



Leaders

BOOK SUMMARIES

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Coaching 101

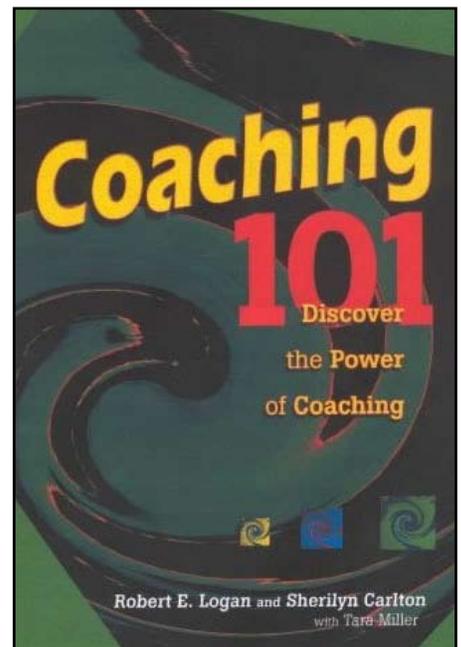
Discover the Power of Coaching

THE SUMMARY

A coach is someone who comes alongside to help others find their focus. A coach helps others get where they're going: they help people find their way and give them a sense of perspective. Within the framework of a coaching relationship, people can take stock of where they are, figure out what God wants them to do, and decide what steps to take to get there.

Coaching benefits the coach as well as the person being coached. A lot of potential coaches are swamped with responsibilities, often feeling like they don't have a lot of extra to give. However, God in his wisdom designed coaching relationships to be a blessing to both parties. After coaching, people are often able to "share the load" in a way that helps the coach!

In one sense, coaching is like being a Barnabas. Called the "son of encouragement" in the New Testament, he took Paul under wing and helped him step into God's calling, and later did the same thing with John Mark. The basics of coaching aren't difficult; anyone can learn them. What



About the Authors

Robert E. Logan is the executive director of CoachNet International Ministries and provides training, consulting, coaching and resources to over 40 denominations. He has also authored *The Church Planters Toolkit*, *Raising Leaders for the Harvest*, *Beyond Church Growth*, and *Releasing Your Church's Potential*.

Sherilyn Carlton is an experienced life and leadership coach. Through her business, Destination Coaching, she coaches leaders to discover, delight in, and fulfill their divine appointment.

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does a Barnabas do? He helps people answer three questions: Where am I? Where do I want to go? How will I get there?

Where am I? We can't take any steps toward a goal unless we first know where we are starting from. Some point of reference is needed. A good coach helps people find the "you are here" point in their lives so they can begin taking steps that will lead them toward their goals.

Where do I want to go? Moving towards any goal requires identifying clearly what the goal is. The problem is that toward the beginning of the journey, most people don't always know exactly where they want to go. The destination may be fuzzy or incomplete. Often they don't have a map, but just make it up as they go along. Coaching is a way to improve the map, even while on the journey.

How will I get there? Coaching is forward-looking and action-oriented; it provides people with the focus necessary to take their dreams and make them realities. Strategy and action steps are essential, for positive change requires a proactive approach. Coaching can help people take steps that move them toward the completion of the work God has given them to do.

There are a lot of misunderstandings about what coaching is. Coaching is *not* about giving advice or telling others what to do. Good coaches try to avoid that; rather, they try to help people make discoveries for themselves. People usually already know what they need to work on. The issue is about support. They want to know they don't have to navigate the difficulties of life on their own.

And coaching isn't about being an expert. There is knowledge involved, but the most crucial knowledge focuses on areas like listening skills and asking good questions. Coaches don't need to have all the right answers so they can tell people what to do. It's not about listening to the coach—it's about helping others learn to listen to God for themselves.

Coaching is really quite simple. You don't have to be an expert; anyone can learn to coach. And once you do, your ability to coach people—to reach them on a personal level—is what will separate you from the pack. Coaches make investments that last. By taking the time to learn some basic coaching skills, we can make a difference in the lives of others, and in our own.

Chapter 1: So What is Coaching, Anyway?

My father gave me the best definition of success I've ever heard. He said, "Success is finding out what God wants you to do, and doing it." The role of a coach is simply to help people find out what that looks like for him or her and then help that person figure out ways to do it. Coaches walk alongside people as they go through the process of clarifying goals, brainstorming, trying to execute plans, making revisions, and celebrating successes.

