

SPIRITUAL COACHING

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SPIRITUAL COACHING

Dedicated To Coach Mike Walker

I am going to confess something that I have not shared with many people. I was part of a secret society.

Don't get too alarmed. It was during my days of playing high school football at Archbold High School in Ohio. I was a "F.O.O.L." Now before you any of you begin to make any smart comments I better tell you what the acronym stood for: the "Fraternal Order of Offensive Linemen." We were a loyal bunch and we proudly served our leader – Coach Mike Walker – specialty coach of the offensive linemen. Nobody messed with the FOOLs!

I want to introduce you to my coach – Mr. Mike Walker. He had a profound impact on my life. It has been over 25 years since I suited up and ran onto the football field in Archbold, but I remember my relationship with Coach Walker like it was yesterday. No other coach inspired, motivated and challenged me as much as he.

It was the beginning of my senior year – a hot August day in 1979. I was getting ready for our two-a-day practices. While sitting in the locker room Coach Walker came up to me, sat next to me and said, "Jimmy, we need to talk."



There was a sense of excitement in coach's voice. I could always tell when he had an idea. This was not just an idea, it was a huge challenge. He continued "Jimmy, the other coaches and I were talking and we want to move you from tackle to tight-end. What do you think?" For those who know little about the offensive line, this was huge. Some would see this as a simple move, but for us on the line it was massive. First of all, I was going to have to run more. This meant I would have to run pass patterns. As a tackle each play required very little running (selective memory). For a young man they nicknamed named "Iron Lung" (because I got quite winded - way out of shape), this was a seemingly impossible challenge. Then I realized that I might even get to touch the ball! The quarterback throws to the tight end – sometimes. (A little bit of "glory seeking" crept into my decision making.) All I remember is that I looked into Coach Walker's eyes and agreed to make the move.

Running out to practice that day my mind and heart made a significant change. The coaches and my teammates were expecting more from me and I needed to rise to the challenge. I chose to do and give my best to the team. Coach Walker was there for me throughout the season. He coached me as well as any coach had in the past. He brought out the best in me. Please understand that I was not an exceptional athlete. I was average. I was big, slow and rarely intimidating. I was not an "All-Ohio athlete" nor was I given first-team or second-team honors in the league. But after the dismal season was over, I walked away knowing I did my best. Thanks to Coach Walker.

I heard that Coach Walker passed away a few years ago. I regret that I never communicated with him how much he meant to me. Not only was he a great coach to me, he was a teacher, a great father and a dedicated husband. Like so many others, I took for granted the investment he made in my life. Even though I never expressed to him how much he meant to me, I have a feeling he knew.

As I prepared this training on Spiritual Coaching I asked myself, "Who was the most significant coach in my life?" Only a second went by and I answered...Coach Mike Walker. As Coach Walker helped bring out the best in me, the church needs people – spiritual coaches – who will bring out the best in other believers. Based on the example of Coach Walker, I learned important values that I believe make for a good spiritual coach. I will share them with you in this training.

I want to implant a vision in your mind before we start. Let's travel 25 years into the future. Let's say that Jesus has not yet returned and we visit our church. We approach some of the people gathered and ask the question: "Who made a spiritual impact on your faith?" Will any of them give me your name? Will any of them tell me of their time with their special relationship with you - their "spiritual coach?" Will any of them voice their thankfulness for the investment you made in their life?

I don't know about you, but I want to be a spiritual coach. I want to make a significant impact in the Kingdom of God by helping at least one believer to finish the race of life with a stronger faith in God. As Coach Walker helped me, I want to help believers give their best to God. I hope you will join me in making this kind of investment in the Kingdom of God. Let's learn about spiritual coaching!

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Coaching Quotes

"I don't believe in team motivation. I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on a field and be prepared to play a good game."
(Tom Landry)

"As an athlete throughout my career I had five coaches who all contributed in a large way to my success at varying levels from schoolboy to senior international. I relied upon them to provide strategy, training schedules, motivation, empathy and a shoulder to cry on, the latter in general was rarely needed. I suppose as an athlete I lived in a comfortable world knowing my coach would be there to provide me with my expectations of Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth glory never doubting his input to provide me with what I believed was my destiny."
(runner, 1500m Champion and Olympic Silver medalist
Peter Elliott)

John 10:27-28 - "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."
(Jesus, the greatest spiritual coach)



What is a coach?

