



PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

Chris McCluskey & Kim Avery

*The podcast dedicated to Raising the Standard of Coaching...
and Changing the World*

Episode 036

Turning Inquiries into Clients

CHRIS: Ooh, here we go for inquiry calls that really work. If you tuned in because maybe you're having trouble getting client inquiry calls as a coach or maybe because you get them but then you find yourself struggling as to know how to handle them or you find yourself having them and handling them in a fashion but they don't every quite seem to go to a close, you never quite make that sale or secure that client then definitely today's podcast is for you.

KIM: And I think, Chris, that I've probably been in every single one of those categories at some point in time. I'm so thankful that over the years, God has shown me through trial and error and otherwise people ways to really have inquiry calls that work and so we want to share some of that information here today. What we're going to do is give you all some examples of how to invite people to this inquiry or exploratory call. We want to give you a proven framework that Chris and I both use that will guide you step by step as it were through this call and then show you how, at the end, to issue an effective call to action so you end the call, Lord willing, with a new client who is eager to begin.

Let's jump right on in. When we think about issuing that invitation to your inquiry call, first of all, let's just start with what you're going to call it when you

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think about inviting people. I know it's tradition, maybe history out there for people to call it a complimentary call and I kind of have an oonch with it for a couple of reasons, Chris. One is complimentary doesn't begin to denote the value that we're providing in that conversation with the person. I think it almost cheapens the value that we're bringing and sometimes, people then don't take it seriously. I've known coaches who have prospective clients who don't even show up after they have booked valuable time on their calendar for this complimentary call.

CHRIS: Yup.

KIM: And then for another reason, it's not really a complimentary coaching call at all, at least, that's what we're going to encourage you to not do today - to give people a many pink spoon taste of a coaching call because while it seems like the generous thing to do, in many reasons, it's not the most effective thing to do. Whatever you decide to call it – an exploratory call, an inquiry call, a discovery call, of course appointment or meeting if you're meeting with someone in person – I think this communicates more clearly the spirit of what we're going to.

CHRIS: Kim, you know I could not agree with you more in regard to the importance of just thinking through what we call this for our own mindset but also then how we explain it so that it kind of seeds the right expectations that we're wanting the prospective caller to come to the call with. You mentioned a pink spoon sample and that may or may not have immediately been recognizable to people but years ago in the coaching profession when the field was young, one of the kind of buzz phrases that a lot of people used for how you get a person as a prospect to take this inquiry call is you do "pink spoon marketing." Pink spoon was referring to those little pink sampler spoons that we get at Baskin-Robbins 31 flavors ice cream stores and the idea was that you're giving them a sample of coaching just like you go into Baskin-Robbins, you get a sample of ice cream.

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What Kim is really saying here and I entirely agree with her is that we do not recommend that approach to the call that they are getting a free coaching session, a complimentary coaching session, a free sample. It sets a different expectation. In fact, we find that the mindset that it puts the coach in is one of a tremendous amount of pressure because it's performance immediately. If I'm demoing this thing, if I'm giving you a sample, boy, I sure hope it's a good one. What if the coaching session doesn't go very well? What if they aren't impressed? That's not a great free space for the coach to come to the session and their anxious. They are going to be potentially self-critical but it also puts the prospective client, the one who is just inquiring right now on alert like they are going to be in their evaluative mode. Put your judge hat on here. I'm going to give you sample. You decide if it's a good enough sample or not. Did you like that one? Maybe you'll buy a quart. Otherwise, maybe not and so it actually puts both parties to this inquiry call in a bad space as contrasted with the space that both of them actually can easily be in if you choose the right languaging.

Certainly the coach is excited about the prospect of working with another person. In coaching, what do you work with them around? Their gaps. You're excited about finding out what somebody's gaps are. In an inquiry call, that's all you're doing, inquiring about the gaps which we'll get to in just a moment here but for the prospective client, the one who is checking out coaching, they are already motivated to see if this could help them. They want this to be good. You meet them in an opportunity for them to explore that possibility without putting them in evaluation of do they like your skills or not, just exploring? They are in a much more free space themselves so really, both parties benefit tremendously by choosing your languaging carefully and calling it an inquiry call or as Kim said, a discovery call, an exploratory call or meeting, not a free session, not a complimentary session.