"Find out what God wants you to do, and do it" sounds simple, but the reality of it isn't so easy. It's hard to discover what God wants you to do, and even harder to do it. Despite the difficulty, it's worth the effort. Living rhythmically has enabled me to get free from busyness and guilt, and

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accomplish more of what matters most with less stress and frustration.

I haven't mastered it yet, but I've learned to change the question. I no longer ask "Is my life balanced?" Instead I ask, "Am I living in a good rhythm?" I encourage you to make the same change. Embracing that definition will transform your life and ministry. The secret is actually learning to listen to God. In a sense, then, you could say that "success is listening to God, and responding."

At its core, coaching is a spiritual process. It isn't always a nice, neat process; it's more of a journey. As coaches, we get to come alongside people on this journey to help them discover God's agenda—and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to see that agenda become a reality. My goal as a coach is to come alongside others and help them listen to the Holy Spirit for themselves. None of us know what God is calling others to do. Trying to push our own agenda is the quickest route to stifling a coaching relationship. Only as people discover for themselves what God wants them to do, and do it, will they begin realizing their full potential.

As coaches, we can't play the role of the Holy Spirit. Most people know what they need to address, and we need to trust in their ability to hear the Holy Spirit for themselves. Our job is to come alongside and draw that out, then walk along with them as they figure out what the next steps are. Often people just need someone to validate their desires and ideas and give them the courage to pursue them.

So how does that all happen, practically? Coaching is more of an art than a science. Since each person is different, every

coaching relationship will be somewhat unique. But it's also true that there are specific competencies that all excellent coaches have, and they can all be learned. The core of these we call the "five R's of the coaching process": relate, reflect, refocus, resource, and review.

- **Relate:** Establish coaching relationship and agenda
- **Reflect:** Discover and explore key issues
- **Refocus:** Determine priorities and action steps
- **Resource:** Provide support and encouragement
- **Review:** Evaluate, celebrate, and revise plans

Although there are five stages in the process, coaching isn't a purely linear process. You may be well into the resource phase when you realize you need to focus on reflecting again for a bit. That's ok—the coaching process is intended to be flexible. As a coach you need to stay open to the Spirit's leading and aware of the natural flow of relationship.

Coaching isn't just for experts and specialists. The basic methods are simple enough that anyone can learn them. Everyone needs people to come alongside them on their journey. As coaches, we have the privilege of coming alongside others to help them along their journey—to become what God wants them to become and to accomplish what he wants them to accomplish.

Chapter 2: The Power of Relating—Don't Skip the Small Talk

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Sometimes we forget that at its core coaching is a relationship. It's about qualities like trust, connection, support, and understanding. The relationship is what gives power to coaching. If we skip over building a solid foundation in our hurry to get more accomplished, our strategy will backfire. Coaching that leaves out the relational element will be ineffective at best. If you think of the people who have had the greatest impact on your life, you probably aren't thinking of a stranger; you're thinking of someone you know personally, who took the time to invest in your life.

Coaching is a unique kind of relationship in that it has a purpose. It isn't about just hanging out, but without a relationship-building component people can feel like projects instead of people. The focus of coaching is to help the other person accomplish what God wants him or her to do. That means the person sets the agenda, not the coach. They negotiate together a relationship that is defined and purposeful.

So how do you build an effective coaching relationship? The two best ways to get to know others are also two of the most obvious—listen and ask questions. It's surprising how often these simple things are overlooked.

Listening is what builds trust, and is how we help people think through their goals, options, and feelings.

Real listening is rare, but tremendously powerful. It's actually a gift that we give to people. A good listener focuses completely on the other person, giving that person undivided attention. The interesting thing is that as I listen to people and help them

think through their goals, they will solve their own problems 70-80% of the time without any input from me.

Listening skills do not come naturally for most of us. They need to be learned, and we all have room for improvement. Here are some key listening skills that we can develop:

- *Focus.* Give undivided attention to the person who is talking, without letting your mind drift.
- *Summarize.* Mirror back to people what they are saying.
- *Invite.* When a person talks a bit about a topic and then stops, ask for more.
- *Unpack.* Exhaust the speaker's resources before sharing any of your own ideas or solutions.
- *Clarify.* Sometimes we are quick to think we understand but aren't really on the same page. Check your assumptions by asking, "Here's what I'm hearing you say..."