One of the greatest memories I have in my life is playing high school football. Over the years of playing sports I had many coaches; however one coach rose above all the others. His name was Coach Mike Walker. Like most high school coaches Mr. Walker would teach classes during the day and at 3:15 pm would change hats. It was during the football season of my senior year that my relationship with Coach Walker matured. Allow me to share how Coach Walker "coached" me.

A coach is a challenger

- Coach Walker: "Jimmy, we have an idea. We want to move you to tight end this year. What do you think?"

A coach is an encourager

- Coach Walker: "You can do it!" and "Keep your head up!"

A coach is a confronter

- Coach Walker: "What in the world were you thinking?"

A coach is a strategist

- Coach Walker: "Tell me what is going on out there. Let's try this..."

A coach is a celebrator

- Coach Walker: "Good job, Jimmy! We did it!"

What is a spiritual coach?

It has been awhile since I put on my high school football jersey (#84) and jogged onto the field with my teammates at Archbold High School. But the influence of Coach Walker has stayed with me for many years. It is easy for me to see that the way he "coached" me is the way believers can coach others in the faith.

You may not have had a Coach Walker in your life, but that does not disqualify you from being a spiritual coach today. Ask God: "**Is there someone you would like me to coach?**"

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Biblical References Regarding Character

Giving

Luke 6:38 (NIV)

Loving

John 13:24-25 (NIV)

Patient

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV)

Purposeful

Philippians 2:1 - 2 (NIV)

Teachable

Proverbs 9:8 - 10 (NIV)

Trustworthy

Luke 16:10-12 (NIV)

Truthful

Zechariah 8:16-18 (NIV)

Understanding

Colossians 1:9 (NIV)

Wise

James 3:13-17 (NIV)



What are the characteristics of a spiritual coach?

Obviously, if we used Jesus for our model coach, we would get to this point of our training, throw up our hands and give up the notion of ever being a spiritual coach. There is no way any of us could ever measure up to Jesus Christ. Question: So do we give up on the idea of being a spiritual coach or do we use what God has given us to help brothers and sisters in Christ to grow and mature in their faith?

I think you know the answer to that. If “perfection” was a qualification then all of us would be disqualified from ANY kind of spiritual service. So what are the primary characteristics of a spiritual coach? (Note: I used the word primary, because there are many other characteristics that are helpful to being a spiritual coach.) A spiritual coach must be:

Giving - Realizing that all I have (time, talents and treasures) belongs to God and freely giving of these to benefit others.

Loving - Having a deep personal attachment and affection for another person.

Patient - Accepting difficult situations without demanding a deadline to remove it.

Purposeful - Exercising determination to stay on track until the goal is achieved.

Teachable - Demonstrating a willingness to learn or be trained without any reservations or hindrances.

Trustworthy - Believing completely and totally in someone or something.

Truthful - Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts.

Understanding - Learning to see and respond correctly to life situations with keen judgment; the application of knowledge.

Wise - Exhibiting strong intelligence and a sound mind in comprehending and discerning matters.

Exercise: Look in the back of this training manual. There is a listing of 104 Biblical Characteristics. I highlighted nine that I believe are important to being a good coach. Of the ones on the list I did not mention, which ones do you believe are important to being a good spiritual coach? Why did you choose them?

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Biblical References Regarding Spiritual Coaching

Hebrews 12:1 - 3

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Questions:

- How are believers to run the race?
- What will that run look like in a spiritual sense?
- What role does a spiritual coach play in that run?

1 Timothy 1:18 - 19

"Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, ¹⁹holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith."

Questions:

- Who was Timothy's spiritual coach?
- How important was it for Timothy to following the instruction of his spiritual coach?
- What would be the result if he did not follow the instruction?

What is the goal of spiritual coaching?

There is one main goal to spiritual coaching.