KIM: It really does relieve some of the pressure and I think it also helps the outcome. I know when I first began, I was doing complimentary coaching calls and it almost

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didn't matter whether it went good or it didn't go well. The outcome in terms of growing my coaching practice still wasn't beneficial if I felt all the pressure of performing at the highest possible standard so they think I was coach of the decade entirely. Inevitably, I wouldn't be my very good coach self and it didn't go well. They weren't as impressed and they would say, "Well, I'll think about it," and never come back.

But here's the funny opposite effect, Chris, if it went really well and they received what they wanted and what they brought from the session, it was like eating the appetizer and not needing to eat the meal. Their relief was temporary but very real and they are like, "Oh, that's good. Thank you. I feel so much better," and still they wouldn't move into a deeper coaching relationship because they had, what I know to be temporary relief. We, of course, in one 30-45 minute session hadn't gotten to some of the mindset issues, some of the habit patterns, some of the deeper values that we're driving whatever was wrong in their life and so it almost didn't matter whether it went good or well. I frankly didn't have a very high, what they would call close rate with my clients and I look back and I can see why.

CHRIS: Kim, isn't that amazing that this difference in mindset is to how you come to the call and what you call the call can have such a different result whether it goes badly and they are not impressed with you or it goes really well and like you said, I love the metaphor of the appetizer. How many times have we gone to a nice restaurant and if the appetizer was just amazing, you might go, "Maybe I'll just go to dessert" and the restaurant just lost the sale of their main course meal, their big ticket item because their little appetizer was so fantastic. Yeah, either way, this can hurt us, critical awareness for people to have. Kim, talk about who we're trying to get into this inquiry calls. Who do we invite?

KIM: Well, it would seem like we want to invite everyone and that certainly appeals to us at some level, but we really don't want to be working with people who are not a good fit for us or who aren't good coaching candidates. I think we want our

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radar to be always out and our eyes to be open for the specific people group that God has called us to serve. God has probably put in each of our hearts certain people groups, certain problems we like to help people around or maybe more than one niche but those are the people that God is going to bring into our path and with our intentional marketing, we're going to be running into them wherever they are so I'll call that your ideal client. We're just out there looking for our ideal client and I don't think we have to be shy about that.

Well, I'll ask you actually for a few examples here maybe how you can invite them into that but just to give people a heads up, it could be offline, so your meeting people at church, at networking meeting, or in a Starbucks or I know our friend in Denmark, she met somebody in a gift shop on a cruise line. Whatever works, you're having those important conversations that God seems to spark. Don't be afraid to follow it up with an invitation to your inquiry call but we can also invite people online whether it is on our website where we have a Contact Me page and in invitation to the inquiry call, on our Facebook page, business page particularly, not all the time but occasionally, just remind people who you serve and invite them. People love to be invited and I would say about once every three or four months, I'd like to remind people on my newsletter list. They have joined my newsletter list because they are interested in the subjects I cover and the things I coach around. A lot of them I think just don't know what the next step is and so they are relieved when I say, "Hey, it's simple. Just shoot me an email and we'll set up a time for an inquiry call." There's lots of people that we can give this opportunity to, so what kind of wording can we use?

CHRIS: Yeah. Since it's coming up often conversationally, your mindset again is the key thing to be examining when you are in a potential conversation that you suddenly realize could turn into a prospective client. I don't mean that we want to go around all the time like just looking. We've got a radar constantly scanning the room to see who is my next victim here? That's a yucky model. We don't want to be the annoying person at the cocktail party or any other gathering that

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everybody tries to stir clear of because they know that person is going to come up and pitch them. No. This just says your mindset is aware that in conversation, there will be times where you'll hear areas of gap because people are sharing with you their lives and they are opening up about some areas of frustration. As soon as you start to hear gap, some area where something is not as they wish it would be, your mindset can begin to be one of filtering out whether or not this is a prospective client. Could I help them? Would I enjoy helping them? Like Kim was saying, is this kind of my ideal client profile? If it is, then the bold initiation of a conversation that inserts the word "coaching" into it somewhere is the place to begin.

It normally, in most circles, isn't going to be a secret that you're a coach just as if you were a dentist, a doctor, a veterinarian, or whatever else and a lot of settings where people already basically know you, like you, and trust you, they know what you do for a living, but in other settings, it's not going to be. Regardless, when you hear those areas of gap come up in a conversation, a very natural transition can be simply something like, "Oh my goodness. Wow, what you're talking about right there, that's exactly the kind of stuff that I coach people around. Just last week, I was working with...." and you transition nicely into a conversational sharing of an example without of course violating client confidentiality. You just give it a quick little souvignet about someone whom you've served who had a similar area of gap in their life and what growth they made, what they gained as a result of it, how much they have raved about it or something like that.

