



WEEKLY COLUMN in TORONTO
CANADA

Melvin University with Me



People hard to coach

There's a lot of talk about coaching these days, and it's true that the field has come a long way. I personally have no coaching training. I don't have any formal coaching qualifications. But I'm just interested in it from personal experience. I've been very frustrated for a while with people who don't get fixed. And then I came across this resource on coaching. (Marshall Goldsmith)

First of all, there are some people who shouldn't be coached, and that is, don't try to teach them. Don't try to change people who don't want to change. This may sound harsh, but some people are hard to change. It's too easy to give up after one or two attempts, but sometimes it takes dozens of attempts, a lot of heartache, and no change. Maybe it's your boss at work, maybe it's someone below you, maybe it's a colleague. If you keep trying to fix them, you end up getting yourself into trouble that you can't handle.

I've been around people like that, and I've found that at some point, it's wise to give up. It doesn't happen often, but some problems are so deep and organisationally dysfunctional that it's not until years later that we discover they are unknowingly affecting the ministry itself or the organisation. Through trial and error, we may eventually conclude that the problem is intractable, dispelling all illusions about our leadership.

It's hard to change people who don't think there's anything wrong with them. Sometimes we try to change the behaviour of successful adults at work or in our social lives who are not interested in change. We may also try to change our spouse or children at home, but it doesn't work. They're not interested in changing, and we often see examples of this on TV. It's weird to say that they give up, but that's the end result. It's about your wife, it's about school teachers, it's about patient-doctor relationships in hospitals, it's about young mothers, it's about siblings, it's about teenagers, it's about relatives, it's about pastors.

If the person, the other person, is not interested in being changed, why waste your time? It seems futile to try to change people who are pursuing strategies in the wrong direction. If they are going in the wrong direction, our only option is to wait for them to leave the organisation quickly, albeit harshly.

For those who are just hanging on because they don't fit in their current job or ministry, it's hard to change their mindset. In fact, some people feel they are in the wrong company. Perhaps they believe they were meant to do something else, or that their skills are being misused. Or that they're missing out on something. We may feel these people intuitively. But is it too much to ask them, 'What if our company closes today?' They'll probably be surprised.

People who think they're fine but everyone else is, it's harder to change their minds. Let's say a boss is concerned about employee morale. You think the business is thriving, people love working there, and the ones who don't like it will leave. The only way to get them to leave was to raise their salaries, and you hated that. You think of all sorts of ways to get them to

quit. It's really hard to change people like that. They'll try to change us for trying.

I think we need to think about whether we're wasting energy where we shouldn't be. It's one thing to give up too easily, but I think it's wise to accept that some things in relationships are unavoidable.