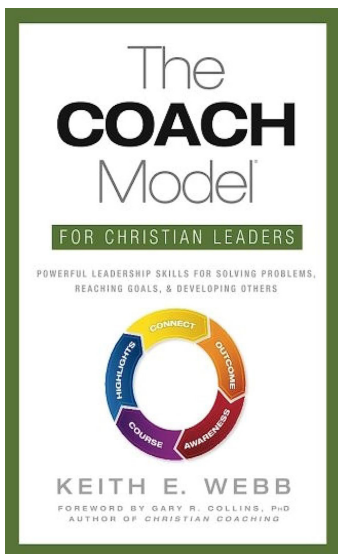


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## The COACH Model For Christian Leaders

### THE SUMMARY

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#### Coaching Mindsets

I have a serious illness. It afflicts many without regard to education, economics, or ethnicity. People of faith are not immune. In fact, they may have a slightly higher rate of infection, but not by much. It's called *know-it-all-ism*. Know-it-all-ism affects the ability of the mind to take in information and process it without prejudice. The illness causes those afflicted to be blinded to opinions, answers, and solutions other than their own. People affected with know-it-all-ism are all around us. However, the ability to spot know-it-all-ism in others may be a sign that you yourself suffer from this illness.

I write this as a fellow learner, someone who has suffered from know-it-all-ism. I am not naturally gifted in listening, asking questions, drawing out, or empowering. I've learned valuable coaching skills that have transformed my interaction with other people. Ideas and advice still come to my mind, but I've learned how to control the urge to tell people what to do and instead, I now can use questions to draw out thoughts and ideas. The process has been a long but incredibly rewarding journey. I hope you'll join me as we take a more in-depth look at what it means to coach others.

#### Learning Without Being Taught

How you define coaching reveals much about the values, mindset, and approach you bring to working with other people. You will act in accordance with your

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beliefs. In this book I define coaching this way: Coaching is an ongoing intentional conversation that empowers a person or group to fully live out God's calling. Let's separate and take a look at each concept in this definition.

**Ongoing:** Coaching can be a one-time event, like a short spontaneous conversation. However, coaching is most successful over a period of time, through regular interactions.

**Intentional Conversation:** "Intentional" does not describe a pre-determined outcome, but rather expected outcomes and methodology. A coaching methodology utilizes processes and communication skills designed to keep the coachee in the driver's seat reflecting on ideas, making decisions, and taking action.

**Empowers:** The overall result of a coaching relationship is that the coachee feels empowered. Throughout the coaching relationship, she has set the agenda for each conversation, created her own action steps, and made her own decisions. There is no manipulation or dependency on the coach.

**A Person or Group:** Coaching focuses on an individual's reflection, growth, and forward action. Groups can also be coached. A group of people with the same coaching issue can be coached simultaneously.

**Fully live out:** Coaching helps people to thrive, excel and to live out their full potential, rather than just making do.

**God's Calling:** Here is where my definition diverges from many others – both secular and Christian. I believe that a coach's job involves more than just helping another person to achieve whatever he or she wants. The coach and coachee must also pay attention to God's larger purposes. Coaches help people to become what God would have them become, and to do what God would have them do.

Does coaching really work? Can you actually help someone without giving them ideas, suggestions, or advice based on your own experience? Yes! And this is why coaching is so exciting. You don't have to have the answers for other people; you simply assist them in thinking about their situation and allow the Holy Spirit to work through your questions and their answers.

Coaching is an application of the Action-Reflection Cycle. If we can understand the effects of our actions (or inaction), we can use that greater clarity and understanding to further adjust our thinking and behavior and produce further improvements. If we fail to learn from our experiences, we can end up repeating avoidable and costly mistakes.

Acting, then reflecting on the effect, then adjusting the action is called single-loop learning. It is the simplest form of the Action-Reflection Cycle. This kind of learning is based on performing a number of similar, yet improved actions. Even though some additional improvement can be achieved, this level of reflection doesn't often result in innovative breakthroughs. Without someone or something else to stimulate our thinking, we tend to remain in the "more of the same" type reflection. It's easy to get stuck in a fixed pattern. This is when coaching can help.