You've connected for the person sharing with you now that you heard their gap, that you work with people who have similar gaps, you've even given example of someone who kind of borrowed a testimony, if you will, from that person who is not present right now, and that invites them if they want to carry the conversation further to say, "Whoah, wait a minute. I'm not sure I realized you were a coach" or "I know you were a coach but I'm not sure I'm tracking with what you actually do. Can you tell me more?" You've opened up the door to them through an

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invitation and they can take it or leave it. If they don't nibble on the worm, why then don't pull on the line but you've at least put it out there. You've used the word coach or coaching and you've let them know that the frustration they are sharing, the gap area, the vision, the passion, the value, whatever it was that you're riffing off of, that thing is the kind of thing you work with people around and help them to gain and then the natural ebb and flow of conversation goes back to them. They can decide whether or not they want to do something further in exploring that.

KIM: I think the good news and what I've discovered around that, Chris, is the Holy Spirit wants to connect the people who need our services with those of us who provide those services. So very often, the Holy Spirit has gone ahead and has been stirring in their mind and their heart "I wish I could get some help around this. I wish I knew where to go. I wish I knew what the next step was." So like you said, it's never selling or high pressuring anyone. We're simply putting it out there and so often, it's that Holy Spirit moment and they were so ready to, as you said, just move forward and take that next step.

CHRIS: Now there are times when I'm having conversation with someone, maybe it's not just in a casual setting like the foyer after church on Sunday morning or something or a business luncheon as it's breaking up, but maybe I'm staffing a booth at a convention or a conference of some kind where really, I'm there because yeah, my ideal clients are here. They attend this thing and I'm part of this organization so here I am. People are coming around and inquiring about my services. There are times when I adapt an additional tweak to that mindset. I'm not just now listening for a gap. I'm definitely listening to hear is that potentially an ideal client for me? Do they have an area of gap? Aah, then I'm going to adapt the mentality of "claiming that client." This is only what Chris McCluskey knows in his head. This is not something I would say that I'm claiming you as a client. It's a mindset that I adapt inside and I don't mean it spiritually like you

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were praying over something and claiming a healing or something. There's not so much a spiritual dynamic to this as a psychological dynamic.

In my mind, in my use of self, my guidance of this conversation from this point forward, I have recognized this is exactly the kind of client that I want to work with. Oh my goodness. I love working with those life issues. I know I could be of service. Well, that's a triple whammy right there - ideal client, ideal situation and I know I could help. So claiming them in my mindset says I'm going to begin to interact without again being obnoxious or pushy. I'm going to interact in a confident way, a reassuring way, a very proactive, assertive not aggressive, but assertive way that tries to see this conversation through to the point of scheduling that inquiry call. So I might adapt a comment back to them that eventually the conversation goes something like this, "You know, I would love to work with you. That kind of stuff is my sweet spot. I mean zero pressure but just know, if you had any interest in pursuing this a little bit further, gosh, we could go for coffee right now. If you want to sit down or run out to grab a frozen yoghurt or something, or we can compare calendars and just arrange a time to talk when we're not so distracted as we are right now, but I would love the opportunity potentially to work with you around that. Does that interest you?"

KIM: What is their typical response when you do that?

CHRIS: Actually, their eyes light up. You're baiting me here, Kim. I know you well enough. You know exactly what the response is. It's not a push back or a taking of offense or a shutting down of conversation. Their eyes light up, don't they?

KIM: Mm-hmm.

CHRIS: They hear that you heard. You get it. You might really be able to help. You're not sounding pushy, you're sounding confident, and that's attractive. That's affirming. That's exciting. That's the normal response that I get. When I hear the conversation going that way and I adapt that mindset of claiming them as a client, we're far down the road pretty quickly to them becoming a client.

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KIM: And I think we shouldn't underestimate the power of that. While you were talking, it triggered this memory, how many 12, 15 years old of the first time I reached out to Judy Santos to be my coach. First coach I ever had and I sent her a tentative email and I was a little bit nervous because she's this big, important famous coach. She may not even want to coach me. She wrote back to set up the inquiry call and just kind of almost as a PS, the last line was, "Plus I just really like you and I would love to work with you" because we knew each other in a classroom setting and that line just affirmed and honored me. It didn't feel salesy and I don't think it was. I think she was speaking from the heart but it made me realize I want to be wanted. I think most people do and it was just a lovely thing.

