

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS FROM HERO MAKERS

Discovering 3 Powerful Coaching Ideas

We want to leave you with three powerful ideas from our coaches that have helped us shape the way we approach Millennials with the idea of calling; and then four exercises that have proven valuable in our ministries.

Idea #1: Be the catapult...

In his (with Warren Bird) seminal book, *Hero Maker*, pastor and Exponential President Dave Ferguson defines a hero maker as *a leader who shifts from being the hero of their own story to making others the hero in God's unfolding story.*³²

One such hero maker in so many lives was and is *Halftime* author and Kingdom entrepreneur Bob Buford. About a decade before his death (April 18, 2018), Bob was given an idea that governed his work the last decade of his life. And it translates well to church leaders as we reach Millennials and help them pursue their personal calling.

As a part of Bob's own discipleship—as well as a mechanism for getting things done—was the formation of his Bob, Inc. group I (Derek) talked about earlier. Several guys gathered around Bob, learned from him, and then multiplied him. One of those guys was a retired Rear Admiral of the U.S. Navy, Ed Allen. The idea that Ed gave Bob and those around him is a huge reminder to us as leaders as we disciple Millennials. Bob shares the idea better than anyone...

*I was given an exceptional image by a friend of mine, Ed Allen, a retired Navy Admiral, now working as an executive coach. He was an F-14 pilot, then a squadron leader, then the captain (CEO) of an aircraft carrier. He explained to me, “You are the **catapult**, not the carrier.”*

When I wondered out loud what he meant with this startlingly unfamiliar metaphor, Ed asked whether I had seen the movie Top Gun, which casts Tom Cruise as a hotshot F-14 carrier-based jet jockey. Virtually everyone I know has seen that Jerry Bruckheimer film (three times for me). Ed then said, “The key to naval aviation is the catapult.” If you have seen Top Gun, you will never forget the first scene where double-barreled jets are flung into the early morning dawn. Bring it to mind.

Here is the way Ed explained it to me, “A fully armed F-14 is 60,000 pounds of dead weight. It needs to achieve in excess of 150 knots airspeed within the approximately 200 feet of the carrier deck. It takes around 2.3 seconds, and if you are the pilot, it's the greatest show on earth. It wouldn't happen without the catapult.”

Then Ed said something that was a moment of true honest-to-goodness enlightenment for me, like a whack on the head. He said, “You are the catapult.” You are not the pilot, you are not the plane, you are not the carrier or its captain, and you will never see the final result—the target. You are the force of encouragement that is needed to get the plane airborne on its mission. That’s it!”

Earlier I had been told, “At this stage of your life, it is your job to release and direct energy not to supply it.” ... It also clarifies what I intend to do personally, perhaps for the rest of my life: being the catapult, not the carrier.”

As leaders who are working with Millennials, it is so tempting to make ourselves into the ship, or the pilot, or the plane, or even the bombs being deployed. However, if we take on the burden of doing the ministry, we are robbing a Millennial of the joy and blessing of stepping up.

If I (Derek) make a Millennial my helper but don't give them the associated responsibility, they have no opportunity to grow. When I am working to intentionally launch a Millennial in whatever they sense God is asking of them, I literally step back from the situation and ask myself: *What part do I feel like I am playing in this scenario? How do I focus on being the catapult in this Millennial's journey?*

Idea #2: Replace Yourself

In the arena of walking individuals into their calling, I (Derek) was influenced greatly by Greg Murtha who was mentored by Bob Buford. One great idea that Greg taught

me was that being afraid to replace myself would limit my ministry.

One palpable fear I dealt with in ministry (and I know others do as well) is value. I often thought, and still do, “do I offer enough value to my church, my ministry? Do I provide enough value for them to keep me around.” What a hard place to be when you are working to release others into ministry but you’re worried about your own value.

Greg taught me that in God’s economy you always win when you promote others more than yourself and that when you brag on others more than yourself the Kingdom wins—and so do you in the end. I even watched Greg go to the extreme when he would recommend others for his job, or jobs he might be called on to fill if he thought they could be more effective for the Kingdom.

In a ministry setting, that means finding someone and heaping praise and credit on them and even giving that individual parts of your responsibility if they can do it better than you.

There are two unintended consequences to always giving others credit and actively working to replace yourself. First, unintended consequence is that people see what you are doing and also start to do it until a culture is created that simply gets things done for the Kingdom and no one is spending energy to attain credit.

The second unintended consequence is that we, as Robert Lewis teaches in *Men’s Fraternity*, get to place expectations on God for a “greater reward.” When times are more challenging, it’s assuring to know that we are doing what God has asked us to do and that even we if we’re not rewarded here on earth, God is storing up treasures for us to enjoy for eternity. In Bob

Buford,'s words, “men, I have done the math; and eternity is longer than time.”

Idea #3: The Danger of Being Prescriptive

As a younger leader, I (Derek) got myself in trouble while I worked to help Millennials engage their calling—I was being prescriptive. The Cambridge Dictionary defines prescriptive as “tending to say what someone should do or how something should be done.”

As I got to know the young men in our group, I would hear about their past and their experiences and then begin to see their strengths. All the while, I was forming my own opinion of how God might use them. As the discipleship journey continued, I would start dropping hints of what I thought their calling was all about.

Keep in mind, I did this with the best of intent. After all, I was older and at least thought I was wiser.

It wasn't until one day the most effective catapult I knew, Greg Murtha (another man highly impacted by Bob Buford), sat me down and explained to me that being prescriptive hurt the process God has for these men. His words stung, but they were also eye-opening.

I started paying attention to how Greg launched people. He never said things like, “It sounds to me like you need to do this,” or “Based on what I know of you, I think you need to explore this avenue.”

Greg understood several things. First, people need to come to their own conclusions about something as serious as God's call in their life. When we are handed things, even ideas, we don't take full ownership. Greg witnessed people who had been “given” their calling. It seemed right at the time

but quickly waned as they realized that what they had heard was from their friend, not God.

Second, Greg knew himself well enough to know that he always brought an agenda to the table—even when trying to resist. When discipling men and women, we always take into account our relationship with them; often we bring our own unarticulated selfishness to the table.

I have been in relationships when I didn't want to launch or deploy a disciple because that meant I would not get as much time with the individual as I wanted.

Admittedly, the reverse is also true. I've been in discipleship relationships where I wanted to launch (maybe a better word is "send") this guy because I wanted a good excuse to *not* have to hang out. In either case, I could steer the calling discussion based on my desires if I was being prescriptive.

As they helped individuals probe the heart of God, Greg and Bob would ask question after question. They would certainly point out observations about the individual's gifts and how they were uniquely designed. But they were never prescriptive.

It was enlightening to see men and women squirm as both leaders refused to answer the question, "So, what should I do?" Bob and Greg knew better than to give in and provide prescriptions when asking questions would more than suffice.

They had the wisdom not to short-circuit the process of an individual searching the heart of God. Instead, they knew that God's unique calling is so intimate that when we try to insert ourselves into someone else's calling, we tend to muddle things up.

In addition to these three big ideas, we have more granular ideas to help you guide the largest generation into their calling. Check out the following Appendix.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION (www.millennialscalling.com/community):

- Has a hero maker played a role in your life and ministry?
- How do you play the role of hero maker?
- What has happened when you were prescriptive with calling in the lives of those you lead?