

Faith Coaching Fundamentals

Engaging others to intentionally encourage and develop Spiritual Growth and personal development.

1. INTRODUCTION:

- a. **Definition of a Coach – visualize a vehicle of transportation... something that helps move you from one place to another. However, the context with which Authentic Discipleship will employ this term is more as a “stabilizer bar” something that helps the driver or the Person Being Coached [PBC] to retain better guidance and direction of the vehicle that is their own faith journey or Spiritual Journey. We view the “Person Being Coached” [or PBC] as being in control of the pace, and even of the direction of their own Spiritual Journey. Each person has to stand before God and take responsibility for their own life. As a coach, we respect the individual personal responsibility and individual control God has given us. God is very gracious with us... He doesn’t force us to act before we’re ready, but He is always encouraging us to grow and develop. In our definition, the PBC has the responsibility to define their own priorities and their own pace and direction. We as Spiritual Coaches come alongside them as an advocate in support of the indwelling Spirit to help clarify what they are experiencing, help keep them moving in a positive Spirit Dependent manner, and help them work effectively through the obstacles they face.**
 - i. **The Person Being Coached [PBC] is like the driver of a car. As the driver they employ the steering wheel, the speed and brakes, etc. Often, they may find they are in need of certain guidance which may include direction, destination, cautions & obstacles, course correction, clarified expectations, etc.**
 - ii. **The Coach’s role is to help provide this navigational guidance as a passenger. The coach in this role needs from the PBC the following elements:**
 1. **An understanding and acceptance of their respective roles – this may be a formal covenant or an informal agreement depending upon the stated expectations of the relationship.**
 2. **The need for timely & honest communication – it is essential to have clear and honest interaction of what is going on and what to do about it.**
 3. **Ongoing feedback on how the relationship is working.**
 4. **Mutual respect & trust.**
 5. **Agreement on decisions and actionable timetables.**
 - iii. **The coach is expected to adjust to the needs and style of the PBC, not necessarily the other way around.**
- b. **The Role of a Disciple – Is to become a reflection of their Lord... all Christian Discipleship is focused on forming the nature and character of Christ in the inner-person. As Spiritual Coaches, it our role is to help enable and perhaps expedite the manner in which a PBC advances in their Spiritual Journey. People often get “Stuck” in their growth and Spiritual advancement, the coach**

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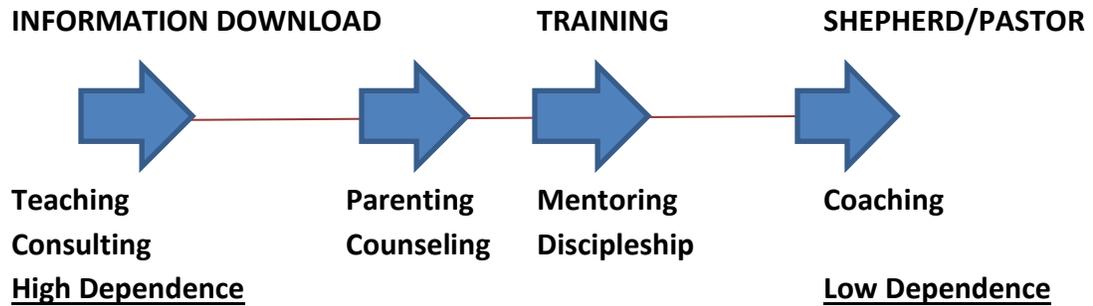
helps them keep moving and getting past obstacles they face. Coaching is a great ministry for discipleship. At the very least we desire to help clarify and perhaps enable the PBC to make informed decisions and remain relationally grounded, counter culturally relevant, and Spiritually focused.

- c. **The Role of a Coach – is to help bring out the potential of the PBC:**
 - i. To demonstrate and express Godly love.
 - ii. To experience the reality of redemption.
 - iii. To experience active encouragement in equipping disciples to become more like Jesus.
 - iv. To catch a vision of God’s ongoing prodding’s and invitations.
 - v. To exhort in helping prevent or relieve discouragement and fear.

