

Journal of CHRISTIAN COACHING

INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS FOR COACHES & LEADERS

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Assessments: Using Inventories and Profiling Tools in Coaching

BY CHAD HALL, PCC

When Jill first engaged me as her coach, she requested help with two issues. First, she thought I might be able to help her establish new patterns for dealing with some difficult people at work. Second, she wanted help getting more done at work. As she described it, a number of speed bumps were slowing down her productivity and retarding her ascension in the medium-sized firm where she was a junior partner. “Fair enough,” I thought, “these sound like reasonable issues.” I also wondered if her two challenges might be connected.

As part of our intake, I asked Jill what kinds of inventories or assessments she had taken and if she still had the results. Jill thought a while before recalling, “The only thing like that is this *StrengthsFinder* instrument I took last month after our Senior Partner gave each of us a book about working out of our strengths. Is that kind of thing helpful in coaching?” The answer proved to be a resounding “Yes.”

The *Clifton StrengthsFinder* profiles 34 different strength themes and highlights a person’s top five. Along with other assessments, inventories, and tools, I’ve found it valuable for helping a client learn more about how she shows up with others and the pathways she takes toward success. It turns out Jill’s chief strengths included *Woo* (the ability to win others over), *Responsibility* (psychological ownership of anything you commit to), *Communication* (preference to explain and describe things through speaking and writing), *Achiever* (driven and constant need for achievement), and *Self-Assurance* (faith in one’s ability).

As is sometimes the case, pathways can also become ruts. A few coaching sessions revealed that Jill was pressing her strengths in ways that were not working for her. In fact, they were working against her. In her zeal to *Achieve*, she started running over some people in the firm. And though she had

the strength of *Woo*, she was choosing not to exercise it at work—thinking such relational energy was not appropriate in the stodgy firm corridors. Not only that, but she pressed her *Communication* strength into service regularly to let the world know of her *Self-assurance*.

Being able to identify her strengths gave Jill handles for understanding what shifts she needed to make to keep from sabotaging her relationships and career. As she began to utilize her *Woo* at work and *Communication* on behalf of others, she saw almost immediate results. Those “difficult people” started to align with Jill, who they discovered to be a wonderful spokesperson for them and their achievements. In fact, Jill took *Responsibility* for making sure everyone shared in the spotlight of success.

In my coaching efforts, I make use of a handful of assessments, picking and choosing which ones to use with each client, depending on the needs of the client. Some assessments point to somewhat fixed aspects of personality (e.g., MBTI, FIRO Element B, StrengthsFinder, RightPath, and DiSC). Others assess some particular aspect of emotion or behavior (e.g., Reversal Theory’s Individual State Report, 360 feedback instruments, and Emotional Intelligence Assessment).

As it turned out, Jill made partner within a year. Better yet, her energy is up, her relationships are solid, and she’s making winners of those around her. Jill’s story highlights the value that assessments can have in the role of coaching. I suspect it would have taken us three times longer to identify what was working and not working for her without the insights provided from the *StrengthsFinder*. ■



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Coaching Non-Christians: Shining a Light Respectfully

BY MICHELLE HOLLOWOM, MA, LPC, CPC

I had a client I’ll call Lisa that welcomed the idea of spirituality as part of the coaching experience, but wanted to refer to God as a type of feminine “Source.” *What do you do with that?* Well, here’s what we did—we used my client’s terminology during the sessions because I was not uncomfortable with my client’s view of God being different from mine. This flexibility created a climate where spiritual exploration was encouraged.

Each client comes to us at a different level of “knowing” God and a different level of desire to know God, but the coaching process must occur in a zone safe from rhetoric, persuasion, or “Christian convincing.” Our relationships with clients must be one of safety and trust...which includes fully accepting a client with his or her own beliefs and not trying to talk them out of them.

If at any time you find yourself arguing with a client, you have already gone too far. If a client starts to feel “evangelized” or like he is being “sold” the gospel, he will quickly begin to feel like an object to be won instead of a person to be experienced. Trust is lost when a client feels like she is being persuaded to do something she is not ready to do. Adequately harmonizing with a client’s readiness gives the client utmost respect and space to just be themselves. A skilled, sensitive Christian coach will be able to challenge with insightful questions without pushing or prodding.

Every client, no matter their spiritual orientation, is either walking toward God or away from God. I see the Christian coach as a beacon of light for the non-Christian, helping him or her to experience the goodness of God’s nature. And for the client who is resistant toward traditional religious terminology, this can be done quite effectively without mentioning religious terms, scripture and verse, church going, or the like.

The client I previously mentioned wanted to make some major changes in her life toward safety, self-care, and healthy relationship-building. Though my client was not seeking “Christian” coaching, nor was my client open to “biblical” encouragement, my client set goals that were in fact quite godly in nature. And I remember recognizing how God was slowly leading her toward his truth and love. At the time, I didn’t know just how transformational it would be! Two years after our coaching had ended, this client called my practice again and excitedly reported that she had indeed found Christ who had transformed her life and purpose. For me, that kind of impact lies at the heart of Christian coaching.

As Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud articulate in their book, *How People Grow*, “All growth is spiritual growth.” If this is true, then a coach has one of the grandest privileges on earth: to join a client wherever he or she is on their journey, and encourage them onward. It means that their growth process is somehow divinely directed.

God is always at work in and around the people in our sphere of influence. From my client’s first phone call to my practice, there is a greater purpose unfolding on both ends of the wire. The client’s desired outcome is to grow, develop, expand, improve, achieve, and change...which means that the Holy Spirit is already at work in and around them, stirring their soul with the winds of change. Now I can come alongside that client and join in the work. I then can ask God, “What part of the growth process will I be engaged in with this person? Where do I partner with the already active Holy Spirit to bring about the encouragement the person needs to move forward?” ■



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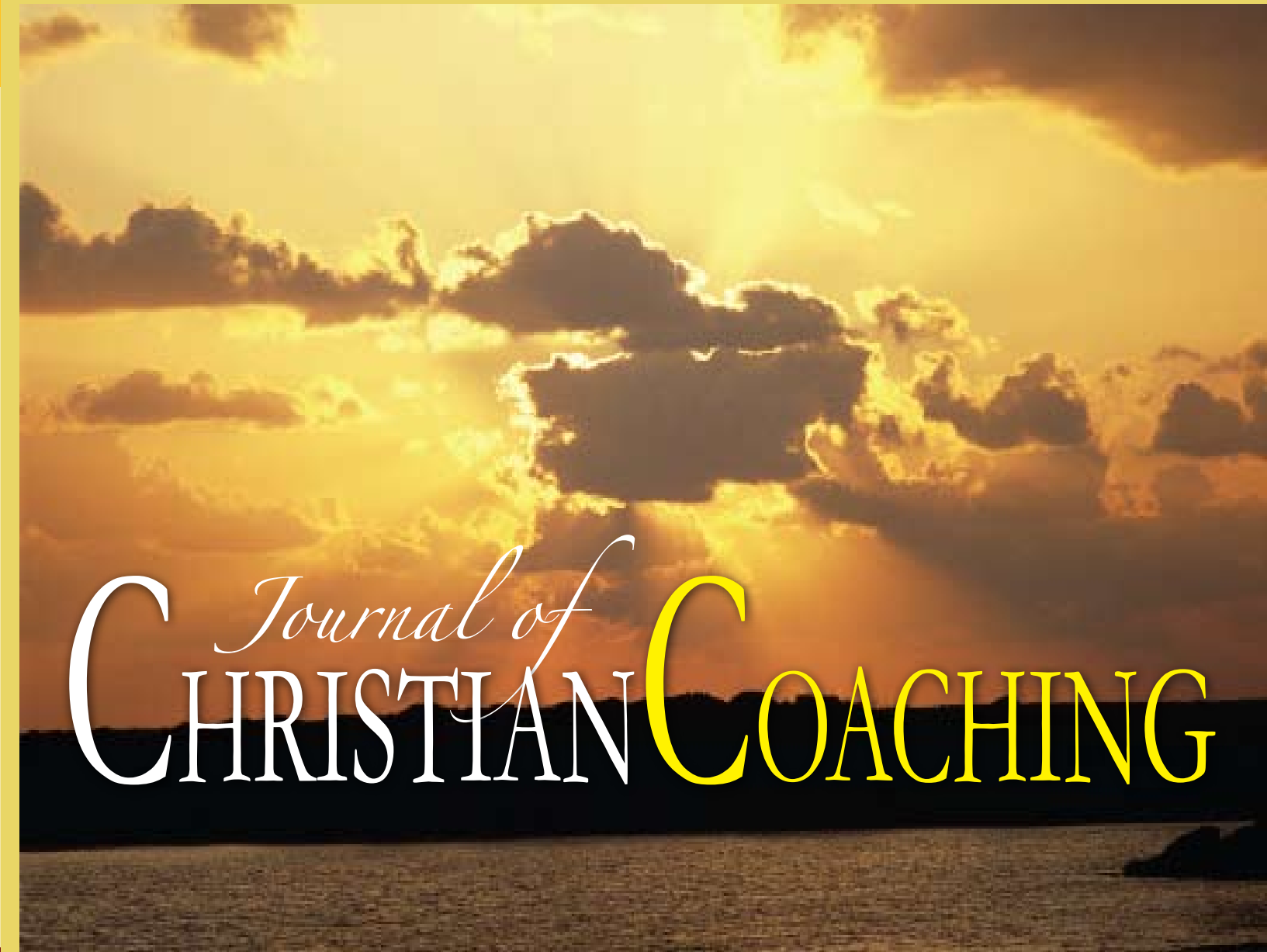
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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

The Center for the Advancement of Christian Coaching is looking for someone in the Minneapolis area who enjoys a fast-paced environment, has high attention to detail and follow-through, is proficient in Microsoft Office, knowledgeable in systems and process, and able to provide warm, professional customer service. Contact Mary Verstraete, mary@caccoaching.com.



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