

Coaching in the Church: Leadership and Growing the Skills of Those Around You

Martyn Snow and Huw Thomas (Grove P115, 2008)

One of the blessings of Grove booklets is that they can be read in an hour or so, but can sow the seed of a new way of doing ministry, life or both. And if one good idea is worth £5, then at £3.50 Grove booklets are amazing value.

How does the church grow leaders? And how do we grow the sort of leaders who grow the gifts and skills of those around them? Coaching is an increasingly popular way of developing people. While practitioners debate the difference between coaching and mentoring, this booklet goes straight to a series of definitions: 'coaching moves people forward; coaching keeps the learner in control; coaching is about developing people's performance in exercising their gifts; coaching is about personal growth.'

The second chapter gives a biblical rationale for the concept of 'moving people on', looking at Moses (taking people to the brink of the promised land) Jesus (enabling people to learn), and Paul - setting goals and having clarity of purpose.

This is a very practical book. There are a number of activities to help the reader apply what they've read to their current context. And from chapter 3 onwards the reader is given a process for identifying those who might be most open to moving forward, and a four-step coaching process. This consists of reviewing (how are things going?); setting positive goals, engagement, and reflection. Each of these stages is outlined carefully, with helpful boxes listing (for example) techniques for effective questioning, five key questions to ask, ways of establishing and refining goals, and considerations for a action plan.

Coaching has become something of a buzz word, and it's not a panacea for all ills. But the booklet quotes Bryn Hughes' point that churches face just the same issues as other organisations when it comes to developing people, and sending people on courses is not enough. Development needs to be 'continuous, high profile and rooted in the workplace.' Coaching might well be one aspect of working with people which would fit into other aspects of the bigger vision for the church.

As the authors note, many books have been written on the subject of church leadership. So why read this one? I can think of a number of good reasons:

- While using a common management tool, it does not do so uncritically, but the case is well argued, and the concept of coaching is rooted in scripture.
- The authors refer to other writers and management theorists, but it's not a book which assumes prior knowledge of concepts or writers.
- It's very practical, providing a simple process which could be easily applied or adapted to a whole variety of contexts.

I would have liked to see some suggested further reading as well as the list of references. But a simple and useful tool which could be really effective in helping to growing leaders. And it might provide a good tool to use with those who've *done* the CPAS *Growing Leaders* course, providing a framework to help those leaders continue developing.

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