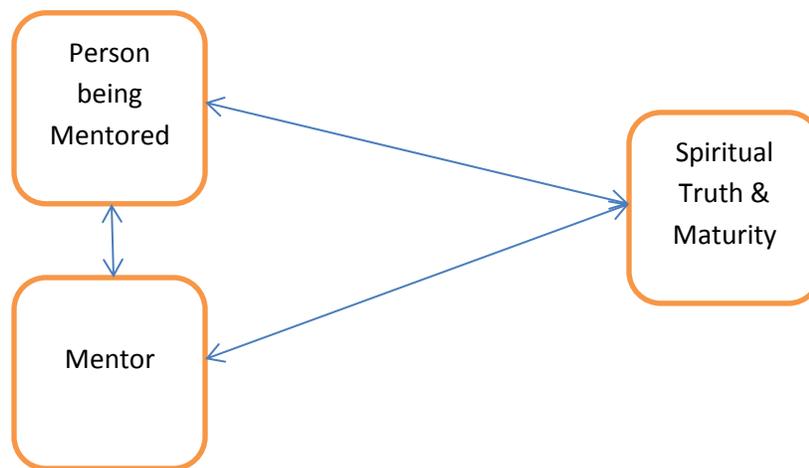
- d. **Context for Coaching – may include several types of coaching relationships, both formal and informal.**
 - i. A more formal “Covenant” approach would involve both parties [coach and PBC] in a rather specific understanding of what is intended and expected for one another as they pursue their coaching relationship. This may be either short term or long term.
 - ii. A more informal approach might involve casual encounters where through the conversation are occasional and even brief, and the coach employs questions to clarify intent, direction, focus, or priorities of the person in the encounter. These are on the order of a Spiritual Friend providing a relational gift to bless another pilgrim.

- e. **Coaching Conversations – though every coach’s approach may have different styles, they should be both focused and directional. The coach must remain aware of their role and not take on the roles that remove responsibility or control from the PBC. Other Spiritual Formation roles include that of “Spiritual Director” [where the responsibility for the results moves from the director to the Spirit] or that of a “Mentor” [where the mentor helps to direct the PBC drawing from their own experience through territory unfamiliar to the PBC].**
 - i. Positive reinforcement conveying that people are Spiritually alive and well, and that they are able and encouraged to choose and to act.
 - ii. Identify relational boundaries and maintain a healthy interaction, being aware of the potential for relational attachment and dependence.
 - iii. Reaffirming that as disciples we are functional beings living out a spiritual life in a broken material world.
 - iv. Note the movement in the diagram below of different helping forms from the “detached information download” toward the relational “companion walking with” a person demonstrated below:

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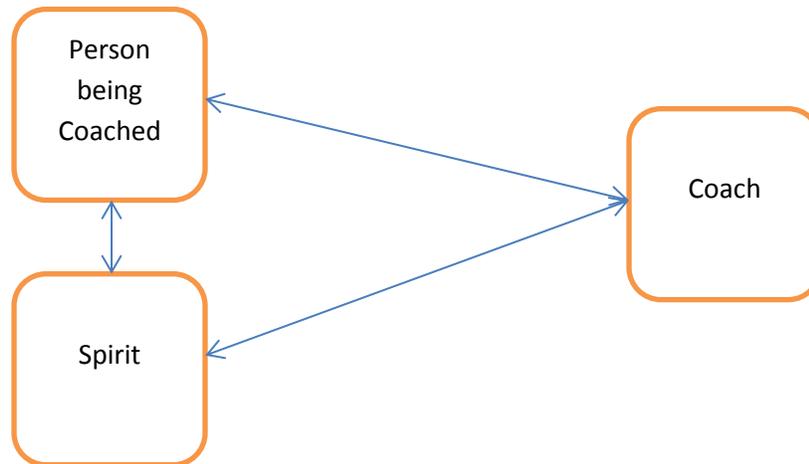


1. Information download is essentially my telling another what they should do and how they should do it. I'm teaching them what they should know and explaining what they should do and how to do it.
 2. Parenting a child is a developmental role where I maintain a close personal stake in, because they will always be my child. It is the training up the way a child should go (Psalm 22:6). This relationship should move through early training and teaching in their youth, advancing to more of an advocate as they mature where my role will become more influential and less directive.
 3. A mentoring role is similar to a journeyman teaching an apprentice... this is the classic discipleship role of master and student evident in Scripture (Matt 10:25).
 4. Walking with a person is accompanying them on their journey, coming alongside them as a shepherd. Shepherds are fellow travelers... traveling and visiting with the PBC giving insight as you do life together. The PBC has the responsibility for all the decisions and all the results.
- f. The positional arrangement of a mentor looks something like this... note that the position of the mentor is to help guide the person being mentored to understanding what is going on in Spiritual life. The mentor is essentially saying "this is how it works."