Coaching enhances the Action-Reflection Cycle by encouraging a person to reflect beyond incremental improvements to the current actions. Coaching around the coachee's assumptions, goals, and meaning can provide a new perspective and lead to breakthroughs. This is called double-loop learning. The coachee acts and observes the results. Then rather than simply adjusting the original action to improve it, he steps back and reflects on the broader assumptions that led him to that action in the first place. Changes at the assumptions level can produce significant differences and will automatically produce ideas for new actions, producing different and hopefully better results. These results can then be used to review and perfect the strategy, or reexamine the assumptions further.

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I've shared with you the theory behind coaching. Now let me introduce you to the practice through the acronym C.O.A.C.H. The COACH model follows a pattern that has proven to reproduce successful, holistic, and empowering conversations. It harnesses the power of the Action-Reflection Cycle and creates a flexible conversion guide that allows the coachee to reach significant milestones that produce insight, learning, and responsible forward movement. As you will see, the five steps of the model spell out the word "coach."

The COACH model is pure process. The content, the destination and discoveries along the way are determined completely by the person being coached. Many people find that this model gives them the confidence to coach anyone through whatever it is that they want to work on. It's important to remember that coaching isn't about providing answers; it's about asking thoughtful questions.

## Step 1: Connect

The first step of the COACH Model is to Connect. The purpose of connecting is to begin the coaching conversation on an informal and personal note that helps to reestablish rapport since the previous conversation, catch up a bit, and leave space for the person being coached to share whatever is on his or her mind. We don't want to be mechanical in our conversations, but rather we want to be open, caring, and holistic. When provided with an opportunity to go "off task" and talk about whatever they want, people will share about all sorts of things, often bringing closure to things that have been on their minds, and allowing them to fully focus on the rest of the coaching appointment. Begin the conversation with the simple question, "How are you?" Nine times out of ten you'll hear the standard answer, "Fine thank you, and you?" But the question also opens the possibility of sharing any variety of things.

The Connect stage of the COACH Model has two parts. First, engaging with the person you are talking with to build rapport; and secondly, following-up on action steps from the previous coaching conversation. During the first coaching conversation there won't be any action steps to follow-up on. However, each appointment thereafter will build on them. We will discuss the Follow-Up near the end of the book.

After this short relational connection and follow-up of action steps, it is time to move into the current conversation and find out what the coachee wants to work on and what result they would like to achieve by the end of the conversation. By beginning with the end in mind, both the coach and the coachee can move forward with confidence and focus.

## Step 2: Outcome

Coaching is an intentional conversation. It is a journey that will result in something meaningful for the person being coached. Rather than a meandering walk without a destination, a coaching conversation usually begins by clarifying where the coachee wants to end up. A clear understanding of the desired outcome near the beginning of the conversation helps in several ways. First, clarifying the outcome of the conversation allows the coachee and coach to be clear on the intended result of the conversation. The coach understands what the coachee wants from the conversation and can partner with the coachee to work towards it.

Second, a clear outcome helps guide the conversation and keep it focused on what the coachee wants to achieve or explore. A conversation without an intended outcome can be direction-less – unsure of where it is going and how it is going to get there. A clear outcome, on the other hand, gives both coach and coachee something specific to work towards, decreasing the chances that the conversation will wander down unneeded rabbit trails.

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Third, the results of the conversation can be measured against the intended outcome. As the conversation progresses, it's helpful to check in midway through the conversation and ask the coachee if he or she is satisfied with the progress so far, and whether or not the conversation needs to be adjusted in order to achieve more meaningful results. At the end of the conversation it's easy to know if the conversation has accomplished its purpose by simply comparing what actually happened against the intended outcome.

A coachee-driven agenda for the coaching conversation is an important feature in the philosophy of coaching. Adult learning theory tells us that people are more engaged in learning if they have a choice in the topics and can apply it right away. Coaching taps into both these motivations by asking the coachee to choose a topic that is relevant and immediately applicable. It is critical to find out what the coachee considers to be the most valuable topic for that particular coaching conversation. The coach doesn't decide this. Nor does the coach assume that the coaching topic will be a continuation of the previous conversation. The topic may be the next step in a continuing conversation, or it may be something entirely new. It's the coach's job to draw the topic out of the coachee and then clarify it. Through dialogue, the coach and coachee determine how to best use the coaching appointment.

