



Episode 30: Why Every Pastor Needs a Coach

Featuring: Mingo Palacios & Dave Mitton

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Transcript:

Mingo Palacios: For our listening audience, glad to have you. Mingo here, your podcast host.

Certainly a pleasure today as I have sat with Pastor Dave Mitton and his team and several pastors from all over the country as we've been talking about how to develop a pastors' network for the purpose of not just becoming a more healthy leader laterally, with others to your left and to your right, but really to test and I think to validate the kind of leader that we think we are.

There's been probably 30 or so pastors gathered here at the Saddleback Ranch for the last two days talking about the ebbs and flows and the pains and the challenges and the victories that come

with not just being a church that leads people well, but being a pastor and a team that lead other pastors and teams well.

Pastor Dave, thanks for joining us.

Pastor Dave: Absolutely, absolutely.

Mingo Palacios: One of the things that we were talking about before we hit the record button for this episode was the potential sourness that comes with the idea of having a coach. Somebody said it in the room a few hours back, that pastors can be some of the most pessimistic people, the most guarded people when it comes to somebody saying “hey, I’ve got something that can help you.”

Pastor Dave: Right.

Mingo Palacios: Would you speak to me about that, in response to that statement, but also really your larger purpose for wanting to get people together and really coach them well?

Pastor Dave: Absolutely. We can all be suspicious about “what do you want from me?”, but I think a good coach starts with what they want *for* you.

In my mind there’s a difference between training and developing. When you’re training, you’re on a determined course; now I have an agenda for your life. But when I’m a developer, I’m trying to find out what you’re created to be and help bring out your best talent and ability. So I think defining what kind of coach you’re talking about is really important. Both have their place.

For me, though, I really believe that if I want to accelerate my growth and development, a coach or a mentor in that area is critical. If I want to do better financially, a financial coach. If I want to do better in my marriage, a marriage coach. If I want to do better in my leadership, a leadership coach. Wherever I want to excel, finding someone that is a model and a mentor to me in that actually accelerates my developmental progress.

I actually have the worldview that says that God answers most of our prayers by sending us a leader. I think the church is the answer to so many people's prayers in their community. They're hurting and broken, and the minute they discover that church, they're going to hear message. They're going to hear answers that are going to help their life, help them recover their lives, maybe even help restore their marriages and families.

God answers most of our prayers by sending us a leader. That's the way I approach it. I'm looking for those that can help me develop, but at the same time understanding that I also have a place being an answer to somebody else's prayer.

Mingo Palacios: That's good. I constantly view leadership through the lens that I've experienced myself. There have been seasons when I've had really great leaders – pastors that employ me, who have been active in seeing me grow – and then I've been in seasons where there have been pastors who just didn't have the bandwidth to coach me well. I felt like I was a sailboat without a headwind. I had everything, I thought that I was capable and I was able, but I just didn't have the fuel. I didn't have the direction that was allowing me the greatest potential.

Do you see the role of a coach, even for somebody who's not a senior pastor – is it okay to jump outside of my circle and go chase down a potential coach? Should I be waiting for somebody to come and approach me who says, “Hey, I see something in you”? Are there rules of engagement?

Pastor Dave: Really good question. I think number one is always seek out influencers in your life if you want to grow. To wait is to really miss the opportunity. If you're waiting for somebody to recognize you or see you, you're not being proactive. A big part of leadership is proactive. So number one, I would say seek out and believe for people that can influence and mentor. Sometimes that's a structured or more identified relationship; sometimes it's just a real personal relationship. But that's a big part of it.

The other part is we're all individuals. You asked the question about waiting on your pastor, if you're on a team. We're all responsible for our own growth. Growth becomes the great alienator, unfortunately, sometimes. Sometimes we can outgrow our leaders if they're not growing with us.