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- g. The positional arrangement of a coach looks something like this... notice that the position of the coach is to help the person being coached see what the Spirit is doing and is already at work accomplishing in their Spiritual life. The coach is essentially saying “do you see what God is doing?”



- h. The implications are significant – as the mentor tends to take a more active guidance role in the relationship, especially early on where they are helping to fill in the voids of the experience and knowledge deficient of the person their mentoring. Instead the coach takes a more passive guidance role and helps the person being coached to see what the Spirit is already doing in their life. As a result, the mentor role often tends to be shorter in duration by its nature, where the coaching role can potentially be viable for a much longer period of time.
- i. Many mentor roles morph with time into coaching roles as their charge matures and their developmental needs change. It is important to understand when the mentoring role must change into a coaching role.
 - ii. Much like a parent raises a child up to be an independent individual and then let them go to lead their own life, a mentor must do likewise. As with the parenting relationship, to hold on and not letting the role morph can cause unnecessary dependence and ultimately stunting the person’s growth and development.
 - iii. As the coaching relationship matures, the coach becomes more of a cheerleader and encourager to their charge who has now become more of a peer and a friend to them. The peer relationship is a healthy and stable relationship that can endure for many years. In the best coaching relationships, the person being coached will often eclipse or surpass their coach... to the delight of the coach.
- i. Coaching Sessions – should be tailored to the individual situation to meet the PBC’s needs and schedule. It should be often enough to remain relationally connected, but also sustainable. Plan on average of a total 2 hours per month... typically a one hour session every-other-week per PBC.

This allows you to be involved with several PBC's at a time without getting over loaded.

j. Coaching Priorities include:

- i. Enabling the PBC to discover, clarify, and align their priorities on the path they want to achieve.**
- ii. To encourage self-discovery of their identity in Christ.**
- iii. To expose the presence and work of the indwelling Spirit.**
- iv. To elicit PBC generated strategies and problem solving solutions to move forward with confidence.**
- v. As an accountability partner to keep the PBC responsible and accountable.**

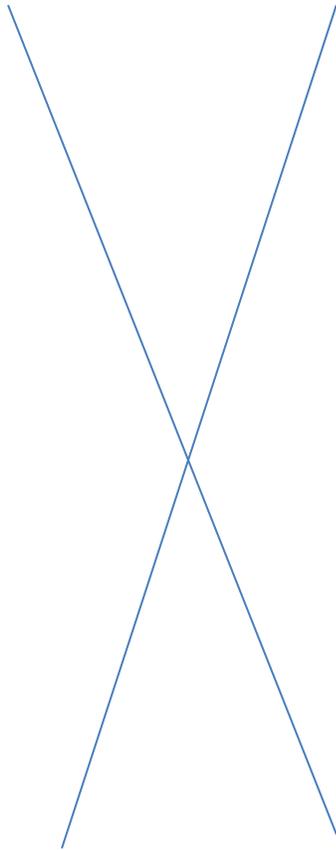
k. Philosophy of Coaching – includes these elements:

- i. Discovery, clarification, alignment, and realignment with what the PBC wants to achieve.**
- ii. Encourage self-discovery and confidence.**
- iii. Elicit client generated solutions and strategies – this is a key component as spiritual coaches don't tell people what to do, they ask questions to help focus the PBC to decide what they want to do. This way they own both the problem and the solution.**
- iv. Help keep the PBC accountable.**
- v. Stay out of the PBC's business, don't make decisions for them or value added advice unless they are specifically seeking that from you. Instead, coaches explain things you might do, not what *you* would do... don't be lured into making decisions for them. However well-intentioned you might be, you may not understand enough and you might get the blame if things go south.**

l. Theology of Coaching:

