

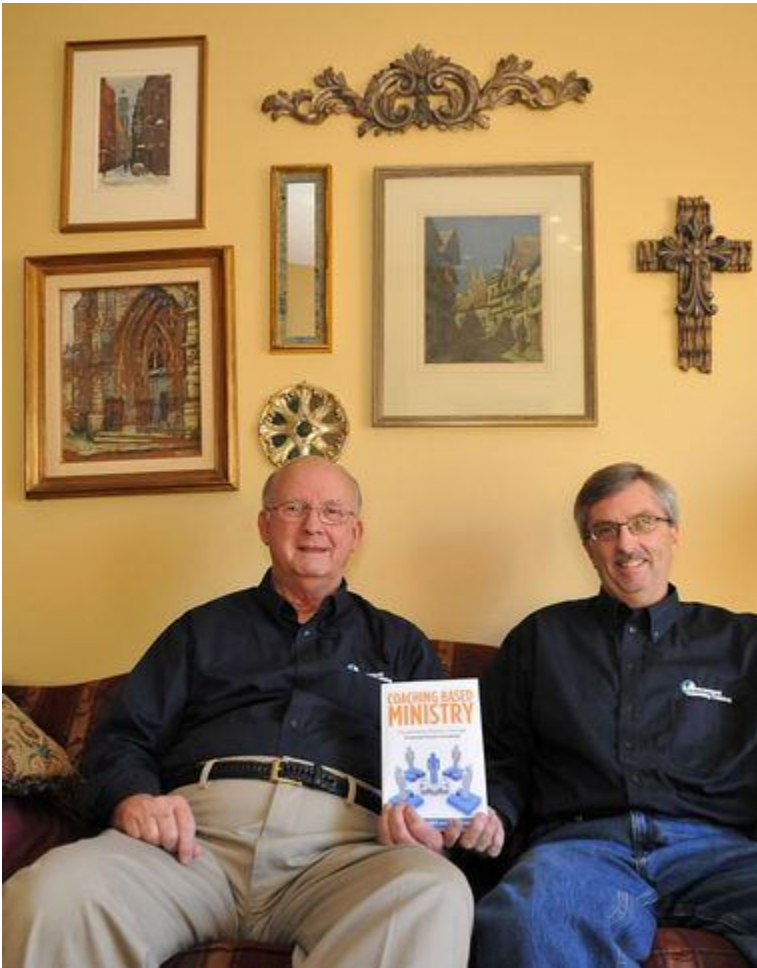
'Coaching Based Ministry' book by Grand Rapids authors stresses change is not about control

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By Ann Byle | The Grand Rapids Press

Tim Cosby and Mike McGervey are concerned about how churches are guiding people to change. The old model of telling people what changes to make and how to live their lives isn't working anymore.



Katie Greene | The Grand Rapids Press
Mike McGervey, left, and Tim Cosby, co-authors of "Coaching Based Ministry: Transforming Ministry Through Empowerment Coaching," are leaders of the Empowerment Coaching Network, which seeks to help clients discover on their own what they must change instead of telling them how to live their lives.

The new paradigm, McGervey said, is realizing that leaders have to let go of trying to control what others do and think and say.

“It’s about empowering people to change without telling them what to do,” Cosby said.

The pair spearhead that paradigm shift locally through Empowerment Coaching Network, an 18-month-old venture that blends skill-based training with hands-on learning to produce church and ministry leaders capable of reaching out to the people they come in contact with every day. They also envision small group leaders and other volunteers using the training to take on coaching tasks previously done by pastors.

So far, they’ve trained 98 people in 14 two-day seminars, plus in-house seminars at Cornerstone United Methodist Church and Life International.

They have three more seminars planned for the first half of 2012 and several events at area businesses.

“Our heart is to bring coaching to the church,” McGervey said. “And there’s a strong indication that the church is starting to be ready for coaching help.”

Following Jesus’ example

Coaching moves beyond telling into true discovering, which the pair says is a much more human and respectful way to help people change. In fact, they say, coaching was Jesus’ way of changing hearts and lives.

Helping young folks

It’s also striking a chord with the younger generation, whom Cosby calls a “collaborative generation.” Young people are much better trained in collaborating with others to come up with solutions to problems big and small.

Empowerment Coaching Network is the result of Cosby’s own life transition. After 13 years at Bella Vista Church near Rockford as director of worship and arts and teaching pastor, among other roles, Cosby started a life-coaching practice in 2009. His goal was to meet all the life coaches in Grand Rapids. One of the first he met was McGervey, who Cosby hired as a business coach to help him build Terra Nova, his fledgling coaching business.

McGervey suggested a collaboration to create a training program to take to the churches to teach people how to coach. Cosby was skeptical coaching could be taught in a two-day seminar, but McGervey, a 30-year veteran in instructional design, pulled it off, creating a curriculum and manual for attendees.

“Most coaching manuals are about the theory of coaching, but we wanted a skill-based training manual,” said Cosby, who does life coaching in private practice and helps run Empowerment Coaching Network.

Six months ago, the pair decided they needed a book that could better reach the public with their message of empowering others to achieve personal goals. “Coaching Based Ministry” was released in November by locally based Credo House Publishers.

Jobs coaching

Thanks to the success of Empowerment Coaching Network, the pair are working on an Empowerment Coach Certification program to launch in mid-2012, and a new JobsConnect Coaching, a three-day training for church leaders who want to use coaching techniques to help parishioners find jobs. They will hold their first training in March.

“Coaching is a catalyst for everything,” Cosby said. “Coaching will impact everything you do, every decision you make, and every conversation you have. My ‘aha’ moment came when I thought coaching would help me in business but realized it would help in every area of my life.”

“Coaching Based Ministry: Transforming Ministry Through Empowerment Coaching” is available in softcover (\$14.99) at Amazon, as an ebook on Kindle and Apple platforms, and at Baker Book House and Schuler Books & Music.

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