Asking for the conversation outcome is only the first step in determining the end result of the conversation. Next you need to help the coachee think through what he wants to work on, and determine the outcome for the conversation. Through dialogue, the coach and the coachee shape the outcome into something that is both useful for the coachee and achievable during the coaching conversation. Use questions to explore, clarify, and focus the coachee's topic, problem, or goal. As the coachee defines his intended results through a dialogue, he increases his own awareness and gains clarity on the issue even before thoroughly discussing the topic. Just defining an outcome is often welcome relief for an overwhelmed coachee.

*Exploring questions* examine the topic that the coachee wants to work on in order to understand it more fully. Don't be afraid to dig below the surface. Many times coachees give a "how-to" topic, like time-management. While this issue may be real and pressing, it may be more helpful to move quickly from the surface "how-to" issue to a deeper "being" discussion. Explore the topic with questions like "What's going on in you that is keeping you from doing this?" Once the coachee can sort out what's happening inside them, they often can quickly address the "how-to" part of the solution.

We all make assumptions about the meaning of words or phrases. Sometimes our assumptions are correct and other times they are not. *Clarifying questions* allow you to explore what the coachee means by the words they are using. Clarifying questions are not just for your understanding, but also to promote greater clarity in the coachee. Clarification usually produces a more straightforward and clear explanation. Pick up on vague or meaningful words or phrases the coachee uses and ask for clarification.

*Focusing questions* help to narrow the coaching topic to something that is both manageable to achieve during the length of the conversation, and immediately helpful to the coachee. It's not unusual for coachees to suggest a broad or vague topic. Don't worry. There are simple ways to narrow the topic to something manageable. Ask the coachee something like this: "That's a big topic, what part of that would you like to focus on today?" Again, don't be tempted to assume you understand what the coachee would like to work on, or to narrow the topic for the coachee. Instead, use questions to help the coachee separate the broad topic into smaller topics, and to prioritize what today's conversation will be about.

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As the outcome becomes more specific and clear, test your understanding by asking the coachee to restate his or her outcome. Or you can summarize the outcome yourself. Be careful not to go beyond what the coachee has said by adding meaning or specifics the coachee didn't mention. Asking the coachee for his or her desired outcome and then using exploring, clarifying, and focusing questions to sharpen the topic will ensure that you are working on what is most important and meaningful to the coachee. At any time during the conversation you can check on your progress by referring back to the outcome. Ask something like this, "Are we making the progress you hoped for in our conversation?"

## Step 3: Awareness

Discoveries – insights both large and small – are a fundamental part of the coaching experience, and are the ultimate goal of the Awareness step. Coachees make discoveries about themselves, their situation, their potential, their actions, their inaction, their assumptions, their values – the list goes on and on. The thrill of discovery produces new thoughts, emotions, perspectives, and determination. Coaches facilitate these discoveries and help coachees take action based on their insights. As their perspective expands and their current situation becomes clearer, coachees see more options for action and change. The greater the discovery, the more readily options for action will present themselves.

It is commonly believed that the key to finding answers and getting unstuck is through more information or knowledge. So we seek experts through books, seminars, podcasts, and blogs, hoping they will give us that new little tidbit of knowledge – the key to solving our problem. Breakthrough, however, rarely comes through new knowledge, because looking at additional information from the same perspective just keeps us on the same road.

Coaching takes a different approach. The focus is not on new information or knowledge, but rather on a new perspective. A shift in perspective – seeing what we already "know" with new eyes – can lead to the discovery of new roads. With a new perspective we make discoveries about our situation and ourselves. Insights come through pursuing these new lines of thinking. As a result, we are immediately presented with new options for action that are significantly different than before. We move from being stuck and "having tried everything," to seeing many new possibilities and feeling hope once again for success.

