Elizabeth Hixson, M.A., with Katie Brazelton, Ph.D.

How do you incorporate Christ into the coaching session with your clients? Elizabeth Hixson, M.A., spoke with Dr. Katie Brazelton to explore this important topic, which we are privileged to share with you today!

Elizabeth: Katie, what’s your journey? Can you give a little background about yourself and how you got involved in life coaching?

Katie: Sure, I grew up in the 1950’s in a middle-class family with godly, loving parents and seven awesome brothers and sisters. With my dad being a career Navy man, we were stationed in Guam, the Marshall Islands, Hawaii, and eventually California. I think this gave me a sense of adventure, freedom to dream, and a belief that life is like a puzzle we put together over time. The pieces of the jigsaw are God-first, family, friends, your past, present, where you hope to go in life, your spiritual gifts, what you value, your innate talents and learned skills, your ministry and vocation, your longings weighed against your seasonal roles, and your ability to adapt to circumstances, overcome obstacles, and take risks.
By the mid-80’s, I dreamed continually of discovering my life purpose and writing a book about that journey. So with pure Navy-blood coursing through my veins, I traveled to Calcutta, India, and was given the rare opportunity of sitting with Mother Teresa. I asked her to tell me how she felt about the Calling on her life from Jesus. With a broad smile and a gentle pat on my arm, she told me that working for Christ was “pure joy!”

Years later, my spirit leapt as I remembered her words. At that moment, I knew it would be “pure joy” to do what I felt God had commanded me to do. I was to continue down my investigative pathway toward my unique purpose, so I could write a book about it. With this platform, I could walk alongside those who were searching for their purpose. I honestly thought that doing so would completely fulfill God’s calling on my life, thus lifting that passionate ache off my heart.

Imagine my surprise when God nudged me to rewrite my first 1985, unpublished book, so He could have it published as a four-part book series on the same day in March 2005. I was humbled and overjoyed, and I believed (albeit foolishly) that I had finished my One Big Thing, my God-given assignment on earth. My plan at that point was simply to return to the 50-minute coaching and strategic 2-day LifePlan coaching that I had been doing since 1992 and 1995, respectively. I was done, yes? No. God had only been warming up for a Bigger Reveal. Elizabeth, maybe we’ll have time to circle back around to this topic for what happened next.

Elizabeth: Sounds really good to me. What is your coaching niche?

Katie: I coach and teach students in my school [Life Purpose Coaching Centers International®] to coach only from a life purpose perspective. That means they can choose any niche from marriage, finances, career, ministry, health, etc., because they are coaching under the umbrella of God’s plan for their clients’ lives.
Elizabeth: When we say “Christ in the coaching session” what comes to your mind? How does that mindset change the way one’s coaching approach?

Katie: What comes to mind for “Christ in the coaching session” is that we are to coach from an unabashedly Christian perspective, freely putting forth questions about God’s miracles, promises, and guidance in a client’s life.

I don’t believe we coaches were put on this earth to make people rich, famous, popular, or even successful, but to help them know Christ and follow Him. We were put on this earth to coach people to follow Him more obediently, so if He gives us a command, we obey it immediately and joyfully. And, I freely admit, I require coaching in this regard myself!

The mindset of “Always Remember Christ” and relying on Him in the coaching session changes everything! When I coach, I know my only purpose must be to do it in a way that bows down to Christ.

With all my imperfections, I still strive to be a coach for Christ and teach other coaches to be the same. Coaches can use their passions, skills, and brilliance for Him, instead of paying homage to themselves or being a people-pleaser. Christian coaches and their coachee are approved and loved by God, and He is our Audience of One.

Elizabeth: How can a coach be encouraged to make Christ the center of the coaching session?

Katie: Great question! Making Christ the center of the coaching session is easier when we have a brief devotion with the client. For example, Mark 10:46-52 is a Scripture passage that has profoundly changed my life, and it’s one I encourage coaches to use in their sessions with clients—after first meditating on it themselves. It recounts the blind man Bartimaeus receiving His sight from Jesus (who was actually on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified). It’s amazing to me that Jesus even stopped, let alone asked the man, “What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus answers, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

Before coaches ever ask their clients the incredible question Jesus asked the blind man, they first need to ask themselves, “What do I want Jesus to do for me and to help me see?” In this way, they will be better equipped to help clients pray for Jesus’ help. Coaches and coachees might ask for something tangible from our Lord or that their eyes to be opened to the truth about a sugar addiction, spiritual growth, a job offer, their parenting, fears, friendships, etc. I have found this to be one definitive way a coach is encouraged to make Christ the center of the coaching session.
**Elizabeth:** What happens when a coach ignores Christ in the coaching session?

