



## Leadership Letter

### *Stepping up with coaching?*

Two disciples were on the road to Emmaus and Jesus approached them and asked, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” Luke 24:17-19

Jesus wanted to find out what had taken place in their understanding of events over the weekend. So he asked some open-ended or essay questions – What’s this conversation about, and what things have taken place? It’s often very helpful for us to verbalise what we think about a situation to someone else. We are able to hear it for ourselves and it becomes clearer and more defined and more importantly, REAL. At this point in the conversation, Jesus turns from a coaching approach to a mentoring approach and shares what has REALLY taken place that was beyond their understanding.

**Asking questions:** We need to have the right tool for the right job and coaching is a wonderful tool in order *to help others use their knowledge, draw from their previous experience and think through the possible options, decisions and actions through the art of listening and asking good questions.*

Jesus was a master at asking questions rather than always giving answers. To Peter he said, “Who do you say that I am?” To the lawyer who questioned, “How do I inherit eternal life?” Jesus asked, “What is written in the law?” Then in response to the question, “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan and asked, “Who acted as a neighbour to the one who fell among robbers? In the synagogue he asked, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” How many times did Jesus ask, “Where is your faith?” Questions starting with what, where, when and how always draw out our thinking processes.

**Holding back opinions:** It is very easy for us, well at least me, to share my great wisdom and depth of knowledge, along with my clear opinions to those who ask for help and even those who don’t! (just kidding) As leaders we sometimes would do well to take a humility pill, if there was one available, to save people from our opinions that we proudly think is what they need. Coaching skills come in useful in every relationship including those in marriage and family. The coaching approach listens and asks for understanding through open questions rather than sharing opinions and often making judgements.

Leaders are expected to know the answer to every situation and question and so try to come up with them whenever asked. Whether there is a generation gap, cultural gap, gender gap or responsibility gap, coaching skills help you as a leader, mentor, advisor, friend or parent understand what their thinking

processes are, what is going on inside them and what broader perspective is needed. Using coaching skills has helped me immensely over these past years to help people with major decisions to think it through for themselves. In these situations, zipping the lip or holding back on opinions has been harder than I thought it would be and I have needed to be very intentional about listening.

In mentoring we share from our experience and what we believe to be the truth and in so doing share opinions. Hopefully this doesn't come with any arrogance or sense of pressure that this is the only right way of believing. Individuals having heard your input then need to make up their own minds and commit to those truths in their own time. In this way the truth becomes a value for them personally. In mentoring we are asked to impart what God has given us, in coaching we are asked to draw out what God has put within the other person. So coaching and mentoring are valuable and have their place.

**Silly questions:** Jesus was on his way from Jericho with a crowd and blind Bartimaeus called out to get Jesus' attention. Jesus knew what the need was, but asked what some might call a silly question, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51) When faced with a situation like this, as leaders we can sum the situation up from our own perspective and come up with an answer. However, we can't know the mind of others and that's why there is a need to ask good questions. They draw out the real intentions. Jesus perhaps wanted to check that Bartimaeus recognised not only his need of seeing but the change of lifestyle it would create once he was healed. There would be no more begging as he would need to work. No more depending on others. It would mean a new life of responsibility. From the text it doesn't read that Jesus spent an hour helping Bartimaeus to think it all through but I'm sure this would have been the direction of Jesus' questioning. Jesus however, sees his heart and gives the healing that is desired.

**It's not about me:** As a leader, I can get a buzz from teaching, passing on revelation, sharing tools and applications that have helped me. It's especially gratifying when people actually give feedback and say how blessed they were from my talk or preach. Mentoring too, can be so much about passing on my wealth of wisdom and experience. So many aspects of leadership are 'me' focused. How did I perform, how did my strategic approach make an impact?

The difference in coaching is that I am in the background. I am not the agenda. It's all about the coachee. It's their agenda, their thoughts, their opinions, the options they generate, their decision and their action steps. I am the facilitator, the questioner, the one who from behind the scenes asks helpful questions that can help to bring breakthrough. But at the end of the day it's ALL THEM! This tests our real love for people. It reminds me of Philippians 2:3-4 "Count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

**It's about the future:** One of the reasons I like coaching is because the focus is on the individual working on decision making, problem solving or planning that will make a difference for today and tomorrow. It's future oriented. It's all about how I get from where I am right now to a better place. It's about giving

confidence that the person is able to think through their own future (with the Lord) and to implement some plans. I am convinced that all leaders need to have this skill under their belt.