After listening, asking good questions is the next most important skill for building a strong coaching relationship. Powerful questions can help people feel valued, which in turn helps build trust. They also help to clarify expectations at the beginning of a coaching relationship. Making sure you're on the same page at the beginning can save a lot of time and energy in the long run.

Another significant byproduct of listening and asking questions is that people often come up with their own solutions. Coaches commonly fall into the temptation of providing their own solutions for people instead of helping them find their own answers. We all like to fix problems, but

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that isn't what coaching is about. When people find their own solutions they are much more likely to follow through with enthusiasm than when other people give them answers. When coaching, remember three simple rules:

- Don't give advice.
- Don't tell people something they can discover on their own.
- Don't fix the problem for them.

Coaches don't need to know all the answers. They just need to know how to help people find them. Ultimately, coaching is about helping people think for themselves within the context of relationship.

Chapter 3: The Power of Reflecting—Where Are You?

Gaining perspective is the central task of the reflect stage. We need to know where we are, where we've been, and where we want to go. Key steps in reflecting include celebrating progress, clarifying direction and values, and recognizing obstacles. Reflecting well is important; it helps us know what our priorities are and see our situation clearly.

Throughout the coaching process, the more the people being coached do for themselves, the better. That's especially true in this stage. The best way to help others get a clear picture of where they are and where they want to go is by drawing out their own desires and following their lead. People need to set their own agenda.

Following are five key questions that can help people through the process of gaining

perspective during the reflect stage.

1. *What can we celebrate?* I like to begin every appointment on a positive note, which helps people not focus only on problems.
2. *What's really important?* This helps them sort out issues of priorities and values and moves them toward a sense of God's calling on their lives. To do so we need to recognize the gap between what's important and what's being thrown at us every day.
3. *What obstacles are you facing?* Sometimes obstacles are legitimate; there are limits on your time and energy. Other times they are simply barriers we've constructed in our own minds. Either way they need to be recognized.
4. *Where do you want to go?* After clarifying what's really important and identifying obstacles, we need to loop back and focus on where we want to go. What's next? What issues need to be addressed?
5. *How committed are you?* Another way to ask this is, "What are you willing to endure to see your vision become a reality?" For change to be successful, we need to estimate the cost and want it badly enough to pay that price. (It's easy to generate good ideas without taking action).

The reflection phase is a time for getting specific about the past and the present. The biggest temptation during this phase is to jump forward to next steps before taking adequate time to evaluate what has already taken place.

Hopefully it is becoming clear by now that asking good questions is an essential part of the coaching process. Every stage of the

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coaching relationship should be laced with powerful questions. So what makes a good question?

The simplest rule of thumb will carry you far: ask open-ended questions. An open-ended question cannot be answered with a yes or no. If you ask people, “What issues do you see as most critical right now?” they must think independently and generate options. We more naturally lean towards closed questions; subconsciously we are often trying to limit other people’s options when we do.

Example: compare “Do you want to address this issue next week?” with “What would you like to address next week?” The latter promotes more thinking and generating options. Remember that coaches ask questions in order to help others discover what God wants them to do.

Asking good questions serves to decrease the pressure on the coach. One of the biggest reasons people avoid coaching is the fear of not having all the answers. A coach doesn’t need to have all the answers, only some good questions. For most, that’s a relief. As with any kind of ministry, the most important qualification for coaching isn’t what you know; it’s who you are. If you run into a roadblock, ask the person you’re coaching: “Where do you think we should go from here?” It’s actually an advantage to not have all the answers. This frees people to think for themselves. Good questions encourage creative thought and allow people to reach their own conclusions.

Chapter 4: The Power of Refocusing—What Will You Do?

Refocusing constitutes the planning stage. After getting a general sense of direction in the reflect stage, we can now move onto giving our vision some definition. It’s time to create a game plan and come up with some concrete steps that can take us where we want to go. Without a plan no progress can be made.

Refocusing acts as the bridge between good intentions and actual results. Refocusing confirms our destination, direction, and priorities, but it also turns them into steps that will help us move forward.