*Powerful questions* are the tools that help coachees to discover new roads and to find answers. Many people are not naturally reflective, and we all have a limited perspective. Coachees stimulate or even provoke reflection with questions that cause coaches to think more deeply than they could on their own. Powerful questions come from profound listening and engagement with a person. What makes a question powerful is its ability to provoke reflection in the other person. Many of us are used to telling people about our own reflections rather than drawing out theirs. To ask powerful questions, it's helpful to keep three principles in mind:

1. *Coachee or Me?* Powerful questions are for the benefit of the other person. Not the asker. Questions are based on the other person's agenda, not the coach's. A coach-focused question is, "Tell me about the conflict." Since the coachee knows about the conflict, the question is for the coach. A coachee-focused question would be, "What would an excellent resolution of the conflict look like?"
2. *Forward or Backward?* Powerful questions are forward-moving, not backward-looking. This principle builds on the first; if the coach isn't providing solutions, then she needs to know very little background. A backward-looking question would be, "Why did you organize it that way?" The coach wants history, but it may not be needed. A forward-looking question would be, "What approach is your intuition telling you to take?"

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3. *Building or Correcting?* Powerful questions stimulate discovery toward action and do not subtly attempt to correct the coachee. No matter how impartial you try to be, you will still make mental judgments about the coachee's situation. Don't focus your questions on correcting the coachee, but rather on ways that will allow the coachee to build. A correcting question would be, "Why haven't you delegated this to someone else?" A building question would be, "What help do you need from here?" Just using the word "delegation" will provide a suggestion, if not a judgment.

Even as we use questions, we may still be sharing our ideas. My-idea questions are a vehicle for our own ideas or suggestions. This type of question is the easiest to ask because it is basically giving advice in the form of a question. My-idea questions flow directly from our own perspective toward the solutions or the next steps we see. An alternative is to ask open questions. The response to an open question can go in a hundred different directions. Asking open questions requires the coach to give up control of the conversation and be willing to be go where the Holy Spirit and the coachee leads. That lack of control can be scary to a coach.

The technique of creating open questions involves taking your idea and broadening it to its root topic or category. By asking about the broader category, you encourage the coachee to reflect and find their own answer. So, rather than asking, "Could Susan help you?" Ask, "Who can help you?" Immediately the coachee goes from one possibility (Susan) to a multitude of possibilities (anyone). Both my-idea questions and open questions follow a pattern. Typically, my-idea questions begin with the words would, could, are, is, and does, while open questions begin with what or how.

When the coachee presents their situation to us, it's natural that we will see it immediately from two perspectives, our own and the coachee's. It's easy to get stuck on either road – either perspective. Instead, the coach can ask questions from different perspectives, or what we call angles. Asking questions from different angles allows the coachee to reflect on their situation from different perspectives. I use angle questions quite freely. Sometimes I have a hunch that there might be something to be gained from exploring a different angle. Other times, I simply ask an angle question to see what new reflection it may provoke. The goal is to raise awareness and increase the perspective of the coachee.

Another way to raise awareness is to give the coachee feedback. The goal of feedback is to provide useful information that helps a person improve and develop. This information can reinforce positive behaviors, or point out blind spots. Feedback is both reinforcing and corrective in nature. However, just about everyone feels defensive when faced with critical feedback. So, how can we give feedback that people will still hear? The answer is simple. Don't give it – instead generate it.

You can generate feedback from within the coachee using a simple three-step process:

- *What did you do well?* Ask about what the coachee did well. Explore these behaviors and the results. Reinforce these positive behaviors.
- *What could you improve?* Ask the coachee in what way they think they could improve. Talk about what that improvement might be and what results they would expect to see.
- *How would you do it differently next time?* Generate some possible future alternatives. Coach through how the coachee will do it next time.

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With new roads, discoveries, and increased perspective come new options for action. Gone is the slow progress of the old road. In its place are new roads with all sorts of possibilities for action and application. And action and application is the direction that the coaching conversation moves to next.

## Step 4: Course

Reflection and discussion are not ends in themselves. Reflection must move beyond warm thoughts and clever insights to application. Action steps put feet to insights and discoveries, and helping people move into action is one of the key roles of a coach. Without action steps, discoveries and insights are just good ideas.

