

# COACHING **4**

## *Clergy*

# COACH YOUR WAY THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

A Tangible Way to Use Coaching in Ministry



J. Val Hastings

# COACH YOUR WAY THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

## A Tangible Way to Use Coaching in Ministry

In 1999, while pastoring at a local United Methodist church, I began working with my first coach. Almost immediately my progress was noticeable by all, and I began to wonder, “What if I adopted a coaching approach to ministry? What if the larger church adopted a coaching approach to ministry?” In that moment, a vision began to emerge—a global vision of *Every Pastor, Ministry Staff, and Church Leader a Coach*.

There are numerous ways to use coaching in the local church. One of my favorite ways is to use a coaching approach to scripture. Over the years, I have spoken and written on a variety of my favorite Bible verses and employed coaching techniques. What I have observed is that people frequently discovered new insights and had significant aha’s. In addition, I also noticed that, since coaching is about moving forward and making progress, many people were making a shift from *insight* to *implementation*. Tangible next steps and internal applications of scripture were happening in a whole new way. *Isn’t that what we want to have happen?*

Enjoy coaching your way through several of my favorite passages of scripture. My hope is that you will personally benefit and that it will encourage you to adopt a coaching approach to ministry.

Blessings,

*Val*

## Coach Your Way through the Scriptures—Jacob’s Story

I’ve long been inspired by the powerful coaching lessons found throughout the scriptures. As a pastor, coach, and coach trainer, it’s only natural for me to look to this ultimate source for inspiration and example.

Is there any end to the coaching wisdom in the New and Old Testaments? I wanted to find out, and so this e-book begins that journey, starting with Jacob's story.

Whether it’s the start of a new year, a new week, or a new day, many of us compile lists and goals of the things we want to do and accomplish. As I’ve pointed out in previous articles, it’s important to get into “being” mode before jumping into “doing” mode. That way your actions can be grounded in your ultimate vision of what success looks like for you.

Getting into “being” mode is a lot easier when you know who you are. Jacob’s story in the book of Genesis gives us a useful framework for turning inwards to answer three powerful questions about our own identity:

### 1. Who do others say you are?

In Genesis 25:26 we read, “After this, his brother was born, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; and so his name was Jacob.” Jacob’s name, literally, means “heel grabber,” a very unflattering name. Just imagine growing up with that stigma.

*Who do others say you are? What names or labels have you been given in your lifetime, and how do those impact your own beliefs about what you can accomplish?*

### 2. Who do you say you are?

We go on to read in Genesis 27:18-19, “So Jacob went to his father and said, ‘My father.’ And he said, ‘Here I am. Who are you, my son?’ And Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau, your firstborn ...’”

At a defining moment in his life, Jacob decided to change his name. He chose to take his brother’s name and be someone he wasn’t.

*Who do you say you are? Really? Are you living and acting as your true self, or someone else? How does that feel?*

### 3. Who does God say you are?

Then in Genesis 32:28 we read, “And God said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel...’”

At another defining moment in his life, Jacob heard loud and clear who God said he was. Being called Israel began a period of life change, radical transformation, and lasting healing for Jacob.

*Who does God say you are? Spend time really discerning this. This may mean saying no to other tasks. It may require giving yourself some breathing space. Give yourself this gift.*

*What would it mean for you to live and be who you are in God's eyes? How different could today be for you?*

*How do you plan to apply this suggestion to spend more time in "being" mode? More importantly, who will you be when you get there? The person others say you are, the person you say you are, or the person God says you are?*

## **Coach Your Way through the Scriptures—David's Story**

In 1 Samuel 17:38-40, we find the story of David preparing to fight the giant Goliath. Saul, with good intentions, dresses David (a boy) in his (adult-size) armor. David recognizes that this won't work and removes the armor. He chooses instead to use his sling, which he is skilled at. David proceeds to defeat the giant.

Saul's story is a common story. With the best of intentions, we attempt to fix each other all the time, by telling someone else what to do or passing along prescriptions of what worked for us. In most cases, these suggestions do nothing to help move the person forward or succeed.

Saul's actions in this story give us several powerful coaching questions:

*When are you most like Saul? What's your track record with telling and fixing? Be honest. How might Saul have been more helpful? How can you be more helpful?*

David's choices give us even more gold. David's insight—his "aha!" moment—is what I really want for you. David became aware of the skills and abilities he already had that would work for him in this situation. He recognized that God had been preparing him for years for this very moment.