There are several barriers to successful refocusing:

1. *False beliefs about planning.* Some people feel planning is constricting, and may cause them to miss opportunities that could arise. (Planning actually promotes freedom). Others think planning is unspiritual; they think being led by the Spirit has to be spontaneous.
2. *Fear of failure.* The potential for failure is an unspoken reason many resist planning. However, without plans we seldom make progress.
3. *Living by “shoulds.”* Often people pursue goals the way they think they “should” rather than the way that would work best for them. Coaches need to be aware of times people have false expectations and give them permission and encouragement to change. The same applies to the goals themselves—sometimes people pick goals they think they “should” have, rather than ones they really want.

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There are five key questions to ask in the refocusing stage.

First is *“What do you want to accomplish?”* This asks us to clarify our goals in light of the present realities. We aren’t looking for general direction here, but rather specific goals that are concrete and measurable. The more clearly you can define the end, the more successful you will be at figuring out a strategy to get there.

The coach’s task here is to keep unpacking people’s ideas, and help them to clarify what they want to accomplish. Listen, summarize, and then ask for more. “You said you wanted to exercise more; what would being fit look like for you?”

Second is *“What are possible ways to get there?”* A common mistake people make is to come up with only one way to accomplish the goal. Making better decisions comes with multiplying options. The more options generated, the better the final decision is going to be. There usually needs to be at least three to make a good decision.

The third question is, *“Which path will you choose?”* This is the point of decision; it’s time to commit to a particular strategy or path to accomplish the goal. After generating some options, it’s time to evaluate them and select one. A good plan needs to be realistic and functional, taking current life circumstances into account, and recognizing that we are not always going to be at our optimal level of functioning.

Next comes, *“What will you do?”* which asks us to develop a specific action plan. We need to look at the who, what, where, when, and how. What action steps need

to be taken? Who will take them? How will they be accomplished? The most important thing here is to be specific. The major reason people don’t accomplish their goals is because they have general intentions but not specific action steps.

A great question at this point is, “What do you sense God wants you to do between now and the next time we get together?” Only the next step needs to be identified, not a complete plan. The plan itself isn’t that important; the planning process is everything. Once we begin, our plans will keep changing to fit with reality or they will become irrelevant.

Finally, we need to ask, *“How will you measure progress?”* We need some milestones along the way to let us know how we’re doing. The small successes and accomplishments let us know we’re moving ahead.

Deep, lasting change doesn’t just happen—it requires planning and strategizing. As coaches, we need to help people pinpoint their areas of blockage, then guide them as they come up with concrete steps that will move them toward their goals. Doing the hard work at the refocus stage is often what makes the difference in terms of bringing about desired results.

Chapter 5: The Power of Resourcing—What Do You Need?

Once the person being coached has clarified his goals, the next question is: “What resources do you need to get there?” A coach’s role is to connect people with the needed resources they have, and to look beyond their immediate circles for

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possibilities. Having the right resources and using them effectively is often the difference between struggling along and possibly not reaching goals versus reaching them.

Resourcing means applying the right tool at the right time. It's one thing to have a plan, it's another to have the resources to implement that plan. Resourcing is more than recommending a good book. It could include time, money, connections, experience, support, websites, training opportunities, etc. A coach can help people brainstorm about resources in a way that helps them not be limited to one or two of the many options available.

Finding resources can be challenging. While we live in an information age—books, seminars, and websites abound—that very abundance can interfere with finding what is needed. Where do you start? There are two common themes to look at in the resourcing stage:

Other people—think networking. Often there are other people who have the experience or expertise you need. We can feel like we have to meet our goals on our own; we don't. God often puts other people in our lives for a reason. We can build teams and draw on other people's gifts to get things done.

Time (one of our most elusive resources). The first thing we should do is look at what we can eliminate. Peter Drucker writes, "I have yet to meet an executive who couldn't throw 25% of the demands on their time into the wastebasket." Before adding more tasks to your busy life, consider what you can stop doing.

A coach's role is to find ways to help people

think through creative options for finding what they need. Coaches can be uncertain about how to do this, or about how to be involved in the resourcing stage. Should I just give them answers, or let them figure it out on their own? The best way to find the answer is to ask the person being coached, "What can I do to support you?" some coaches hesitate to ask because they're afraid they won't be able to deliver. But no coach has all the answers; if you don't hit on the right resource the first time, you can always try again later. Resourcing is an ongoing process, not a one-time event.

