

# Discover: Coaching!



## Christian Coaching vs. Mentoring: What's the Difference?

What's the difference between coaching and mentoring? At first, they seem very similar. Both are one-on-one relationships where they coach or mentor invests in someone he or she believes in. Both involve regular meetings, use covenants to structure the relationship, and offer support, encouragement and accountability to help people grow.

Now here's the difference. A mentor is a more senior individual who *imparts* what God has given (wisdom, opportunities, counsel) to a more junior person. A coach, however, *draws out* the abilities God has put in someone else.

Here's an example of each approach. A pastor has a job opportunity that would move his career forward but requires relocating across the country and leaving friends and family behind:

### The Mentoring Approach

"That sounds like a great opportunity! It must be rewarding to be recognized like this.

"Yeah, it sure is!"

"I had a couple of opportunities like this when I was a youth pastor. One was a great move, the other was a disaster."

"What was the difference?"

"One was a young, suburban community church with a lot of people in our age group. My wife really thrived on the fellowship, and she loved the cultural opportunities in the city. The other was a country church in Nebraska where people were spread out all over. They offered me 40% more than what I had been making, plus the senior pastor role, which was a big step up. But my wife never felt like she fit in, she never really made friends, and it was very hard on her and our marriage. In retrospect, she didn't really want go but she was deferring to me. I didn't really tune into what my wife was saying, and that was a mistake. What are you hearing from your wife on this decision?"

### The Coaching Approach

"That sounds like a great opportunity! It must be rewarding to be recognized like this.

"Yeah, it sure is."

"Let's think it through. How would this change your life relationally?"

"Well, probably the biggest difference is with my parents. We'll miss going over for Sunday dinner, and the free babysitting. Vacations and dates will be a lot tougher. Oh! Mom and dad are going to really miss doing the grandparent thing. I better talk this through with them."

"Is that a step you want to take?"

"Yes. I'll do that this Sunday."

"How else will this affect your relational life?"

"We'll be able to make new friends eventually. It'll be harder for Patrice, because I'll be spending a lot of time at the church while she is stuck at home with the kids. Her mom's group is a big deal for her. We better talk that one over, too. I can check and see if the church has a mom's group, too..."

The mentor is showing the younger pastor the ropes and giving wise counsel gained from life experience. He's conveying information the client might need by sharing personal story and drawing a lesson from it. Mentoring focuses around one person imparting to another.

Instead of giving counsel, the coach asks questions to help the pastor think things through and take action on what he chooses to do. By pushing him to think instead of offering advice, the coach builds the

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pastor's decision-making ability. And because the pastor developed his own solutions, he really "owns" them and is more likely to carry them out.

When I'm mentoring, I'm teaching a person, letting him draw from me or learn from my experience. When I'm coaching, I'm pushing a person to draw from his or her own resources and experiences. *Coaching is helping people learn instead of teaching them.*

*Adapted from the book, Leadership Coaching, by Tony Stoltzfus*  
To purchase this book, [click here](#).