CHRIS: That's a beautiful example. It really is. I'm glad that memory came to your mind because I can guarantee you, having known Judy as well, it wasn't salesy and it was intentional. That's really what we're discussing here is our use of self, our conscious choice of words and how we describe what we do, the way that we listen and what we're probing for. We're going to get to that in a just a moment here. This is all about being always aware you're a coach but you don't get to coach unless you secure clients. How do you secure clients? You identify prospects and you arrange for them to inquire about your services, this inquiry call that we're talking about here. It's a mindset that you carry around all the time. You're right, though that wasn't a sales pitchy kind of a thing, I guarantee you from Judy, that was intentional. She knows, that kind of affirming statement, "I would love to work with you, besides, I just really like you." That lands and it's genuine and it's drawing.

KIM: Mm-hmm, very much so. All right, so we talked about issuing the invitation to an inquiry call and who we're going to issue it to, and maybe some wording to spark some ideas in our listener's ear. Let's start thinking about that proven framework that really works.

CHRIS: Yeah, you know in the course that I teach here at the institute, it's called The Successful Coach, we use four different texts and one of my required texts, I'm

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going to pull a little segment from here. It's a book called How to Become a Rainmaker. It's by Jeffrey Fox and some of his work is actually used at Harvard Business School as one of their top 100 case studies that they use in Harvard Business School in marketing. A very, very successful marketer and that title, How to Become a Rainmaker, is a reference to in the business world oftentimes, your person in the marketing and sales department who just month after month after year after year always brings the income. They can land clients when everybody else is saying, "Man, it's a drought. There's a famine out there. We're not getting any clients." They call the "rainmaker" like the great Indian shaman or something. "Do your rain dance, man. Bring some rain. We need it." They bring in the contracts month after month.

Well, that's what this book is addressing, How to Become a Rainmaker. I'm going to pull a little segment from a section here he calls "you are not at lunch to eat lunch." With a big tip of the hat to Jeffrey Fox, here we go. He says, "You're at a cocktail party with customers. You're not there to party. If you're playing golf with a client, you are not there to play golf. These are business meetings or sales calls or both. You do business at business meetings. Some sales people forget the priority. They actually care what golf score they shoot and at the 19th hole, instead of closing that deal, they are still talking about the 35 foot putt they made on the front 9. A luncheon meeting with a prospective customer is a sales call with table ware. You are there to ask questions, to listen, and to get a commitment." Oh, he nailed it. When we're having these intentional conversations again at a booth or perhaps at some kind of a party, gathering, business luncheon, or a networking event, it doesn't matter where it is. Again, the foyer after church on Sunday, it's not that you're always on the prowl. It's not that you ever become annoying but it's that s you listen and you hear potential opportunity, you shift into a different filter, a different mindset that says, "Hmm, this conversation suddenly became a prospective marketing session and I am here now principally to ask questions, to listen, and to get a commitment. Not a

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commitment to coach with me yet, a commitment to the inquiry call.” That just really nails it.

So at the point that you have somebody who you could tell sounds like a prospective client to you, got an issue that you’d like to coach them around and they have expressed interest in that conversation you arranged for this formal inquiry call or meeting. Now it’s going to be a face to face or via telephone. Sometimes you do continue to have them right then and there. I would say generally that is rarely the case. Most coaches are going to schedule a set time for an inquiry call. You heard that they had a felt need, you could tell there was some interest. Goodness gracious they don’t know what could come next, you do. So you set the table. You roll out the carpet. You let them know very clearly that this opportunity is there.

You explain briefly what the inquiry call is for. You give a clear expectation that it means no other distractions. Your spouse isn’t over there waiting for us to wrap up this conversation in three or four minutes because they want to get in the car and go to dinner or something. This is our time and so when they show interest in that inquiry call, you simply compare calendars. If it’s by email, you shoot them several times. Maybe you have an online schedule that they can go to and just pick any time that works for them. I personally like to capitalize on the time when I’ve got them verbally if I can.

Most of us now on our smart phones have our calendars in there. Pull your calendar out and ask them do they have theirs and can we compare sometimes. Even if all you’re doing is “penciling it in.” They don’t have their calendar or they are not sure or they need to check with their spouse or some other commitment, cool. Let’s tentatively put something in and when I get back to my office, I’ll shoot you a reminder and you can check and let me know at that point. You’ve secured it as strongly as you could secure it right at the moment that they were really interested. That sets the initial invitation for them.