- i. Coach is being present while the PBC does the work – Phil 2:13; John 14:10... in Christian coaching it is the Spirit who is doing the work in and through us, the coach just wants to be in cooperation with the PBC to help them realize it.**
- ii. Coach focuses on servicing the PBC's best interest – John 14:23; Luke 9:23-24... in Christian coaching we serve God through developing an attitude of surrender and obedience.**
- iii. Coach looks for clues and patterns in the PBC that helps explain their habits and to help keep them on track – Prov 3:5-6... look more for the movement of the Spirit and aligning the PBC with what God is doing to keep them on track.**
- iv. Coach seeks to move the PBC into understanding experiences that liberate their passion and direction – Matt 11:29... a personal relationship with Jesus and dependence upon the Spirit is the highest calling and greatest passion a disciple may experience.**

2. THE SHAPE OF A COACHING CONVERSATION – THE HOURGLASS:



a. Top of the Hourglass – clarifying and focusing the conversation:

- What is the reason we're talking today?
- What would be most useful to you right now?
- Follow those ideas until you help expose what is going on in their life at that moment.

b. Center of the Hourglass – narrowing the conversation to a specific focus that is actionable:

- Identify a decision point or direction.
- Talk about getting that point into action.
- Identify other sources necessary for advice or guidance to proceed.

c. Bottom of the Hourglass – exploring, identifying and aligning these actions with focus on timing:

- What else? What are you going to do with this action point?
- Who else? Who do you need to move this decision forward?
- What next? When are you going to do this?
- Identify specifics that are actionable.

d. Ending – what was most useful to you in this conversation?

- What would you like to explore next?
- Have the PBC make notes on what they have discovered and what they intend to do, and bring them with them for the next session for review and update.
- Confirm the next encounter.

- e. Coaching is all about clarification and movement. People tend to get stuck or frozen either through over analysis or procrastination. Sometimes they can't see the forest for the trees. Coaching is about helping another clarify their thoughts, options, and possible actions and then to make decisions.
- f. After each session make sure they summarize and reframe the thought development and the action proposed... is best to have them do that immediately before they forget or get distracted.
- g. It is up to the PBC to keep their own journal of these encounters... remember it is all about them taking responsible action for their life and decisions.

3. MODELS OF COACHING:

- a. Jethro & Moses – look at Exodus 18 as a coaching model... then answer these questions from the dialogue:
 - i. Which show the top of the hourglass?
 - ii. Which show the narrow part of the hourglass?
 - iii. Which show the widening of the hourglass?
- b. The “CARR” model:
 - i. Clarity – what would you like to talk about [focus on, etc.] today? Firmly puts the conversation into the hands of the PBC... and insures it’s not your agenda.
 - ii. Action – What are the actions that emerge in the focus? There will usually be several that come up but try to keep it simple and straightforward.
 - iii. Reflection – what did you discover? What was most useful?
 - iv. Results – how will this make a difference? What are you going to do now? What are the problems, risk assessment, and consequences in the decision direction? What are the rewards? Best to consider both... as the objective is to move in actionable specifics.

4. COACHING SKILL DEVELOPMENT – ANYONE CAN DEVELOP COACHING SKILLS:

- a. Input skills:
 - i. Listening – being fully engaged, present, and focused. Try to avoid distractions... it is crucial that the PBC realizes they are the focus of the meeting. Try not to interrupt the PBC... the encounter is all about the PBC. Use casual and appropriate phrases and words... don’t over think it, move along with the PBC but keep it moving. Paraphrase what has been said periodically... this is very helpful in keeping clarity. Listen and learn... ask questions to clarify and focus.
 1. Note the situational context – are they behaving oddly? Are they stressed or distracted? What inner life movements do you sense? Their physical responses can reveal as much or more than the verbal response.
 2. Note their personal context – are they energetic or goal oriented and focused? Are they listless and directionless? What of their values and ethics do you sense? Is their faith vital or is it in the background?
 - ii. Observation – note their non-verbal content as well as their verbal... take in the whole of the engagement. Note their inflection, pace of talk, tone, do you sense any incongruities? What about hesitations or hurried responses to clarifying questions? Anything seem unusual or troubling?
 - iii. Spiritual Insight – the Spirit wants to give you insight if you are open and aware... always pray and anoint the time together. Always invite the Spirit for direction and clarity and thank Him for what He is going to do in the encounter.
 1. Learning to trust His leading doesn’t mean you act on the first insight you think

you understand... wait and listen.