Coaching helps coachees to create action steps that will move them forward toward their goal. While each action step is 100% up to the coachee to decide, through dialogue, the coach asks clarifying questions regarding what the action step will look like, how it will be done, and realistic timing. Good coaching balances ambition (or lack of it) and practical planning, resulting in greater forward movement.

Action steps are the transitions from thoughts and insights to action and application. There are three elements that, if included in the action step, will help the coachee be more successful in accomplishing them.

- Simple enough to complete, yet significant enough to build momentum.
- Moves the coachee toward their goal.
- Doable before the next coaching conversation.

Some action steps cannot be completed in a week or two. If an action step is too large, the coachee may become lost in the complexity or discouraged by an unexpected turn of events as they try to implant the action. Instead, divide an overwhelmingly large action step into different parts or smaller action steps. A step-by-step approach, using small relevant action steps, better supports a coachee as she tries to reach her goals. Each step forward is a small win, encouraging the coachee on to the next small win.

Finally, it's best if each action step is completed before the next coaching conversation. The ongoing nature of coaching mimics the Action-Reflection Cycle. The coachee reflects and creates new action steps and then implements them. During the next coaching conversation, the coachee reviews the previous action steps and creates a new plan of action.

A common mistake in forming action steps is to make them too large or complex. To take advantage of the power of small wins, multiple smaller action steps are a better way to go. It is the coach's job to help the coachee break larger action steps into smaller, more manageable steps. This way the coachee can tap into the motivational power of small wins as they work through their action steps.

How do you know if an action step is too large? Ask the coachee how he will accomplish the action step. If he hesitates or says he doesn't know, coach him through how he will implement each one. The coachee will finish with a detailed plan to move forward with three or four mini action steps for each larger one. The accomplishment of each mini action step will motivate the coachee to keep going. This is the power of small wins.

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A good action step is like a mini vision statement that describes the preferred future. Properly formed action steps may motivate the coachee, and will form the basis on which to evaluate learning, growth, and performance. In creating action steps, it is helpful to make them SMART:

- **Specific** – It is clear and unambiguous.
- **Measurable** – You can observe or measure its completion.
- **Attainable, yet a Stretch** – It is challenging, yet possible to complete. • **Relevant** – It is meaningful to the coachee.
- **Time Limited** – It will be completed by a set date.

Some action steps are difficult to make specific or measurable. Action steps regarding feelings, attitudes, emotions, character, temperament, and spirituality can be very difficult to make tangible. It's difficult to see, touch, taste, smell or hear a new emotion or character quality.

The process of making intangible action steps tangible involves identifying the tangible things behind the intangible goal and making those things into the action steps. Linking an intangible action step to tangible behavior makes the action step more specific and measurable – it can be observed – and thus is more achievable. Ask for the attitudes and behaviors behind the changes. Ask how these changes could be observed if achieved. Ask what the changes would look like.

The various techniques for coaching action steps can be combined into a three-step dialogue. By coaching action steps, we help the coachee to think through what actions would be relevant, what they will do, how they will do it, and when. Planning these things prior to attempting actions steps provides a much greater chance of a positive result.

- *Ask for Action Step:* Depending on the flow of the conversation you may first ask for options, or go straight to commitment to action steps.
- *SMARTen Up the Action Steps.* Coach towards SMART action steps. This includes dividing any too-large action steps into several smaller steps to tap into the power of small wins.
- *Confirm the Action Steps.* Confirm the action steps and make sure that you and the coachee have them written down. This step makes following-up on action steps much easier.

## Step 5: Highlights

The coaching conversation is now at the final stage. Take a few moments at the end of your conversation to give the coachee an opportunity to summarize what he or she has learned and state it succinctly. This will cement the learning in the coachee's mind and give the coach valuable feedback at the same time. No one likes a conversation with an awkward conclusion or unclear ending. Sometimes it's difficult to know how long is long enough. Highlights provide a clear closure to the coaching conversation. A summary of the conversation completes it like tying a ribbon on a gift.