But at the same time I'd answer it this way: I want my team getting constant coaching. In fact, if I know that they're getting coaching, I feel like they're bringing something valuable to the team. If I have to become their source for everything, I'm just not that good. I don't know everything. So I would prefer my staff and my team learning from the best places they can, and then we cross-pollinate. They bring that back to us. Now it becomes a growth-enriching environment.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, it's mutual learning. You get to put something on the table and talk about it and pick it apart and move certain things ahead of other things and prioritize what you think would work best for your team.

Pastor Dave: In our team, in our staff context, if I have a great staff member that I've got their heart, I've got their loyalty, but they may not have the competency, I will invest heavily into their coaching to make sure that they get the right mentors. Now they appreciate me more as a pastor, because now I'm not their limiting factor.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, you don't become their ceiling.

Pastor Dave: Exactly. I want them to win, so I want to give them the resources they need.

Mingo Palacios: Could you speak to me about the temptation – right now there's a trend to be innovative. Everybody wants to write their own thing or discover their own thing. Constantly I hear, from some of the wisest, more experienced leaders, that imitation does not mean you're a lame duck in the sense of leadership development. Could you speak more to that?

Pastor Dave: Really good. I work with a lot of leaders, and a lot of leaders, especially young leaders, want to find their way and have that level of creativity.

Mingo Palacios: I certainly do. You're looking at somebody who wants to be that kind of person.

Pastor Dave: And I validate that. The challenge with that, though, it's a lot of energy to be creative. When you have a model, your learning curve

accelerates exponentially. If I implement that model, not only can I use it for myself as a leader, but I can also share that model with my team. Now we together grow exponentially.

Once we master something that we're learning, then is where I think the real place of innovation and creativity comes. To innovate something you've not yet mastered, I'm not sure how...

Mingo Palacios: We would just call it foolish. That sounds foolish to me. [laughs] I'll say it for the sake of it. You don't have to call me dumb, Dave. You don't have to call me dumb.

Pastor Dave: Sometimes when people are talking about innovation, I feel like Dr. Phil. "So how's that workin' for ya?"

Mingo Palacios: That's really good. You said something really keen also earlier about measuring, and that's something innovators tend to steer away from. I don't want you to measure the thing I'm trying to invent over here. Give me a little bit of time.

Pastor Dave: We like to say it like this: you cannot lead what you don't manage; you cannot manage what you don't measure; and you don't care about what you don't measure. If I'm not measuring it, then I don't really care about it. But if I measure it, I can manage it, and then if I'm managing it, I can actually lead it.

Mingo Palacios: You even dissected the idea between leading something and managing something, because there are some people who say "I'm a leader. I'm not really a great manager." You definitely have some valid points behind that. You want to break that down for our listening audience?

Pastor Dave: Yeah. In other words, you know the school of thought that there's leaders and managers? A lot of times if a person is a leader, they'll start a lot of stuff but it doesn't get sustained.

A manager can manage something, but it doesn't get developed. I think a leader has to be able to, at different times, put on the hat of a manager to make sure that what he's leading actually gets sustained.

At the same time, the person who's that manager has to put on the hat of a leader to make sure something actually happens, that progress and risks are taken.

So I think there's a place for both of those, but if we separate them too far, then we don't really build anything sustainable.

Mingo Palacios: That's good. All of it is so rich. I hope that even just the surface level of this conversation about the importance of a coach and the reality of operating as a team and not writing the idea off of being a master or an implementer or taking a model – all of those concepts speak to the depth of your experience. It seems like you're obviously speaking from seasons and seasons of both successes and failures. Right?

Pastor Dave: Absolutely.

Mingo Palacios: This is a collective conversation about all of those things.

You uniquely have been given the opportunity to lead, on behalf of Saddleback, several pastors in their churches in a network. One of the things that we're going to be releasing in the next several months

are these networking opportunities for teams to be formed in different regions. You want to break that down for us?