**Katie:** Well, to answer that, let’s first talk about what happens when a client ignores Christ. For example, I once coached a woman who came to my home for the two-day planning session about her unique life purpose. The woman, who was a Women’s Ministry Leader and referred to me by her pastor, came with her mind made up that she would have an affair with a married man. I tried to steer her in a godly direction to no avail. Her disregard for the Word of God and a pure life led me to terminate our coach-client relationship; I could not continue coaching her when her decisions were leading her away from Christ.

Now, to follow-up on what happens when the coach ignores Christ. Do any Christians working for the Lord really want to find out? Are they willing to reach that point—harming clients, damaging their own soul, calling down disfavor from our Creator, Savior, and King? No! So let me tell you how I really feel: It’s tampering with danger and bordering on evil to ignore Christ in the coaching session.

**Elizabeth:** Can you share a favorite resource, coaching exercise, or Scripture that you often use when you coach?

**Katie:** Yes, of course. I believe that coaches must make it a priority to open and close their coaching sessions in prayer. We teach coaches to personalize Scripture passages to pray over their clients. For example, why not insert their client’s name in the first line of a Psalm of David, like this one that follows?

“Carol, in times of trouble, may the Lord answer your cry. May the name of the God of Jacob keep you safe from all harm” (adapted from Psalm 20:1 NLT).

Another passage I like to personalize and pray over my clients is this…

“Therefore, since you, Carol, are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, strip off every weight that slows you down, especially the sin that so easily hinders your progress. And run with endurance the race that God has set before you, Carol” (adapted from Hebrews 12:1, NLT).

Of course, there are hundreds of other passages coaches can use to pray with and for their clients.
Elizabeth: What are some ways for a coach to rely more fully on Holy Spirit?

Katie: They can surround themselves with prayer partners and ask their clients to do the same; both need accountability partners.

Also, coaches can do Surrender Exercises (i.e. consider what needs to be given over to the Lord) often and ask their clients to do the same. One way to foster surrender is to go through following topics. They make great coaching segments with homework Action Steps assigned (i.e., client agrees to read, write, call, attend, reflect, pray, do):

1. **Revelation—Seek the Truth.** Ask the Holy Spirit to show up during the surrender process.
2. **Investigation—Do your footwork and homework.** Keep pursuing answers until you come to a conclusion of yea or nay about a surrender choice.
3. **Calculation—Count the Cost.** Evaluate what might change if God decides to take what you have surrendered. Prepare emotionally and financially to let go of what you say you are going to surrender.
4. **Transformation—Think with the Mind of Christ.** Set your sights on becoming more like Christ. Focus on Him and ask Him to transform your thinking.
5. **Declaration—Publicly give up control of your will.** Write out and share your surrender decision with another mature and trustworthy Christian and ask that person to hold you accountable.
6. **Dedication—Prayerfully begin.** Surround yourself with one or more prayer warriors who will commit to praying, for as long as it takes, that you will actually do the surrendering! (LaserCoach™ Protocol © 2010 Katie Brazelton)
Elizabeth: Can you share a story of Christ in a coaching session and the power you witnessed from that?

Katie: I have been fortunate to have many ideal clients who believe in the same credo I profess, which is basically this…

God has a plan for our lives. He made us with certain traits, abilities, spiritual gifts, and passions for the sole purpose of being and doing for His glory. When we embrace His plan, we are able to live a full, abundant, and purposeful life—one loaded with joy and significance. God loves to meet us at the point of our greatest desire, and He sends His Spirit to give us wisdom for each next step.

That being said, I’d love to share with you two memorable times I couldn’t believe the extreme power of Christ that I was witnessing. The first example is when one of my coach-trainees was prayerfully practicing the “Roadblocks to Your Greatest Desire” module on me in a tele-coaching session with thirty other students listening. She went so deep with me that I became totally absorbed in where she and Jesus were leading me—down an unbelievably insightful path that changed the course of my ministry. Her classmates said that it was like hearing a miracle-in-the-making!

The second example is when I was coaching Janie (assumed identity to protect the innocent!). I felt Jesus prompting me to ask her a simple question: What have you noticed during today’s session? She burst into tears and sobbed, “I must pull myself out of ministry leadership. I am so prideful and self-absorbed that, before today, I had never stopped to consider that I lie, poach ideas, act privileged, am demanding, ignore those I consider lesser-than’s, sing my own praises, and hardly pray anymore. I want a Reset Button to begin now to follow God’s plan for His glory.” Whoa…ONLY GOD! Proof to me once again that a coach is simply the Lord’s listener and the client’s recording secretary. Christ in these coaching sessions powerfully moved hearts—both Janie’s and mine.