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KIM: Perfect. So the table is set, they are good to go. Their appointment is scheduled. You're back in your office, Lord willing, they are in a comfortable quiet spot and the phone rings. So it's time to have that inquiry call. Let's talk just a little bit about how to start that call. First of all, we know from brain science that when somebody is uncertain, when they are nervous, when they are a little bit intimidated, their creative self, their prefrontal cortex is going to shut down a little bit and they are not going to bring their best self to the call and I want this person in a creative expansive open space. I'd like to give them a heads up right at the beginning of the call on how I imagine the call is going to go so there's no uncertainty, no worrying, "Oh no, is she going to pressure me?" or "Oh is she going to ask me a question I don't know the answer to?" I really want them to be able to rest in to the call.

So Chris, the first thing I do when I get them on the call after greeting them warmly and all of those kinds of things is to say, "I'm so glad you could come to this call and basically, here's how it can go though I'm certainly open to what's important to you. First of all, I would just love to hear what's on your heart. What's going on with you a little bit more about this issue that has come up in your life right now that's really burning you? I'd like to give you an opportunity to think about how will it be different? How might it be different? What would you like to see happen and what are some of the obstacles in your way?" Of course as we get to the end of the call, "I am so happy to answer any questions you have about coaching" and I usually tell them, Chris, just so they understand, I said, "And really, no questions off the table. If it helps you to know my shoe size, then you just ask away." I want you to feel really comfortable and then I want you to leave with a clear next step. It might be working together and it might be something else entirely. That's fine. I am here to serve you. That's basically my lead in to that inquiry call.

CHRIS: And boy that is really similar to what I do. In fact, when I get them on the phone, my practice is called Coaching for Christian Living so my prospective clients are

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kind of self screened. They know I'm a Christian. It's safe to assume they are Christian coach. I greet them and then I open us up with a quick word of prayer for the Spirit to guide our time. With their permission, I just say, "Okay with you if we open up in prayer before we dive into this area of gap?" And sure they are always happy to have that and so I'll open us up in prayer. I'll tell you what, sometimes after that like 30-second prayer for the Father to guide our time here, maybe I reference something in that they have emailed me that is their area of gap but I'm naming it specifically, and I'm saying, "Lord, we know that we don't see clearly but please, do hear what only you can and give us the ears to hear it so that we know where to focus and whether or not we're to work together and if so, kind of how to proceed about that, we give you this time." I'll tell you, by the time that little opener is over, they are oftentimes already so much more engaged because of the power of just feeling someone really caringly connect with them as a Christian brother or sister in a spirit of prayer before the Father who knows the plans he has for us. That is quite something.

Now, let me be very clear. I am not using prayer as a marketing tool. I am genuinely praying over these brothers or sisters that are inquiring and it definitely serves to quickly connect at a very deep level. So it's a conscious choice and act again and then I do, just as you did there Kim, I set the stage for what to expect of the call. One of my phrases is typically something like this, "I'm just going to encourage you to start wherever makes sense to you right now as to the situation that has you even looking into coaching in the first place. It doesn't matter to me if you take me hither and yon for a while because right now in the next 10-15 minutes, I'm principally listening to catch your heart more than anything else. That's what both of us need to hear. Is your heart for a different experience than what you're having right now, a different season of life than what you're in right now, a different result than what you're getting right now?"

I'm listening less for specific information or details. I'm not going to do like 20 questions things. It's not interrogation. It's really just an opportunity to say, "If I

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need more information, I'll prompt with some questions but mostly just start wherever makes sense and begin to share about where you are right now and what you wish were different. By the time we get all that on the table, 10 or 15 minutes from that now, why then we'll shift into whether or not that's coaching material and if so, how it could help and I'll let you pepper me with questions but it sounds like a good comfortable place for you to begin," and of course at that point, they are saying, "Well, yeah. I didn't know what to expect but okay. Let's see. I suppose I should probably begin..." and boom. They are off to the races.

