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Sunday



Congregational Coaching

By Jane Creswell, CICC, CCMC

A pastor of a very large, beyond what we would call “mega-church,” had a mega problem. His congregation had grown exponentially and it seemed they all had a complaint or need that demanded immediate attention. The days flew by, filled only with an “earful” from every complainant asking for leading, guiding and ministering to this huge and newly commissioned flock. The congregation degenerated into near chaos. The pastor was at wits end. He needed help planning and to meet the needs of his members and knew that soon he would be completely spent, with nothing to give. As if divinely sent, a congregational coach discerned the problem, offered both a correction and a learned opinion. Through the thoughtful questioning and inquiry of the coach, the pastor (he didn’t know why he hadn’t thought of it himself!) to solve his immediate problem and save his church. The coach helped the pastor develop a method to utilize the gifts given to his man, allowing him to provide a structure - an authority hierarchy of sorts - through which all these needs and complaints could be heard, filtered and ultimately solved. The result? The pastor delegated this work to those among the congregation who were uniquely gifted in administrative skill and trained himself up for effective leadership.

This is one of the best examples of congregational coaching on record. You may remember the pastor. His name was Moses. His “congregation” was probably the largest church ever assembled in one place – perhaps upwards of three million people who needed the attention of their leader in a very big way. The coach? He was a wise man named Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law. You can read of this account in Exodus 18. Jethro was not a trained coach, or even a pastor, yet his coaching skills are legendary. Within the Christian coaching community, this story is a classic demonstration of the foundational tenets of coaching itself. The New Testament accounts of our Savior’s patient and compassionate mentoring and training of His disciples show us the Greatest Coach – Jesus. The Scriptures are filled with the essence of coaching.

What is congregational coaching? We could pretty much relate the Moses and Jethro story here and leave it at that, but today’s church carries with it the advanced 21st century structure, personnel, goal setting, product delivery and return on investment issues common more to the mega-conglomerate in the corporate world, than to a fledgling, wet-behind-the-ears desert community church formed thousands of years ago.

What has found phenomenal success in the corporate environment is just now making its way into the Christian congregational world. I have been privileged to see it in action. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (B.S.C.N.C.) has developed a unique approach called Coaching for Congregational Leadership.

For many years, like most denominations, North Carolina Baptists have devoted multi-million dollar budgets to the development of centralized programs designed to be used on a congregational level, saving local churches the huge investment of staff and budget that would be required to generate these materials. However, in spite of this well-meaning and well-funded venture, overall, the results have fallen well short of the potential envisioned. Why? Every church is different from the one next to it, with diverse memberships, different

What is Coaching?

Not too many people compare coaching in the corporate environment to coaching. Most think of coaching as a mutual relationship. Coaching is much in alignment with executive, corporate, and personal coaching. However, the two are very different. The best and most effective definition of coaching I have found is a mutual relationship that follows a predictable path to superior performance sustained improvement in relationships.” (Dennis “Coaching for Commitment”)

BASIC COACHING SKILLS

Observing, Listening, Questioning, Encouraging, Challenging and Endorsing/Encouraging.

There are many existing models that define the coaching process. One example of a model for coaching is “Moving through the Gate” by Drs. Lee Smith and Jeannette (CoachWorks® International) utilized by Corporate Coaching training programs:

- 1. Establish Focus**
Where are you now, where do you want to be? What is most important to be achieved? What do you want to go?
- 2. Discover Possibilities**
What is possible? What are your options?

callings, ministries, focus areas and giftings. Centrally-developed “one-size-fits-all” programs were too generic, too big in some cases, too hard to implement given the unique situation of each congregation, or even too watered down. The churches were trying to use these programs – but they just didn’t fit. The churches found that additional work was needed to customize the programs to fit their individual needs, and began to question the whole idea of centrally-developed materials. In addition, by generating non-specific programs, it’s harder to come back after the fact and allow the Holy Spirit to guide unique congregations in using the gifts of individuals and groups within a specific church.

After years of this kind of failure to really meet the needs of individual church bodies, the B.S.C.N.C. took a hard look at the situation and kept coming back to the question: Why produce these big generic programs? Why not look at each individual church - with its unique gifts, abilities, callings and desired ministry - and then tailor for that congregation something that best utilizes the strengths and unified purpose to go and make disciples?

North Carolina Baptists took a lesson from corporate America, and got the message loud : coaches are the most qualified to do just what needed to be done. In its original introductory boardrooms across the globe, coaching was initially viewed with some skepticism as a via profitable tool for healthy change. That attitude soon disappeared, as the coaching industr skyrocketed into a corporate clamor for experienced coaches who, through their focus on people, can affect company wide return on investment more than ever hoped or dreamed. coaching is no longer a long-shot or a “soft” commodity. It is a must for the organization th compete and succeed in this rapidly changing business world.

Today’s Church must ask the same questions any good business person will ask of their c Church really effective in its mission of going and making disciples? Is the Church really u reach the post modern world? What does it mean, really mean, to be sold out to the Lord, and soul and mind and strength to Him, as an individual, and as a corporate body? What c be part of a community of faith, a unified body seeking the same goals? And just exactly w goals, and how do we hope to meet them? Plenty of money and resources are being thro these questions, especially from a denominational and centralized level. As the B.S.C.N.C questions, they found the answers could be quickly realized, and solutions formulated with planning, through coaching. Coaching is a powerful tool with which the Holy Spirit can cus ministries of individual congregations.