The goal of spiritual coaching is for the **spiritual coach to come alongside** the believer **to assist** him/her in living a **Christ-like life** in the **world** in which they live and **becoming a spiritual coach to others.**

Relationship

- "to come alongside"
- The spiritual coach makes a significant investment of time, energy and prayer in the life of the person being coached.

Responsibility

- "to assist"
- A spiritual coach is unable to play the "game" for the person being coached. His responsibility is to actively communicate instruction, encouragement, etc. from the "sidelines".

Desired Outcome

- "Christ-like life"
- The label used to identify the early believers; "Christian" literally means "little Christ". The desired outcome of our coaching relationship with a believer is for the believer to live a life that reflects Jesus Christ.

Playing Field

- "world"
- Christians have different "worlds" in which they live and work. Some believers live in a world filled with conflict while others live in a world that is rather peaceful. Regardless of the differences or similarities, our "world" is the location in which we are called to live like Christ.

Exercise: On the narrow column of this page are two scripture passages. Find a partner, read through the passages and answer the questions that follow.

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Sample Practice Format

1. **Review of the week** – “How did things go? Were you able to spend time in God’s Word? Did you spend time praying? How did you serve God this week? Share a verse you are committing to memory.”
2. **Prayer** – Coach
3. **Study Time** – Take time to study a specific topic (i.e. prayer, fasting, Bible characters), chapter of the Bible, chapter in a book that focuses on spiritual development (i.e., *Purpose Driven Life*)
4. **Check Up** – Spend some time evaluating the believer’s strengths and weaknesses
5. **Plan** – Produce a specific plan that will help the believer take a step forward in spiritual growth. “You mentioned that you were not taking time during the day to pray. Let’s make a plan that you would wake up 15 earlier everyday specifically for prayer.”
6. **Encouragement and Prayer** – Close the time together with encouragement and prayer. Can include a song or a meaningful Scripture passage.

What happens in “practice”?

In the analogy of coaching and the spiritual life if life is the game, then the time a spiritual coach spends with the young believer is the “practice.” My mind just shot back to my football days. We would start practicing in mid summer (hot, humid August days). The practices would continue until the season was over. The purpose of the practices was to prepare us for the game. There is no difference from coaching sports to spiritual coaching.

There is one main goal to spiritual coaching.

The goal of the spiritual coach is to **come alongside** the believer in order to **assist** them in living a **Christ-like** life in the environment in which they live.

What happens in “practice” (time with the young believer) is very important.

Accountability – training to become spiritually fit

- Scripture
- Prayer
- Service
- Scripture memory
- Journaling

Specialized Instruction – focusing on specific spiritual skill development

- Knowing God’s will
- One Anothers (see in appendix)
- Spiritual Gifts and Passions
- Sharing Christ with others
- (See Path of Discipleship in appendix for more ideas)

Assessment – evaluating current skills and life situations

- Personal assessment
- Healthy Believer Assessment (see appendix)

Strategizing – making plans for spiritual growth and becoming a spiritual coach for others

- Answers the question: Where do we go from here?

The practice session becomes a very important time for the coach and the believer being coached. Imagine being an athlete expected to participate in a game with **NO COACHING!** How well would you do? It is no different for the young believer in Christ thrust into this dark world.

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Humorous Coaching Story

"A few years ago I was coaching a fourth grade team. They had never played organized ball before and I had told them what a foul was and tried to educate them a bit. In our first game, one of my kids went over and told the referee who hadn't been watching him, "Mr. Ref, stop the game! I fouled that guy." I thought the ref was going to die...he had his whistle in his mouth and started laughing and it caused his whistle to blow."

"WC Cougar Coach"

(Taken from an internet coaches' bulletin board)



Remember the Goal of Spiritual Coaching

The goal of spiritual coaching is for the spiritual coach to come alongside the believer to assist him/her in living a Christ-like life in the world in which they live.

Helpful Coaching Advice

From one coach to another, please allow me to give you some advice.