Gathering and using resources well is more than just an add-on; it can make the difference between a good idea and actual results. For most people, resourcing goes hand in hand with the implementation of the action plan. There is always an interplay between finding the resources to take a step in the plan and actually taking the step. Taking the time to gather the needed resources is often what holds the whole plan together; it's like the mortar between bricks—it holds the whole structure together.

Chapter 6: The Power of Reviewing—Let's Celebrate!

The final stage of the coaching process is the review stage, where we look back over our progress. It can be tempting to skip this stage and just jump into the next project, but the growth you can gain in this stage is significant. Reviewing successes builds confidence and courage to take more steps, and honest self-evaluation contributes to our growth in maturity. There are several questions I ask in the review stage:

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What's working? I start my coaching sessions with this question. Many people focus only on the problem and not on what is working, which gives them a slanted perspective. Starting with an eye on the positive helps us gain momentum as we realize that we are making progress. We need to celebrate those things, even if we haven't reached our final destination.

What didn't work? Together with our first question, this serves to assess progress. Only when we see the reality of the situation can we make improvements. Sometimes seeing what isn't working leads directly to an area that needs to be worked on; other times it may reveal expectations that are too high. Note: it's easy for people to resist this question out of their fear of looking like a failure. People are afraid they will be shamed; a good coach helps them learn from past mistakes so they can move forward in a new way.

What are you learning? This question shifts the focus away from failure into an empowering perspective. Whether plans are going well or poorly, there are always things to be learned. Without taking the time to review, those lessons can be lost. Most people don't slow down enough on their own to think through their actions and lessons to learn, so as a coach, if you help them do so you will increase the odds that they will be effective in the future.

What needs to change? The nature of plans is that they can be changed, and the best plans are designed with built-in evaluation times. Circumstances change and unforeseen things happen, so mid-course corrections are both necessary and good. They allow us to learn from mistakes quickly and offer the chance to jump on current opportunities.

What else needs to be done? Those times we are making mid-course corrections often create openings for new plans or projects. Change almost always has that effect. Likewise completing a project frees up time and energy to go in a new direction. Just remember that any ideas for new projects must come from those being coached, rather than being suggestions or assignments from the coach. The coach's role is to ask questions designed to provoke thought about the future.

What further training would be helpful? As people progress, they often realize they have new areas to develop, which can lead to new agenda items in the coaching relationship.

Chapter 7: Guidelines for Powerful Coaching Relationships

How do you set up a successful coaching relationship? While there are always unique variables, there are some key pieces you need to have in place to position yourself for success.

First, *establish clear expectations*. Providing a clear structure and expectations right in the beginning is essential for establishing and maintaining trust. Knowing what to expect and understanding a coach's role play a big part in making the relationship safe, which is a prerequisite for progress.

If you are involved in a coaching relationship, it works best to have regularly scheduled meetings. The "call me when you need me" approach rarely works. 60

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minutes should be the maximum length of a meeting (usually 30-45 will suffice).

Second, *establish a beginning and ending*. Just like with the individual sessions, the relationship as a whole should have an agreed-upon start and end point. People often assume they will know when they're done, but that is seldom the case. Without the structure an end date provides, people can feel like they are just going over the same material again and again.

Most coaching relationships last 3-12 months. No change becomes permanent in less time than that. There should also be a maximum time frame. Coaching isn't intended to last forever, because the goal of coaching is to move people to independence. Going longer than a year tends to breed dependence, the opposite of what we want.

Third is *accountability*. Accountability is one of the essential underpinnings of the coaching relationship—it's what gets things done. One easy way to implement this is by having an accountability form that gets filled out at each session. When people put their goals for the next session in black and white, they become more definitive. Sometimes just knowing that they will review those goals with their coach at the next session is enough to spur people to action.

Confidentiality is a key quality, since coaching requires people to be vulnerable enough to share their challenges and shortcomings. People are choosing to trust their coach with that information, and honoring that trust requires that information shared in confidence be kept confidential. The specifics of what that means should be clearly defined in the

beginning, so there is no confusion.

Setting goals is a key to success. One of the most common mistakes new coaches make is not having the people they are coaching establish an agenda. If both parties know ahead of time that three specific issues need to be addressed, coaching meetings will be much more fruitful. Coaching is most effective when specific, measurable goals are set. A general goal like "become a better leader" can be a good starting point, but it won't be as helpful in the short term as a more specific goal like reading a book.