They fumble around for just a couple of seconds. They truly weren't sure what to expect. You set a very comfortable open creative space for them to just explore and you turn them loose. They can't blow this. They are sharing their heart. They can't do it wrong. They can't give the wrong answer and you're just going to be listening. You're on high receive right now asking very few specific questions, just giving lots of little affirming kinds of, even just sounds. "Mm-hmm, wow, huh, no kidding." Little things spread out every couple of minutes so they know you're still listening. You're still there but you're very quiet. You want both of you to hear what's going on in their heart because that's what you're going to springboard off of for the remainder of the inquiry call. Now Kim, I think that's pretty similar to what you do. You have a metaphor though that I love. Can you kind of tie that into this?

KIM: Yeah. So after the client does that, they kind of lay their problem, desire, issue whatever it is out on the table and I love that you said, "We want to hear their heart." It's not about information. It's never about manipulation or pressure. What's needed is this isn't a sales call. We're using all our coaching skills, even though it's not really a coaching call, every skill we've ever learned of listening, reflecting, paraphrasing, and asking good questions is coming into play and it's a beautiful place for them to play in and experience even if it isn't a sample coaching session.

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Once they have laid that out on the table, I picture it just to keep myself on track so I know where I am in the call, kind of standing at a trail head and there's two paths, one to the right obviously and one to the left. I like to then take them down the one to the right and in my mind, the little sign at the trail head is called "Desired Outcome." We know as coaches, that's that place of visioning, stepping into the future, the ideal. So I might say something like, "Well Bob, you've shared how dissatisfied you are with your job. You feel like you've reached the top of where you can go in your field and you really want to go further. It sounds like you're unhappy, you're stressed. You don't see your family. It's just so difficult. Just for a moment, fast forward into the future, let's say three years. Let's say you do make this change that you're envisioning, you just woke up and we met each other on the street one day three years from now and I said, "How is it going?" What are you going to say?"

They are so excited to step into that ideal future place. "Oh my goodness, I can't even imagine. I would say, "I like my life again. I spend time with my kids. I'm coach of my son's soccer team," and then I would just continue with those coaching questions. I want them to live that future so they clearly know what some of their choices are. "Really, what's the look on your son's face when you told him you could coach the team? What does it feel like on Saturdays when you wake up and you have the whole day in front of you? What does it mean to your future from there?" So question after question, again not an interrogation but whatever invites them so that they are really there in their mind's eye and that future place.

It's important for this client or prospect I guess in this inquiry call to understand the choices that lay before them, and there really is, I don't tell them but path A or path B, and now it's a hard decision for me but I want them to feel the gap, to understand what's at stake because there's always something at stake. So mentally, I'm back at the trail head and I say, "Okay, so back to where you are for a minute. Let's suppose that the same period of time three years down the road. I

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haven't seen you in three years. We bump into each other at the street and absolutely nothing has changed." You can feel the air go out of the client. It's not unusual for me to hear an audible gasp.

CHRIS: Mm-hmm.

KIM: After they have lived in that beautiful place we're assuming it's the place that God is calling them to, wooing them too, wanting them to step into, then to think that they would live the next three years of their life every single day with nothing been different. There's a visceral reaction and there should be. I want them to live into that place, not because it's hard but because they need to see the choices so they make the right one, the wise one whichever one it is and so I will ask the same types of visioning questions that I asked when they went down the desired outcome path. So over here it's, "Wow, what's it like when you wake up on the weekend and the weekend is no different than the weekday? What's it like when your son goes to soccer games and one more time, you have to send them a text telling them you wish you were there? How's your family responding to that? What kind of toll is that taking on your health? How does it feel?" and then I reflect what I hear. "Wow, there's just a weightiness in your voice, Bob, as you talk about that. It's almost as if the life has drained out of you." There's this increasing gap between the desired outcome path and the no change path. They are not just thinking about it. They are feeling it, giving themselves probably for the first time permission to see the kinds of things that are at stake in this issue.

Now again, this is hard because everything in the people helper within me wants to do what we're trained to do, Chris, coach to the gap. This is what we do as coaches. We help them close the gap so they can get over on the desired outcome path, but as I mentioned early on the call, do I really want to give them an appetizer and have them skip the main meal knowing that two weeks from now, a month from now, they are going to be back at the trail head walking down the no change path thinking, "Oh, I tried coaching and it didn't work." No, they didn't try coaching at all. And so I leave them in the place of gap and at the appropriate

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moment then, I transition and I say, “Do you want to hear the good news, Bob?” And of course Bob does want to hear the good news at that point. I say, “You know, praise the Lord, I have been able to help a number of clients with problems very similar to yours through coaching. May I share with you a bit how that works?” And it’s as if I have tossed them a life preserver while they are drowning in the sea. Yes, they are begging me to tell them about coaching.