*What skills and abilities are already being perfected within you? How do you see that God has prepared you for today's challenges and opportunities?*

Now turn your attention to those you influence, lead, pastor, coach, or mentor. Who are the "Saul's"? Who are the "David's"? How can you help each of them to live out the lessons in this ageless story?

## **Coach Your Way through the Scriptures—How Psalm 139 Shows Us Our Greatness**

The scriptures hold many powerful coaching lessons, and we're exploring some of them in this e-book. Consider Psalm 139, which talks about how well God knows us, from before we were even born. And at the end of the verse, David invites God to "search me, test me, know my thoughts," because he wants God to know him even more.

There are powerful coaching lessons wrapped up in this concept for the many people walking around this world feeling inadequate. They don't think they have anything to contribute. They don't feel like they measure up to someone else or other people in general. Maybe you sometimes feel like this.

*How would your life be different if you knew that God knew everything about you and still loved you unconditionally? What would be different today—right now—if you knew that you were fearfully and wonderfully made? What negative tapes or sabotage would be erased if you knew you were created just the way you are, intentionally, by God?*

As we coach people and use a coaching approach to ministry, we can show people their greatness by reminding them of God's unconditional love.

As a pastor, one of my favorite expressions was that "God's fingerprints are all over us." When you see life from that perspective, everything you've named as a "mistake" or even a "tragedy" can be seen as the loving work and protection of God, guiding us through life's lessons in his own perfect way.

*Who in your life needs to be reminded that God knows and loves them?*

## **Coach Your Way through the Scriptures—Jesus Knew All about Direct Communication**

In Matthew 4:18-20, Jesus comes upon Peter and his brother Andrew as they were fishing. Jesus calls them to follow him and "fish for people."

Talk about direct communication! Jesus gives an invitation that's direct and succinct, "Come, follow me." Students of our coach training programs are usually pretty excited about learning how to ask more powerful questions, but they're not always as interested in the lessons about direct communication.

This example from Jesus reminds us just how valuable it is to be direct. At once, Peter and Andrew followed him. They didn't need to ponder, or think about it. They were ready.

Our churches and our communities are full of people who are waiting to be asked and invited—waiting to receive this kind of direct communication, where there is nothing standing between them and the decision to follow.

*What is the invitation that others around you need to hear? How can you remove anything standing in the way of their decision to act?*

## **Coach Your Way through the Scriptures—The Story of Lazarus**

Let's look to John 11:38-44 for the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This story serves as a metaphor for what we do as pastors and coaches. In this passage of scripture, Jesus models three things for us:

### **1. We Care**

We read that “Jesus wept” at the tomb of Lazarus. In ministry, we work from a place of concern and respect for the individual. Caring is in our being; it's part of our DNA.

By creating a safe space for others and meeting them at their own personal tomb, we demonstrate that we care.

*What is your “caring quotient”? What is the relationship between the caring that you receive from others and your ability to genuinely care for others? What are three simple ways you can care more for others?*

### **2. We Call Forth**

The first thing Jesus does is have the rock removed from the opening to the tomb. I love this about Jesus. He wasn't afraid of what might be in the tomb. He was willing to endure whatever came out of the tomb.

Just as Jesus called for Lazarus to come out of the tomb, we also, empowered by God, “call forth” the greatness in people.

*What keeps you from “calling forth”? Who calls forth greatness in you? When was the last time you called forth the greatness of another person?*

### **3. We Unbind**

When Lazarus came out of his tomb, he was still bound by the burial clothes. Jesus ordered them unloosed. Jesus invites us to help people get “unbound” from their old “cloths.” Their old cloths could be: limiting beliefs, self-defeating behaviors, additions, etc.

Jesus also invites us to help others put on new clothes, such as new perspectives, new ways of being, new actions to take, etc. We do this by:

- Asking powerful questions
- Creating new awareness
- Clearing up the view with our own version of “Windex” glass cleaner

As we close this study of coaching lessons from the scriptures, I want to remind you that there is at least one more Lazarus in your world, waiting for you to care, call forth, and unbind.

## **Coaching Your Way through the Scriptures—The Man by the Pool of Bethesda**

The scriptures tell us that the Pool of Bethesda had healing properties and people gathered there to cure their ailments. In John 5:6, we learn that Jesus visited the pool and saw a paralyzed man who had been lying there for many years. Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be well?”