2. Look for confirmation to what you sense. The Spirit will confirm it.
3. Ask for insight on what to say and how to say it. The delivery is as important as the message.

b. Output Skills:

i. Ask “powerful questions” – these will elicit a clearer and more direct response. The first questions should be probing, but then as you gain confidence and direction move more into the matter being revealed. Men especially tend to ask questions to gain information. In coaching and small groups the initial use of information is helpful, but then we must move into the realm of processing feelings and motives. Information tends to be a faculty of the mind or IQ, while feelings tend to be a faculty of the heart or EQ. See section 6 for more on this topic.

1. Closed questions – elicit a Yes or No response or brief answers. These rarely get to the deeper levels of relating that are so necessary for coaching. Closed questions usually offer little insight into what is going on in a person’s heart.
2. Open questions – tend to elicit a longer response and encourage a sharing of thoughts or ideas. These may often surprise both the responder and the asker, and lead to areas where exploration and discovery can occur. Be careful not to push for results, but be content to encourage exploration.
3. Practiced skills promote personal discovery, generate options, uncover obstacles, and determine next steps. One of the main advantages of coaching is getting people out of their rut, to help get them “unstuck.” As they move more freely into uncharted waters of the mind and heart, the Spirit can bring healing, discovery, illumination, and even revelation.
4. If you are unsure of a response it’s better to ask “did I hear you correctly? Or did I understand this correctly?” This helps clarify for both of you.

ii. Favorite coaching questions:

1. Starters – What do you want to talk about? What would be most useful to you now? Is there something that’s on your mind?
2. Probers – what is going on here? What have you done thus far? You seem tense is something bothering you? What other options do you have? Do you need someone to talk to about more sensitive things?
 - a. Finishers – what else? What do you need to do to move forward? If you can’t do this now then when? Who else do you need to be engaged and to move forward?

iii. It is OK to challenge the PBC’s understanding of something if you sense they don’t know to clarify their belief and presumptions.

1. Sparring is sometimes OK. Never intentionally make an accusation of wrong or right, but it's OK to push back when you hear something that rings falsely. This aids in keeping it real and honest.
 2. Always try to shine God's light into their life. Look for where the Spirit is working and encourage that.
- iv. Exhortation and encouragement – are always a good way to invite the Spirit to “Grace up an encounter.” But don't degrade the conversation with needless flattery... making people feel better about themselves is a good thing, but the better thing we should push for is personal Spiritual relevance and growth.
1. Don't be too confident in your statements until you really know them well enough to interpret their heart and mind. If you make a presumption clarify it with “am I hearing you correctly?”
 2. Speaking hope and faith is great. Love can be a little dicey depending on the PBC and circumstances. Remember the boundaries of your relationship and respect them... and remind them to do likewise if they are moving where they shouldn't.
 3. Be specific with your encouragement – focus on the needs of the PBC. Those of us who want to help, sometimes get the desire to know we are being helpful.
 4. Employ a style that is most comfortable for you – don't try to be someone you are not. Phoniness is quickly seen through and will destroy your credibility and undermine your opportunity for a long term benefit.
 5. Be aware that a “one size fits all” approach won't work well either. You will need to somewhat tailor your style and approach to the person. Their personality will help determine what you do to engage them.
 6. Be aware that over time, familiarity may have you saying things that are less than appropriate, or even inappropriate. Be aware of what you encourage in terms of responses from your PBC. Ask for permission to speak candidly, always reclarify the boundaries and expectations, and if they change over time... be sure to clarify those.
- v. Deliver clear and concise messages – employing your own style and personality. A concise message is like a bullet form document, rather than a paragraph form. Think of the difference of a focused rifle shot rather than a shotgun shot. Sometimes you'll need to clarify questions, but try to keep them short and to the point. Too often more and more words muddy the water rather than clarify it. Ask focused questions and wait for a response.
1. Silence is not all bad in these moments; don't feel pushed to answer the question yourself.
 2. Dare to intervene and ask what are the consequences of “such and such” an action? Are there other approaches you could take? Which is the most helpful?