To reach the full Kingdom potential, North Carolina Baptists knew that they had to train an own internal coaches; there are a lot of churches out there, and lot of work to be done. Fo Coaching for Congregational Leadership was born, and has grown into a highly structured grounded and effective ministry-enhancing program. It involves a one day Coaching Awar Experience that imparts the what, why, and how of basic coaching, and its powerful impac introductory experience, participants are invited to participate in the certification process. (participants are selected for their potential as good coaches, demonstrated skills and aptit in general, and passion for the work.) This next level is a two-day Coaching Certification L Experience where the participants receive more advanced training in coaching skills, are i coaching models, have opportunity for practice of skills, and focus on group coaching. (Th distinctions between individual and group coaching.) Following this intensive training, each coached by an experienced Christian coach for four months, and also takes part in monthl teleclasses where they can discuss what they are learning and experience group coaching them by mentor coaches. The final step is to participate in a two- to three-day experience on understanding congregational behavior in greater depth, helping the participants to exp the actual context of congregational coaching. The new coaches are then issued a certific congregational coach, and are made available to congregations who desire this new coac individualized ministry. As a part of their continuing education (coaches never stop learnin congregational coaches are also required to attend at least two continuing education cour: re-certified every year.

These congregational coaches are a diverse group, often consisting of former church con:

with what is known or

3. Plan the Action

*This is the time for str
to get from where you
want to be.*

4. Remove Barriers

*What stands in the wa
removed? Remove it!*

5. Recap

*Go over the plan agair
says, “just do it!”*

That is the nutshell ver

*Obviously, it is overly :
Coaching is composec
and techniques all focu
the individual (or the c
congregation) to achie
If you read the Exodus
Jethro’s coaching of M
all these steps and ski*

denominational employees who truly desire to inspire and equip the churches in their area in a more meaningful way, and pastors who seek new tools and methods for growing their into effective partners in the Great Commission. Instead of generating expensive but unus ineffective programming, congregational coaching is bringing real answers to the real nee church. One newly trained and active coach shared that for the first time in his life he was thing that God had called him to do. He had tried being a pastor, and had moved to every position he could, in an attempt to find the work he was meant to do. As a congregational knows he is making a real difference - people's lives are changing.

Is it working? Congregational coaches actively working with individual churches have repc successes and eye-opening revelations about real ministry. They have seen congregation their combined strengths and abilities to work together as part of a community of faith. The up to be the pastor – to preach, instead of doing all the multiple tasks of the church. Roles shifts are made. One of the biggest shifts noticed has been the pastor moving from the ce congregational universe to an integrated part of the community all working toward the sarr contributing with the gifts given to them for that purpose. One congregational coach share

“All of my ministry responsibilities have been transformed! Not only coaching relationships now approach the churches we serve. I am more comfortable with this...this is just me! It v other night to see a former finance committee become an insight/management team...mo' program budget to developing a 'values driven budget.' This was developed through coacl consulting. A new process has been developed through coaching. Their reaction was awe be the glory!”

A pastor and staff of a transitioning church have found encouragement, help and support to face the trials and challenges of moving an old downtown congregation forward into more effective ministry, reaching a new generation. They recently told their coach, “We could have never hung in this long and been this effective without your support and encouragement...”

Another denominational leader reported, “During our coaching sessions I have detected a definite comfort zone in which I have been used to working. One in which I could control the ultimate outcomes. I needed to release this need to control and recognize that there is more than one way to get to a certain place. I realized that if I am going to help people grow, they must be honored, respected and valued, the way my coach relates to me.”

“During our coach have detected a d zone in which I ha to working. One ir control the ultima needed to release control and recog is more than one i certain place. I rea m going to help j they must be hon respected and val my coach relates

There have even been reports of individuals who have come to a career and faith crossro: moment of reality and enlightenment, where they have honestly questioned their own visic a way that set them on a more deliberate path of personal spiritual fulfillment. Congregatic can result in life changing shifts, transforming individuals, groups and whole churches into effective tools in the Master's hands.

*For more information about Congregational Coaching, visit the Hollifield Leadership Center (part of the B.S.C.N.C.) www.hollifield.org, and read about the Coaching for Congregational Leadership program. The International Coach F offers a wealth of information about coaching in general at their website www.coachfederation.org. Those interestec coaching should pick up a copy of Gary Collins' book by the same name *Christian Coaching* and Thomas Bandy's *I Change*.*

Jane Creswell is a Certified Internal Corporate Coach and Certified Master Coach whose background includes 20 y with IBM, beginning as a programmer for the Space Shuttle, progressing to Senior Manager of Software Engineers, the company's first internal coach, where she founded the IBM Coaches Network. Jane developed a process for Cr Culture within Organizations, and has spoken worldwide on this subject as well as Corporate Coaching, and Coach She now develops and delivers most of the Coaching for Congregational Leadership material highlighted in this arti currently President of her own company, Internal Impact, a company focused on “strengthening organizations from reached through her company's website: www.internal-impact.com.