This is often referred to as an insensitive question, but it’s actually a very powerful one, and one of my favorite questions that Jesus asked.

The man responded by pointing to everyone else, complaining that no one would help him get into the healing water, placing the responsibility on them to put him in the pool. Jesus doesn’t condemn everyone else, he tells the man to pick himself up and get into the pool. He’s essentially saying, “This is your responsibility. You can do this yourself.”

The broader story here is that we need to be placing responsibility where it needs to be placed. So many churches are incredibly codependent and enable unhealthy behavior. The question Jesus asked, “Do you want to be well?” models healthy boundaries and a way of relating. He’s not enabling the man by being afraid to be a bit edgy and asking a tough question.

How did the man respond? He got up and picked up his bed and began walking.

*What are some challenging questions you could be asking? Where do you need to take more responsibility? Where do other people need to take more responsibility for themselves, and will you challenge them to do that?*

Here are a few of my favorite challenging questions:

- What is the truth about this situation?
- What’s the best use of your time and energy today?
- What will you no longer tolerate?

- What will it take for you to become part of the solution?
- What rules or traditions do you have that keep getting in the way?
- What kinds of problems and crises do you keep attracting?
- What consumes your time to the point that it distracts you from attaining your goals?
- Where and when are you playing it safe?
- When are you most likely to become defensive?
- What are you pretending not to know?
- What's the cost of not changing?

I've had the experience of coaching individuals and teams where the simple question, "So, what's your responsibility in this?" relieves them of weeks of torment, as they had been trying to solve a problem that was not theirs to solve! How can you get the man or woman in *your* story to walk to the pool?

## **Coach Your Way through the Scriptures—Coaching Lessons from Easter Weekend**

"It may feel like Friday, but Sunday's a-coming!" —Tony Campolo

As we conclude our look toward the scriptures for coaching inspiration, we end with the story of the resurrection in Luke 24.

There are three days over the Easter weekend—Friday, when all hope feels lost; Saturday, when we just don't know; and Sunday, when "Wow!" everything's different. In Tony Campolo's classic sermon, he talks about how many of us were stuck at Friday or wallowing in Saturday, the unknown, and we have to remember that "Sunday's a-comin'."

The women who found Jesus' empty tomb probably felt a bit foolish going there. Even though they were going to prepare his body for the burial, they were also clinging to the hope that he *had* risen.

As helpless and desolate as they felt about his death, they were continuing on with the next step—preparing him for burial—because that was what there was to do. And that's what we all have to do, when we're unsure or we feel hopeless—just go and do the next step that you do know.

*Which day is most like you right now? Hopeless, unsure, or "Wow!" What helps you move into Sunday when you're stuck in Friday or Saturday? More importantly, what is your next step?*

Just do it! And see what happens.



***Thank You!***

Thank you for reading this book. I hope that it has helped you to see the tangible ways that coaching can be used in ministry. Go ahead ... coach your way through the scriptures.

I would also like to encourage you to consider pursuing additional coach training. I invite you to explore the coach training that we offer on our website at <http://coaching4clergy.com>. I guarantee that your coach training experience will inspire and excite you even further about the possibilities in ministry.

Again, thank you for reading this book.

Enjoy coaching!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Val".

J. Val Hastings, MCC

## About Val



J. Val Hastings, MCC, is the Founder and President of Coaching4Clergy, which provides specialized training for pastors, church leaders, and coaches. Val hired his first coach while he was pastoring at a local United Methodist church. His progress was noticeable by all, and he began to wonder, “What if I adopted a coaching approach to ministry? What if the larger church adopted a coaching approach to ministry?” In that moment a vision began to emerge—a global vision of *Every Pastor, Ministry Staff and Church Leader a Coach*. Today that serves as the mission of Coaching4Clergy.

Val is the author of the book *The Next Great Awakening: How to Empower God’s People with a Coach Approach to Ministry* and *Change Your Questions, Change Your Church*, as well as an anthology book, *Ministry 3.0: How Today’s Church Leaders are using Coaching to Transform Ministry*. He is also the author of the e-book *1-2-3 Coach: Start Coaching in 60 Minutes*. Val currently holds the designation of Master Certified Coach through the International Coach Federation, its highest coaching designation.

## Contact Us

Phone: 877.381.2672

Email: [val@coaching4clergy.com](mailto:val@coaching4clergy.com)

Web Site: [www.coaching4clergy.com](http://www.coaching4clergy.com)