want to fail and so work hard at their craft – there can't be anything worse than trying to make people laugh and failing publicly.
- ❑ They hold people's attention by telling stories that have a beginning, middle and end and have a meaning.
- ❑ They understand their audiences and relate to them well, with a huge pinch of normality Listen to "Mark Steel's in Town" as an example of this

What can we learn from this

Firstly, we don't have to be a comedian in order to get people to listen to us, or we don't have to stop being a politician if that is what we are called to do. Please don't go away from reading this thinking that we must always have jokes in our preaching – I certainly did not learn that during the seminar. In fact the trainer said that we have such important things to talk about in preaching that we shouldn't waste time by telling jokes!

What I'm learning from all this is:

- ✓ Be real! God has called me to be me, to be the best me I can be. So I shouldn't try and be something different than who I really am. Don't be someone different in the pulpit – just be me!
- ✓ Tell stories – of course I already know this, and we have the great story teller Jesus to follow. And if I am going to tell more stores, learn to tell them well so that we can engage the congregation.
- ✓ Be honest and understand my own motives when I'm teaching and preaching. What am trying to achieve? Am I just trying to make myself look good in front of others? Am I just proving that I've read some Greek?
- ✓ Don't manipulate my listeners.

These are just a few things that I am processing from the seminar – there is more go. I am trying to be me, with these words from Paul echoing around my head "Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you" (1 Corinthians 7:17)

And one other thing I'm doing? I'm doing some comedy! I debuted with a friend of mine at the Leicester Comedy Festival and we were nominated for an award and have been asked to do an extended show in Leicester in June. You can find out more from our facebook page – look for Rodney and Russell!

Building up the body of Christ

Training Brief is produced by Brian Boley and you can access back editions by visiting www.christiantraining.org.uk

If you have any comments to make or want Training Brief to look as any specific issues please do get in contact brian@christiantraining.org.uk

Summer – what summer? I hope that over these few summer months you will have an opportunity to rest and relax and maybe think and pray about the future. I certainly find the summer a great time to review the year so far and consider the rest of the year and into the next. This Training Brief is all about looking forward, and there may be a couple of ideas here that might help you as you lead or as you are led.

Is it ok to plan?

In the practical advice of James there is a real warning about planning.

Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.

(James 4:13-17)

So is it right to plan? There are some cautions here, and these verses give us a context for our planning. What do we need to be careful of? What do we need to be aware of?



Training
Brief

Building up the
body of Christ

Biblical Planning?

The bible passage on the left provides us with some very useful guidance as we seek to plan. As with all of God's word we need to think through some questions to understand what God is saying to us as individuals. Here are some thoughts and questions that may help.

- What is our role in making plans for the future?
- We do need to be careful and guard against presumption
- We are ignorant – of course we are ignorant of the future. We do not know what the future holds and so our plans will reflect this. Our plans are based on the information we have available at the moment. In a few months time we will know more and so our plans could well be different.
- We are frail, we are only temporarily here, we should not plan thinking we will always be here to see the fulfilment of the plans.
- We are completely dependant upon God, his role is primary in our planning.
- "If the Lord wants us to..." is key to our thinking through and developing plans. We pray to discover our plans and see plans emerging in our prayers. Obviously God is sovereign, he has all authority and we would be wise to consider this through all our thinking.

And the last verse – if we see that something is good then we should get on with it, and not ignore it. Is there something so obviously the right thing to do? Then as Nike say in their advertising of sports shoes – Just Do It!

Starting Point

Planning is all about moving from here to somewhere else. And a good starting point is to work out exactly where we are now. This is a simple idea that can be applied to your church or mission agency, or to yourself as an individual. SWOT Analysis is a useful technique for understanding your Strengths and Weaknesses, and for identifying both the Opportunities open to you and the Threats you face – if you are honest. Here are some questions that might help:

Strengths

- What advantages do you have?
- What do others see as your strengths?
- How had God used you before?

Weaknesses

- What activities do you usually avoid?
- What are your weakest areas?
- Are there any things that hold you back?

Opportunities

- Are there others that could help you?
- What could you take advantage of?
- Are there needs to be addressed?

Threats

- What obstacles do you currently face?
- What changes do you foresee?
- Do any weaknesses lead to threats?

This may benefit from talking about your analysis with others. "Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success." (Proverbs 15:22)

Making Plans

Some ideas that may help as you look towards the future and make some plans.

- Recognise the motivations, timing, people and emotions involved with the plan.
- Identifying and involving stakeholders early increases commitment to a plan.
- Identify some guiding requirements - these may be found from related plans and will help create/confirm success criteria.
- Define the success criteria - this criteria should reflect the goals, objectives and values of the stakeholders. This will lead to a better plan.
- Prioritise the criteria for the plan – not just yours but others.
- What are the issues or concerns within the plan?
- Understand and manage the tasks within the plan.
- Establish realistic timing for the plan which prevents rushing to judgements.
- Manage emotions so as to improve the plan more objectively.
- Reuse knowledge from previous plans.

Building up the body of Christ