Pastor Dave: We host a Purpose Driven network in the Northwest – actually in Olympia, Washington – and we take churches through the systematic implementation of what it means to be a purpose driven church. How do we actually implement becoming a church that’s living out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, and how do we actually implement the 5 purposes that Jesus teaches?

When we work with churches and we actually walk them through it, their churches get healthier. They experience real team development. There’s a real growth, there’s a real strengthening of the culture that begins to happen.

It’s really fun to watch that happen for people, to really feel like they’re moving their church on a journey with a very clear roadmap of how to implement and become a purpose driven, healthy church.

Mingo Palacios: That’s good. And it’s not just happening for your community in Olympia, Washington, but there are several that will be starting all across the country.

Pastor Dave: There are regional coaches all over the U.S. These are guys who just love pastors. They love leaders, and they want to water the dream of other leaders and be a part of their story, be a part of their dream.

Mingo Palacios: Just to be clear, these aren’t guys who bought a kit and somehow are now operating a big hollow balloon of leadership. These are guys who are tried and tested. They pastor their own congregations,

they've been in the saddle for several seasons; they themselves are practitioners, which is a very important thing.

Pastor Dave: Agreed. There's the message, there's the model, and the churches of the coaches', they're model churches. They're actually working through, figuring this stuff out in their own churches and then they're mentoring other churches on how to actually implement it in theirs.

Mingo Palacios: That's so good. Just for the sake of geography, I know that you're in Olympia, Washington; how far do you reach when it comes to people who are engaged in your personal network? Do you have people coming from just the particular city of Olympia, or are you reaching farther than that? If somebody listening goes "oh man, that's just an hour or two away" – is that still a potential?

Pastor Dave: We actually have people that come from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Canada, California. Apparently they find the value in coming. We try to make it a real value for them.

Mingo Palacios: That's great. I'm hoping that just in hearing this, people see and hear and get a sense that there are a bunch of things that, even in just hearing the tip of the iceberg, I bet you there's a lot more behind that – and that they would be diligent in finding a healthy coach. Not somebody who's just out to do a consultation or to build some sort of self-business or whatever, but really pastor to pastor, church to church, sustainable relationship. I love that Purpose Driven is pastor development.

Pastor Dave: What I love about it, Mingo, is that the guys in the network, they're not trying to build their own thing. They really do care about helping an emerging generation of pastors, or even helping them have a time

of revitalization and renewal in their churches. They love pastors and they love the work that pastors do and want to help them win. That's the biggest agenda.

Mingo Palacios: That's great. For the listening audience, we'll have links to some of the coaching opportunities and some of these gatherings as it pertains to this conversation.

While you're on the line with us, Dave, what's the next thing for you? Or how can people get connected directly to you inside of your own coaching circle?

Pastor Dave: They can visit us at our website at www.go2ccc.org, or email me directly at davem@go2ccc.org. Our Essential Training starts October 12th. If you're interested, I would love to hear from you.

Mingo Palacios: Now you've put me on blast, because now I've got to get this episode up and out. [laughs]

Pastor Dave: Hey, you asked. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: You're right. That's perfect. For everybody listening, I just appreciate you guys so much. Thanks for taking the time, even if it's 14 minutes on your way to work or maybe on your way back to work.

I want you to see this as maybe a wake-up call that you need to get a coach in your life. Not somebody who's going to send you Instagram posts and tag you on Facebook feeds, but somebody who's actually going to get actively involved in your ministry, somebody who's going to ask you hard questions.

And not somebody who is outside of the realm of ministry – although that is great, to have a diversified circle, I'm talking about having a seasoned pastor coming alongside of you and coaching you towards your greatest potential as an emerging leader. Or revitalization.

Pastor Dave: Absolutely.

Mingo Palacios: Both of them are so critical for the local church to do as much as it possibly can to help people right where they are.

Pastor Dave: Amen.

Mingo Palacios: Dave, thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

Pastor Dave: Thank you, Mingo.

Mingo Palacios: Absolutely. We'll talk to you guys later. Thanks.

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