Highlights have a tremendous learning value as well. Highlights give the coachee a chance to simplify the complexity of an hour-long conversation into a few short statements. It cements the coachee's learning, and also provides the coach with valuable feedback about what the coachee found significant during the conversation.



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It is also good to get the next appointment into the calendar at this time. Some coaches and coachees have a consistent enough schedule to set regular days and times for the coaching conversations, every Tuesday at 10am for example. My coachees and I do not. Travel, meetings, kid's sports, etc., make it difficult to predict a regular schedule a month or two in advance. No problem. Set the time and date for the next coaching appointment before you finish each conversation. Doing this in-person is much easier than exchanging email later.

This brings us to the end of the coaching conversation. From here the coachee will go and work on their action steps. A week or two later the coach and coachee will meet again for another coaching conversation.

### Follow-Up

At the conclusion of most coaching conversations, the coachee commits to a number of action steps which are to be completed before the next coaching session. Ideally, the coachee will have two or three action steps that help them move toward their goal from different angles. It is best to follow up on action steps during the Connect stage of the next coaching conversation. Following-up on action steps is critical to the overall learning process. It is at this point that the Action-Reflection Cycle comes full circle, and each subsequent coaching conversation repeats the cycle again.

The purpose of following-up is to debrief the coachee on actions taken. This process helps to reinforce forward-moving thoughts and behaviors, generates learning and insight, and allows the coach and coachee to troubleshoot difficulties while creating next steps. As you make a habit of following-up on action steps, you embed subtle accountability into the process. A coachee's motivation for completing action steps is naturally increased just by knowing that the coach will be following-up on them. The coachee is fully responsible for their action steps. Following-up with them in an empowering way will further promote that responsibility and motivate them to achieve more.

A simple model for following-up on action steps is: What? So What? Now What? This model allows you to naturally explore to find out what the coachee did, didn't do, and the result (What?). From there, the model encourages deeper reflection for the purpose of discovering the lessons to be learned from those actions and results (So What?). And finishes by extending that learning into other areas of the coachee's life (Now What?). Plus, it's easy to remember, and that counts for a lot when you are in the moment with someone.

*What?* The What step is designed to raise the coachee's awareness and make her conscious of her thoughts, emotions, and behaviors before and during the action step. This requires the coachee to dig below the surface to identify many aspects of what happened. For example: what she did, what she chose not to do, what her thought process was, and what emotions were evoked as she did all this.

*So What?* Helpful reflection goes beyond simply what happened to the meaning behind the experience. Ask about the implications of taking this action step, looking for both effects and process. Look for logical connections between thoughts, emotions, actions and their effects. The effects are immediate results to the action step itself, and the process includes the new thoughts, behaviors, and experiences involved in accomplishing it. Ask what conclusions the coachee can draw from all of this. Encourage the coachee to summarize his or her observations, insights or learning for the purpose of reinforcing it and making it easier to remember. Insights and discoveries more often come from the process, yet coachees often overlook this area.

*Now What?* At this point, the coachee has a clear picture of what he did and the results of doing it. He has also generated insights and learning from the experience. Now we want to reinforce that learning by extending it into the

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other areas of his life. The simplest way to do this is to help the coachee find other applications for his insights and learning.

Coachees will not fully complete every action step every time, and that's okay. Sometimes the action step wasn't specific enough, or the coach may have imposed their idea as an action step. There may have been changes in the coachee's circumstances, a crisis, or other demands of life that distracted the coachee. Or it's possible that the coachee just fell flat. Progress in coaching is measured by what the coachee accomplished and by what the coachee learns. Following up on incomplete action steps is a chance for the coachee to increase self-awareness and learning, as well as to make corrections leading to successful completion of their goals.

The process of following-up on failed or incomplete action steps is similar to the pattern of What? So What? Now What? The key to following-up on incomplete action steps is not to move too quickly towards correcting what didn't work, but rather, taking time to review and reinforce all forward movement before diagnosing and fixing what didn't work. From there, create a new and revised action step that takes into account past difficulties. Use insights from the coachee's recent experiences to plan a way forward. It's a two-step process. First, assess the coachee's commitment to complete the action step, and second, reform the action step in light of the coachee's learning.