### **Example of a coaching appointment**

**The agenda/goal:** I was coaching someone recently who wanted to see an increase in their financial support. (their broad goal) With a few clarifying questions we were able to identify a more specific goal of 'seeing an additional 300 euros/month raised in the next 6 months.'

**Exploring:** At first I asked some questions to get some background. What was their attitude to the idea of raising their support? What success had they experienced up until now with their support raising? What had been the difficulties? What had God been saying to them about the topic? As a coach I am listening between the lines. I am paying attention to anything shared that is significant and can be a hindrance or can make a difference in solving this problem or helping them in their decision or plans. What are underlying beliefs, values, thoughts and feelings that impact how this person will walk out their decision and calling?

It turned out that the individual had been functioning in missions on a support base for many years but had recently experienced a number of these supporters retiring or changing their giving parameters. So it felt like they were having to start again and weren't sure that they had the confidence to see the money raised.

**Options:** So now I have a clearer picture of what is happening. My questioning then went in the direction of "What ideas have they had so far for seeing the need met? We explored many options including options that they initially ruled out because they didn't think they would be interested in taking them. One option happened to be, taking a job that they would be paid for. It's amazing how many missionaries have a cottage industry on the side that can help significantly for holidays, special events or miscellaneous expenses. Other options included the more obvious – praying about possible contacts, putting together a fund raising personalised letter, visiting and personally talking through and asking them to pray about supporting with a specific amount per month, producing a brochure, spending a significant time praying each week, communicating regularly with a two monthly news update with personalised notes, .. The longer we spent the more options came.

**Decision:** When we felt like we had exhausted the ideas, I then challenged the individual to think about the options and choose which one or ones they felt they wanted to commit to. Sometimes there is a longer process where the decision is to spend the next two weeks praying into the situation and gaining God's heart. Other times there is a clear sense of – "this is what I am to do." In this case they decided to go for a one day a month teaching role in a university that had emerged.

**Actions:** The action steps are vital to tie down what the individual is going to be doing as a result of your time together. This individual's action steps were one: to contact the university in the next day to follow up on the teaching opportunity, and two: to put aside 3 hours a week to start preparing for the

role. At your next get together, you as a coach will be asking them what progress they had made on their action steps and so the coach/coachee relationship provides some accountability that can add that motivation to actually get it done. The important thing is to make SMART action steps. Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time oriented. Generally a coach will have sessions every two weeks giving the individual some time to follow through.

So there you have it, a simple overview of what coaching is about. Even if you don't see yourself becoming a coach as a main ministry, the skills are so useful in everyday life and I would encourage you to receive some training.

Until next month,

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**For those interested in a Coaching Course:** There is a training programme just for you.

**Europe:** It starts in August 2015 with the opportunity of receiving 8 coaching sessions online, followed by an intensive week workshop training in January 2016 in Malaga. The next stage is for you to take on clients yourself and at the same time receive some follow up coaching to help you hone your new skill. Website coming soon. Contact: Anja at [anja.spain@gmail.com](mailto:anja.spain@gmail.com)

**Application Deadline:** 27th May 2015. **Initial Orientation Teleclass:** 19 August 2015 **On-site Workshop:** 17-23 January 2016 in Malaga, Spain

**USA:** For more information: <http://cmiprograms.org/training/focos/>

**Asia:** For more information contact: Keisa Capers [keisac@cmiprograms.com](mailto:keisac@cmiprograms.com)

This is what others have said about the course:

*"I have learned a whole new way of relating to people that allows me to really see God's grace in each person in a fresh way. I work a lot with the 20+ age group who don't respond well to an authoritarian leadership style. So, learning a way that gives them liberty and room to experiment has opened up these relationships to a new depth of respect and appreciation for each other. It's great for team dynamics too."*

*"It has helped me ask better questions, enabled me to have others take ownership of their lives and solve their own problems. It has helped me become a better listener and one who is able to guide a person through a process leading to action and resolution."*

*"I have benefited from having consistent encouragement and support from a coach through this "wilderness" season of my life. It has been truly life-giving to have my identity, passion, and calling affirmed on a regular basis. Coach training has enabled me to grow in confidence, recognizing that I have much*

*to offer others just by being "present" (and as I implement coaching skills)."*

*"It's given me confidence to offer help to others. I have become more self aware and better able to support people through powerful questions."*

*"I am much more aware of asking rather than telling in normal situations. The training in Malaga was excellent. I felt prepared to begin coaching."*