If I can just say for a minute, Chris, if the coaches are listening, I hope you can feel the difference between that moment and a sales approach to the call. “Let me tell you about coaching. Let me tell you about the benefits of coaching. Let me tell what my rates are. Let me answer your objections.” They are so defensive. By the time you get to the end of the call, they have curled up in a ball and we’re kind of like the vacuum cleaner salesman. Most coaches aren’t natural sales people. We don’t want to be in that place. I genuinely want them to be in a place where they are hearing from the Lord and if it’s not to coach with me, that is truly fine. They feel the generosity in me. It is fine and that’s the decision I want them to make but boy do I want them to see that they are facing a decision.

CHRIS: Kim, we are so similar in our approaches to this and our languaging would be of course slightly different with our personalities but it’s the same basic process. You’re trying to help this person who is inquiring, this person who is checking it out. “I don’t really know what coaching is. I heard that I ought to get a coach. I wonder if this could really help. It seems pretty crazy. This person doesn’t know me from Adam but they are going to be able to help me. I’ve been trying to make this happen for 10 years.” It’s a lot to swallow. It’s a lot to sell yourself on but here they are. They are risking that maybe they are not crazy. Maybe there really is something here. They want this to happen and to go into it and just say, “We’re here to open up.” You’re not going to use these words but this is in fact what you’re doing. You’re going to open up for them a greater awareness of their frustration with this gap. That sounds cruel but that is the motivation then that’s going to make them decide finally, “by golly, I am going to put my money where

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my mouth is. I've been saying I'm going to change this. I know coaching is going to. I'm going to do it because this sounds like it could actually finally help me."

So your purpose to this inquiry call is to through powerful question asking and then just good reflective listening to increasingly make them aware of how badly they want this closure. They want what you have to offer. You heighten their awareness of their frustration with this gap and hey, after all coaching is all about closing gaps. So you're the answer. When you turn the conversation then at that point when they've heard clearly where they want to be and where they are now, and they are in all that yucky emotion about "Oh, I got to do something," I find oftentimes, Kim, and you tell me whether or not this is your experience as well but I find that at that point, when I turn the conversation to something like, "Okay so I got no hesitancy in saying to you I would love to coach you around this because this is certainly exactly the kind of work that I do. You probably have some questions for me specific to how coaching works so pepper me, fire away whatever you got as questions." I find that oftentimes, they aren't even thinking anymore about their objections to the questions. Is that a similar experience for you?

KIM: I know and that sounds like hyperbole but it's really not. At that point, they have decided they are going to do whatever it takes to make this happen. I've literally had people at that point say, "When can we start?" That's their only question about coaching. "When can we start?" and I'm thinking I wonder if they want to know my fees.

CHRIS: Exactly.

KIM: Maybe I should disclose them. They are really eager to start and if they do have questions because I've gotten to really hear their heart and know their issues by then, I can answer them in light of their problem. I'm not talking in coaching in generalities. I'm saying, "For busy professional people such as yourself, here's

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how this could work. For people who like to do this, here's this option. I can tailor whatever is important to them to them but in all honesty, very, very few questions come up at this point.

CHRIS: They really do and if you think about other situations in which we're making significant financial purchases, it's the same principle. We sell ourselves. If you go into a clothier and you're looking at items on a rack or you see it on a mannequin, you think, "Wow, that looks pretty sharp and that's kind of my colors. I like that cut there. That might look good." You go ahead and take it back to the trying on room and you try the thing on and you walk out to the three way mirror and you're looking around and you're going, "Oh my goodness. This is like killer. This fits" and then your spouse or a friend or the sales person there goes, "Oh man, that looks like it was made for you" and you realize yeah it really does. You're going to pay whatever that thing is as long as it's not just a Versace piece or ridiculous price. Otherwise, you're no longer scrutinizing through the filter of can I afford this or not. You're scrutinizing through the filter of how can I purchase this? Let's get it up there. Do you have any others like this? There are different questions that you're asking but they are not nickel and diming the decision at this point. You love it. You know it fits the felt need that you have. That's what's happening here. We're talking now about the close or getting the sale but really Kim, I find by this point, it's a soft sell. As you said, sometimes there's no sell. They have sold themselves. They are just saying, "When can we get started?" At that point, it is a pretty quick trip from that point to the cash register, so to speak. We don't want to doddle around them with a whole bunch of details, huh.