3. Always ask permission to speak into someone's life – treat this as an opening for a special opportunity for Grace to enter rather than an opportunity for you to say something smart or relevant.
4. Do not judge or jump to conclusions... ask clarifying questions where appropriate.
5. Look for personal values and ethical alignment – when you think you heard a clunk [discord], ask about it.
6. Rephrase what's been said as a way of validating and clarifying the issues.
7. Let go of your own agenda and direction... and follow theirs.
8. Be patient with the process... give it time to develop and go where it needs to.
9. When you get stuck and this will happen, instead of an awkward silence or a dumb question... ask them what question needs to be asked next? This is fun to do fairly often anyway, and demonstrates you don't have all the answers and are just another pilgrim on the journey of life.
10. Remember the goal is always to move the PBC toward actions and decisions... and sometimes you need to press a little to get there.
11. When you make a mistake, don't hesitate to apologize. It is more helpful to demonstrate you're not perfect than having to be right all the time. Think of it as modeling Grace.

5. COACHING CONVERSATION FRAMEWORK:

a. Simple form:

- i. Establish the focus – where do we start.
- ii. Discover the possibilities – what are you thinking about doing? What else can you do?
- iii. Probe action paths – what's the first step to move forward? What are your options?
- iv. Remove barriers – what's keeping you from moving forward? What resources do you need that you don't have now? Is there another way to get around this obstacle?
- v. Recap – best when done by the PBC... how clear are you on what you're going to do?

b. Longer form:

- i. Determine what needs to happen in what context.
- ii. Establish trust and mutual expectations.
- iii. Formalize an agreement with the PBC for results... what do YOU want from this time?
- iv. Collect info and communicate feedback. How will you know you are getting where you want to go? What else do you need to explore?
- v. Translate talk into action – who you are, where you are, and what you're going to do.
- vi. Support big steps – little steps are easy, big steps need thoughtful words.
- vii. Foster time to reflect about possible actions... reformation is always good.
- viii. Evaluate individual and organizational progress... how will you know that you've arrived?

c. Realizing Potential:

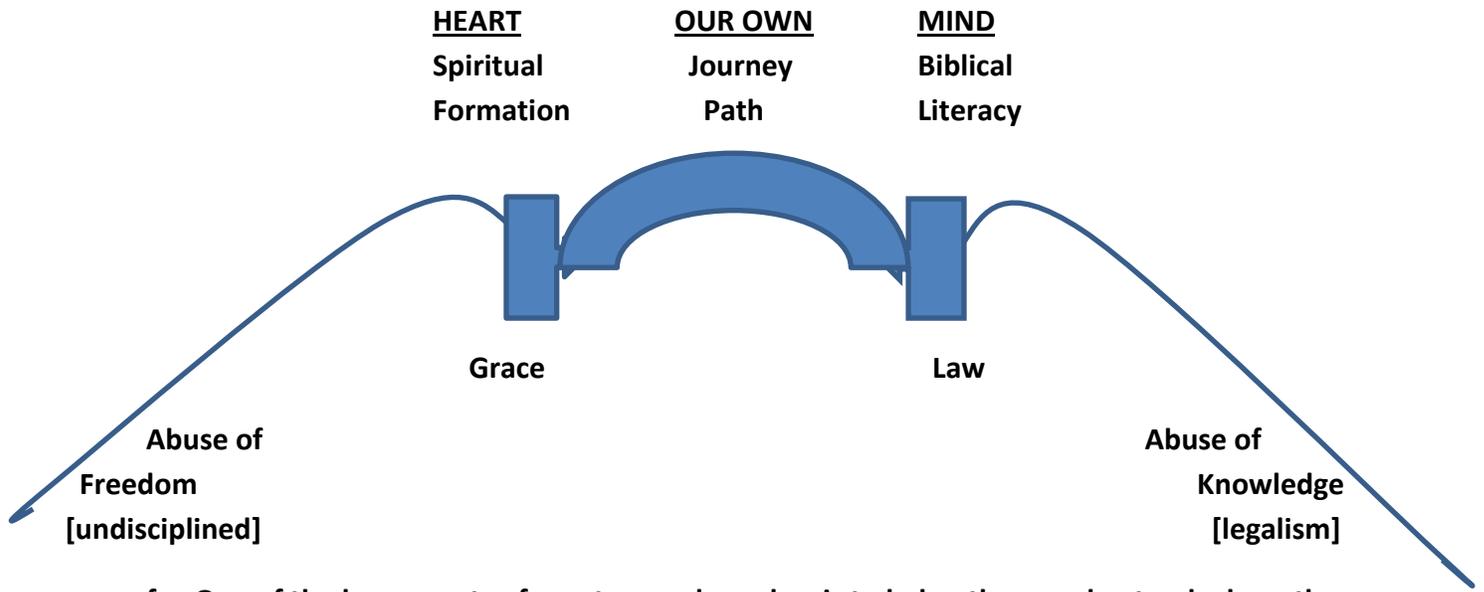
- i. $[P = p - i]$ or more specifically... [Performance equals potential less interference].**
- ii. Evaluate personal skill set and affirm or question whether they can do what they want with where they are. What needs to be added into this equation for this to be successful? Whose help do I need? Who else needs to be on my bus?**