Note: it's easy for people to pick goals they think they *should* have instead of ones they really want. No amount of coaching can make people do something they don't really want to do!

A final key is to *define roles*. As you work to set realistic expectations for the relationship, keep in mind the three rules of coaching:

1. The person being coached does the work.
2. The person being coached does the work.
3. The person being coached does the work.

If people don't do the work themselves, they won't learn. Letting people know about these rules upfront helps avoid false expectations about "help."

Taking all these together, it's wise to put them all in one place at the beginning of the coaching relationship, in a coaching agreement. This agreement outlines the expectations clearly so people know what they are getting into. If there isn't a clear agreement here, it's better to find out in

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the beginning than later.

Setting clear guidelines at the beginning of a coaching relationship is crucial. Take the time necessary to lay out clear expectations for how the process is to be approached. When we know what to expect, we are freed to focus our attention and energy on the task at hand, setting things up for success from the beginning.

Chapter 8: Where Do I Go From Here?

What can you do to begin growing as a coach? We offer two recommendations: keep it simple, and get started. The temptation is to wait until you know what you're doing. Unfortunately, you can't really know what you're doing until you start doing it. No one begins coaching fully competent. In order to get there, we need to get some experience, and that includes making mistakes and learning from them.

Becoming a better coach means getting started and finding out where you need to grow. Once you identify growth areas, there are lots of resources you can draw from. Just get started. Here are some first steps we suggest:

1. Act like a coach by practicing a coaching lifestyle. When your child asks a question, engage in conversation instead of just giving a quick answer. Practice asking questions whenever you can.
2. Practice in triads. Find two other people interested in coaching and practice on each other. Meet monthly, and in half-hour increments one

person acts as coach, one receives coaching, and one observes. Rotate until everyone does everything. It's a great way to develop your skills.

3. Cultivate coaching in your relationships. Become intentional about integrating coaching into your existing relationships. Coaching is just about listening and asking good questions, and that will benefit any relationship.
4. Get a coach. The best way to learn to coach is to be coached.

Developing coaches have a lot to learn: listening, asking questions, relating, reflecting, refocusing, resourcing and reviewing. Mastering these skills will help us become more effective coaches. Our part is to be as prepared as possible.

As we close, we need to remember one central fact: It's God who is ultimately at work. God is the one who works through coaching relationships, causing growth and transformation. As coaches, we get to partner with him in that work. It's an amazing privilege!

The Pastor's Perspective

Coaching 101 is probably the best introduction to the hot area of coaching that I've seen yet. Logan gives an easy to understand overview of coaching that also clarifies how coaching is different from counseling.

The key idea I took from the book is the clear emphasis on who does the work—the person being coached. The job of the coach is to come alongside and help the person

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think through things and come up with their answers—their own goals, their own action steps, their own resources, etc.

On the one hand, I clearly see how that will end up helping people grow and mature. Assisting people in stepping out of a weakness mindset (my words) and into an “I can do it” mindset is a powerful thing. On the other hand, I know that I really love teaching, whether it is in a public setting or 1:1. Teaching, to some degree, involves giving people answers; in that regard coaching and teaching are two very different things.

Coaching does come naturally to me—I love asking questions and helping people think through things. I also love giving them my perspective (which usually means the right answer) after doing that. But as someone who coaches and has been in different coaching relationships over the years, I can testify to the power of asking good questions and resisting the temptation to give answers. Instead, asking more questions in order to help people continually dig deeper has transformative power.

True confessions—as I reflect on this approach, one of the challenges for me is that I really *like* being the expert or the answer man. I don’t usually put it in those terms, but a pastor gets a lot of affirmation for being “wise” when he gives people good answers. Learning to coach the way Logan talks about it, where the people are doing the work and they get the “praise” when things go well, forces me to take a deeper look at my motivations. Am I really pursuing my people’s maturity? If so, I may need to question more and answer less.

Whether you are involved in a coaching ministry or not, learning to ask questions with the goal of helping people become stronger and more independent (in the best sense of that word) is a worthy goal. It can be highly transformative for people. Even if you aren’t coaching, learning to ask good questions is a tool you want to have on your belt. It’s powerful.