Elizabeth: What growth have you seen in your own life as a result of coaching?

Katie: Coaching definitely started me on a path to a much-needed character upgrade. I began to understand that character is foundational to our universal purposes and also our unique purpose. I’m a much-better person than in 1985, when I started writing my first mentoring/ discipleship/ coaching curriculum. I still have a long way to go, but miraculously, God’s Spirit has coached me along to begin to understand the Character Makeover Principles (below) that we always teach our coach-trainees to personalize and use with their coaching clients. After all, isn’t there a great saying: “We teach what we most need to learn”? I think it should be updated to reflect: “We teach and coach what we most need to learn!”
Character Makeover Principles

- Understand why God put you on earth. Search for true meaning and purpose in life. Experience the personal significance of living the life God designed you to live.
- Learn to love God, others, and yourself deeply. Create better and more meaningful, unconditional relationships.
- Let go of self-sabotage, fears, regrets, and impure motives, so you can follow God’s plan more wholeheartedly. And…definitely set boundaries.
- Change your life focus from self-centered to God-centered.
- Grow spiritually in every dimension, especially in faith, trust, and obedience.
- Develop spiritual leadership skills and be the role model God intended. Coach others to practice the same habits, including how to seek Jesus in their everyday obstacles and heartaches.
- Connect with other Christ-centered people who live for the eternal—for something bigger than self.
- Discover and use your spiritual gifts, but perfectionism is not allowed!
- Allow God to work in your life to BE and DO what He, and He alone, says is critically important during each season of your life.
- Enjoy a more balanced, healthier lifestyle.

(Adapted from Character Makeover ©2007 Katie Brazelton and Shelley Leith)

Elizabeth: How have you seen God move?

Katie: As I said earlier when referring to God’s Bigger Reveal in my life, “God had only been warming up,” so here is a snapshot of the “To Him be the Glory” story to-date: Little did I know that four more books and a quadruple-Board-Certified Coach Training Center were to come. By 2007 I realized God was prompting me to launch Life Purpose Coaching Centers International® (LPCCI). It seemed that He wanted me to fully train, prepare, and equip sold-out Christians to open life purpose coaching ministries globally. But wait…would that be my Swan Song? Remarkably enough, no. Currently, God is launching the non-profit arm of LPCCI, so we can reach multitudes more of coach-candidates and their clients worldwide. This 501(c)(3) is Life Purpose Training Ministries (LPTM), and I have this funny feeling that God is just getting started.
Interviewer Elizabeth Hixson holds an M.A. in Strategic Communication and a B.S. in Psychology: Life Coaching from Liberty University. She spends her days fostering career discovery and development in the students of Liberty University where she works as a career counselor. Elizabeth is passionate about using life coaching to come alongside individuals in areas of spiritual growth, seeing dreams fulfilled, and overcoming the fear of public speaking to help move them forward to victory. Her life mission is to “Help people see Christ’s victory” in their lives. Since August 2016, Elizabeth has served as the writer and editor for the International Christian Coaching Association’s (ICCA) monthly eNews publication. Elizabeth is a follower and lover of Jesus Christ, who enjoys time with family, fall weather, encouraging a heart, and views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Elizabeth can be contacted at elhixson@liberty.edu.

Interviewee Katherine Brazelton, Ph.D., M.Div., M.A., Professional Certified Life Coach (P.C.L.C.) Instructor, has authored eight “life purpose” coaching books translated in as many as 12 languages. Some titles include the Pathway to Purpose 4-book series, The Way I’m Wired 2-book series and DVD curriculum for youth pastors/students/parents, and the One-Year Recovery Prayer Devotional: 365 Daily Meditations toward Discovering Your True Purpose. Dr. Brazelton is founder of the Board-Certified Coach Training Provider, Life Purpose Coaching Centers International®. The school trains Christians internationally to become PCLC’s. She is a Board Member for both Rockbridge Seminary and the International Christian Coaching Association (ICCA) and on the teaching team of AACC’s DVD-training series: Life Coaching 101+201. For more information, visit http://www.katiebrazelton.com/ + http://www.lifepurposecoachingcenters.com/.

Dr. B. would love to meet you at her AACC World Conference Workshop #408: The Standout Coach: Creative, Bold, Persistent, and Eager to Learn What Works!