6. The Mind and Heart of Coaching – how IQ and EQ interplay in our life in the Spirit:

The mind and heart or IQ and EQ are actually not in competition, but are two sides of the same coin. Mind and heart are not an “either-or” duality, but rather a “both-and” paradox. Both are in play most of the time.

- a. Most people have a tendency toward processing the world through their mind or heart, but when the two operate together in a more balanced fashion, we get a much better view of reality. Effective coaches learn to employ questions to help the people they work with to discover what is going on inside them, and continue to move toward their goals. Coaches need to operate from a more balanced approach, so they can help those they coach find a balance of their own.**
- b. Mind or IQ is a Cognitive approach – where we gather information and facts to learn about something with an intention to solve problems. People however, are not necessarily problems to be solved. A dependence on the cognitive in terms of Christian discipleship can lead toward a narrow more distant, a more legalistic and judgmental approach to people.**
- c. Heart or EQ is an Emotive approach – where we seek to understand what is going on in another through relational engagement, instead of factual analysis. Employing an emotive approach in terms of Christian discipleship can lead to grace and acceptance.**
- d. When mind and heart are balanced and in sync, we are most able to see our world in a more composite and integrated way... with the interaction of our life, others influence and our mission emerge more clearly.**
- e. In integrating mind and heart, the use of our personal identity and theology to center our life is an important concept. Think of our identity in Christ and knowledge of Scripture as guiderails delineating a balanced faith walk. We want to be somewhere in the middle of the path, but bouncing between the guard rails Spiritual Formation and Biblical Literacy is pretty normal. The path we walk is crowned because we’re in a broken world, so it encourages us to move toward grace or law. When we move too far over the theological and experiential boundary, we start to descend the slippery slope into abuse.**

This concept can look something like this diagram below:



- f. One of the key aspects of mentors and coaches is to help others understand where they are on their path, and how to find and remain in the middle of the path they desire to walk.
- g. A mind made strong through Biblical Literacy, and a heart made soft through Spiritual Formation helps disciples keep their balance on their journey.

7. Discipleship and Individuality:

- a. Just a casual understanding of Creation has to impress the observant Christian of God's great love for the great diversity of life and of personal individuality. Scripture states that God has counted every hair on our heads... that alone should be informative as some of us are hair challenged and others hair rich! God loves individuality.
- b. Other evidence supporting individuality includes:
 - i. We each have a distinctive vocal pattern... children imprint on their parent's voice long before they can see them.
 - ii. We each have a distinctive fingerprint.
 - iii. We each have a distinctive retinal print.
 - iv. We each have a distinctive DNA print.
- c. God's redemptive Grace also has great room for individual expression... though the general patterns are fixed by the Cross, Resurrection, and Pentecost... there is ample room for God reaching us when we are in a time frame when we're most receptive, and He reveals it in a manner we can understand. Biblical stories provide sufficient evidence of God's desire to meet us where we are... whether we're Mary Magdalene, the Thief on the Cross, Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the Gerasene Demented, or the Apostle Paul... God met each of them in unique and individual ways and not in a one-size-fits-all approach.
- d. With evidence of such individual distinctiveness, it should come as no surprise that since God doesn't force a "one-size-fits-all" demand on His Creation, that we should not expect a "one-size-

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fits-all” approach to coaching and discipleship. Approaches to coaching ought to be as diverse as the approaches to discipleship... being sufficiently varied to engage individuals where they are.

- i. Coaching can be used to impact a variety of relationships including one on one, small groups of 3 or 4 [triad/quads], medium groups of 10-24, and even congregations.**
- ii. Each of these coaching opportunities has its own limitations and challenges, but what is key in each is reaffirming the need for individual responsibility and accountability in each of these settings.**
- iii. Different individuals will respond to most of these approaches, but one may be more impactful than another. Be open to experience different approaches with an expectation of enjoying the different perspectives.**