1. **Seek God's direction** – Helping to shape a young believer's faith is an awesome task. Make sure you consult God on what direction you should go with your coaching.
2. **Prepare for "practices"** – I always remember my coaches having a practice plan. It might have been just a 3 x 5 card with a couple words, but it was a plan. Make sure you prepare – have a plan, pre-think some questions, list positive improvements, etc. Be prepared.
3. **Observation is better than accusation** – When you make an accusation you can put someone on the defensive. When you make an observation the person as an opportunity to admit or explain it.
4. **Practice what you preach** – When you tell a young believer they need to develop this skill or practice that discipline, then wisely model it for them in your own life.
5. **Identify sin with love** – When you come alongside a young believer you will notice sin evident in his/her life. With the love of Jesus, identify that sin – using Scripture as a support. Gently help them to see their sin.
6. **Humble yourself** – I always have a verse that runs through my mind when I teach, preach and coach. **Romans 12:3 (NIV)** – "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." This verse encourages all of us coaches to have a healthy perspective of ourselves.
7. **"I don't know"** – These are words are important to remember. Be careful not to get caught up in thinking you have to have all the answers. Following up the phrase "I don't know" with "let's find the answer together" is a great way to teach and learn.
8. **Celebrate!** – There are many reasons to celebrate in a believer's life. Celebrating conversion anniversaries, baptisms, accomplishments, etc. are a wonderful way to bond with one another. Be sure to celebrate.
9. **Eternal Investment!** – A good spiritual coach will see this adventure as a relationship rather than a task or assignment. As a spiritual coach you are making an eternal investment in the Kingdom of God.

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Discipleship Quotes

“Discipleship means discipline. The disciple is one who has come with his ignorance, superstition, and sin to find learning, truth, and forgiveness from the Savior. Without discipline we are not disciples.”

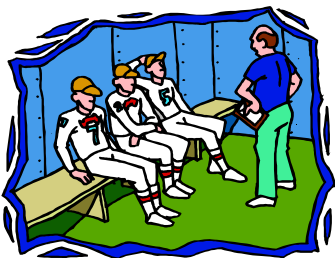
Victor Raymond Edman
(1900–1967)

“If we were willing to learn the meaning of real discipleship and actually to become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed and the resultant impact on society would be staggering.”

David Watson
(1933–1984)

“The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Christ.”

Henry Varley



Exercise: As you go through this section of the training you will begin to identify various people you know who fit the types of people needing coaching. Take a moment right now to ask the Lord: “Will you show me someone who needs a spiritual coach?” You might take the next step: “Lord, are you calling me to be his/her spiritual coach?” Let’s take some time to wait upon the Lord. Listen for His voice.

Who does a spiritual coach “coach”?

There are basically five types of people to coach.

1. **Pre-Christian** – It is possible to be a spiritual coach to someone who is not a believer. This person is close to becoming a Christian, but has not taking the step of trusting Christ as their Lord and Savior. The “pre-Christian” label signifies the direction of the relationship. Through some spiritual coaching we hope that they will make the life changing decision to trust Christ.
2. **New Believer** – Most people think of this person as the one who needs coaching the most. That is an accurate assessment. New believers need direction and guidance. A spiritual coach will help the new believer to develop a pattern of practicing spiritual disciplines that will facilitate spiritual growth.
3. **Young Believer** – People who have been Christians for 1-5 years may need a time of refocusing and redirection. Living the transformed life is much like the athlete who returns to the “basics” in order to get back on track. The spiritual coach is able to come along side the young believer to help.
4. **Disconnected Believer** – Through life situations, poor decisions and inadequate training it is possible for some believers to become disconnected from the church, from the Scriptures and, sadly, from God. A spiritual coach is able to help a disconnected believer be reconnected.
5. **Rough Water Believer** – There are times in our lives when we go through difficult situations (i.e. – a death, tragedies, health issues, a financial crisis) I call these difficult situations in life “rough waters”. During these “rough waters” we need a spiritual coach to help us embrace our God and stay connected to Him.

Exercise: Earlier we identified the characteristics of a spiritual coach. Let’s identify the characteristics of the person being coached. Return to the listing of 104 Biblical Characteristics in the back of this manual. Pick out 4 or 5 key characteristics that you believe should be identifiable in a person receiving spiritual coaching.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SPIRITUAL COACHING

Spiritual Coaching Appendix

List of 104 Biblical Characteristics

Spiritual Health Assessment

(Note: appendix material available in DOWNLOAD area of the website www.westvalleymc.org)