KIM: No. All the essentials are in my coaching agreement so I don't go through every single policy. If there's anything really pertinent, of course I'll cover that briefly but then we do need to call them to action. We don't want them to leave the call. Satan would love to distract them from this powerful tool of coaching, have them do other things. Spin their wheels for a year longer and not be effective at

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whatever they are doing. We really do want to just invite them fully to this opportunity and like you, I use the exact same languaging you do. Assuming it's true and it's almost always true, so for those people, say, "Wow, well I would love to work with you on this. It would be my honor." And then my next question is usually, "Let's get out our calendars and set up a time."

CHRIS: Exactly. In that book I was referencing earlier by Jeffrey Fox, How to Become a Rainmaker, he has periodic chapters in there that are called killer questions and he has like, I don't know, there's nine or 10 of them in there and that's a killer question. It's a simple thing. "Well, that's fantastic. Shall we just compare calendars and get ourselves started?"

KIM: Yeah.

CHRIS: There it is. There's your high pressure pitch. It's so natural. It's like, "Yeah, yeah. What have you got available?" We're off the races. We're going to get their credit card information. We're going to get their demographics, snail mail address and telephone numbers that they want and the email address that they prefer and all of that is going to just lickety-split. We're going to get all that information and be sure they do understand what the fees are and how many sessions that is contracting for per month and all, but it's quick, quick, quick. The primary close question is something like that killer question. "Well, shall we compare calendars and get ourselves started?" That does it. It's sufficient.

KIM: And I'm just so thankful that God has helped me learn this process over the years and I hope people can sense the power, the authenticity, integrity and generosity approach that comes with this whole thing. Again, people are never sales and we're never doing something to close them, but we have been called into this profession to help them and we're inviting them into that opportunity. So just use language we're familiar with. I will say my close rate is so much higher. It's extremely high compared to my complimentary call days. This kind of format for

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an inquiry call has just revolutionized the way that I can connect and start working with the people that God has called me to work with.

CHRIS: I'm glad you said that because yeah, let's use that language from the business world for a while, the close rate. I've never did a hard analysis on it but I'm certain in my early years of learning how to coach and how to handle inquiry calls and all, fumbling around like crazy, I'll bet I had about a 5:1 closure rate, maybe 4:1. In other words, for every five or every four inquiry calls I had, I secured one client, and then I got more and more comfortable with this dance and it became about a 3:1 closure rate, and then about 2:1 closure rate and it's far higher than that. Now nobody is going to have a perfect 1:1 closure. For every single inquiry you get you get a client. That's not going to happen but it is a one point something or other to one ratio just like you're saying there, Kim. This is so natural, so conversational, so real and so powerful. As it allows them to experience the frustration they already hold, share it out loud with you, and hear that coaching is how people close those gaps, then it's a no brainer. It's the looking in that three-way mirror and seeing this suit was made for me. When can I get it purchased? So that should be pretty reassuring for our listeners.

KIM: Very exciting. What I would like to do is issue a challenge or a call to action to those of you who are listening today. Like any new skill, we get better as we use it and learn it, and we don't want you to forget it. So I would encourage you all to find one person, just one person this week that you can invite to this type of inquiry call. The Lord has got people out there who can benefit from begin coached. That's not the problem so just find one or two of those likely people. Try out this format and we would love to celebrate with you and hear the results. So stop by our Facebook business page at Professional Christian Coaching Today and please let me know how it went and we would love to join you in your celebration.

CHRIS: We would love to join you in that celebration and if you're scratching your head figuring out, "Well, how else can I get that phone to ring though? How can I get

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those inquiry calls so I could maybe close them into clients?” Remember that we have a free coach search registry out on our main website, on the web at ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com. There is a huge button there that says “Find a Coach” and then there’s another one that says “Are You a Coach.” you can list yourself if you’re a coach, even a new coach just starting out. You can list yourself and your niche services, your fees, etc. You can list yourself there for free. You can upgrade with a color photo of yourself and a logo for your business for just \$5 or \$10 a month, but that service is available to any Christian coach and it is one that is found by huge numbers of people very month that are on the web searching for Christian coaches. So you definitely want to avail yourself. I mean, free is free, right? Free is good. Go out there and register your services at least on that site. Again it’s at ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com. Until next time gang, keep raising the standard of coaching and changing the world.

KIM: God’s richest blessings to you.