Before charging ahead and assuming the coachee will complete the action step in the upcoming weeks, stop and ask if the action step is still relevant. There are a number of reasons an action step may no longer be needed. Circumstances change, the completion of other action steps may have accomplished the original intention, or new insights may have given the coachee a different approach to the problem. Occasionally a coachee will decide on an action step, and later realize it's not a priority.

If the coachee does not want to continue with the action step, move on to debriefing the other action steps and then transition to determining the Outcome of the remainder of that day's coaching conversation. If the coachee is committed to accomplishing the action step, continue and have a brief conversation about how to reform the action step to make it more relevant.

If done well, Follow-Up is one of the most productive parts of the coaching conversation. Many people learn by doing. Asking them to reflect on what they did and what they learned from it can produce more insights and discoveries than they experience in the Awareness stage of the conversation. Once you've followed-up on action steps, transition to Outcome and ask the coachee how they would like to use the remainder of the conversation.

### Coaching Others

The word "Coach" is both a noun and a verb. To be a coach (noun) is to have a position, role, or title of coach. Some people seek qualifications and titles, thinking that once they've acquired these things they will be ready and able to coach others. Professional level coach training will provide a tremendous benefit, but coaching is not about the certificates – it's about being helpful to others.

Just coach (verb) people! In normal conversations, listen well. Be curious, even if you think you already "know." Ask questions. Ask about the other person's ideas before jumping in to share your own. Finish conversations or meetings by asking, "What could you do to move forward with this?" Meeting regularly will help people, regardless of how proficient you are in your new coaching skills. Don't worry about using the whole COACH Model for each conversation. Use whatever part is helpful to that person and that conversation.

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Who do you know that could use some coaching help? Forget about distance and national borders. Using the phone or your computer you could coach a student away at college, a relative in another city, a co-worker in another office, or someone in your town, when you're otherwise too busy to meet.

## Next Steps

The ability to coach begins with the coach's mindset. How do you want to be as you coach? Here are some helpful mindsets to pay attention to and consider.

- Look for the Holy Spirit to teach and remind.
- Move from problem-solver to solution-discover.
- Value the coachee's ideas and solutions over your own.

As you engage in coaching conversations be aware of what is happening in you. Right after a conversation, take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions. During the coaching conversation:

- What thoughts did you have?
- What emotions were you feeling?
- When were you distracted or not fully present in the conversation? What caused this?
- What would you do differently next time?

It is even better to have someone else coach you through these questions. It will help to meet with someone else who wants to improve their coaching skills and is willing to discuss these questions.

Don't expect that you'll be a master coach right from the start. It takes time and a lot of hard work. You will be helpful to people, however, perhaps more helpful than you are now, and that will produce a fruitful impact in the lives of those with whom you interact.

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## The Pastor's Perspective

Keith Webb gives a really good overview of effective coaching, with lots of practical tips. As someone who coaches other pastors and leaders, I found it to be a good review of good coaching practices as well as giving me some new ideas to incorporate in what I do.

His comment on “defining desired outcomes” at the beginning of each coaching call was particularly helpful. I have seen how I can dive in with someone I’m coaching, ask questions, draw them out, etc. but without a clear outcome in mind we can meander. What is true of coaching in this case is true of life in general; having a defined outcome or place you want to land, or a specific goal in mind makes it much more likely that you will arrive where you want to go.

I also liked his breakdown of different kinds of questions that can be asked. One of the biggest challenges I face in coaching (as opposed to mentoring or consulting), is to try to stick to questions, in order to really help people do their own thinking. I’m not convinced that it is never appropriate to give input or information, but I do believe that learning to ask good questions is incredibly powerful. It’s just harder, at least for me. As I get better at it, it gets easier, as most things do.

Ultimately, I think learning the art of asking good questions, and listening well, is a critical skill for every leader, regardless of whether you are in an official coaching relationship with someone or not. It will help you lead better, and will draw out the best in your team or organization. I think Webb serves us well by fleshing out what that can look like.