



PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

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

Episode 047

Using Assessments in Coaching

KIM: There's no doubt about it, one of the more common questions we get here at the Professional Christian Coaching Institute is from new and veteran coaches about the use of assessments in coaching. We've been eager to have the time to devote an entire episode to this important topic. Today, we're going to talk about the use of formal and informal assessments and inventories in the coaching relationship. You're going to hear some of the key benefits of using assessments, some important limitations to be aware of, some categories of informal and formal assessments, and maybe the most important section of all, using the coach approach to discussing assessment results with your clients.

CHRIS: Yes and I'm aware coming at this field as you do, Kim, from a background in psychotherapy that our familiarity with assessments and inventories was from the clinical world. We used structured assessments the Beck Depression Inventory for example or the MMPI, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory to diagnose pathologies and disorders, and they are very, very helpful for getting a clear sense on something as soft often as the whole field of psychology. It's a soft science, hard to get real clarity about what's wrong with somebody when they are struggling psychologically. Assessments, inventories kind of serve in that field like x-rays do, blood draws, or urinalysis in the rest of the medical field. There,

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you have very hard evidence that comes to you from assessments that can be done to see what's wrong with the body. Not so hard when it comes to the soft science of psychology but assessments and inventories gave us good tools to work with.

That was my familiarity. I know it was your familiarity from our background, but here we come into the field of coaching and we find that coaches are using assessments and inventories. In fact, they are using many of the same assessments and inventories that we became familiar with in that previous clinical work. So I think very rightly, a natural question, a hesitancy even is raised. "Whoah, wait a minute. If we're introducing assessments/inventories, aren't we kind of blurring the line between counseling or psychotherapy and coaching?" Our answer to that today would be very definitely, "No, we are not but good question. Glad you asked." So let's be real clear first on just the value of these babies for the work that we're doing as coaches.

We don't typically of course use ones that are specifically geared toward identification pathology. I mentioned the Beck Depression Inventory or the MMPI. No, those are for clinical settings for clear pathology, but other things like the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, yes, very definitely. It can be helpful in a setting where you're working with brokenness and helping people to function more effectively in difficult relationships and such, and it can be helpful in growth oriented, strength based kind of work with people who are just trying to understand themselves better, to be more emotionally intelligent, more self aware of how God hard wired them. We're going to go through several different kinds of assessments that have beautiful adaptability and some of which were designed specifically for the growth oriented work of coaching distinct from the field of psychotherapy or counseling.

Let's just look at some of those benefits right off the bat. One of the clearest ones would be awareness. Coaching is all about gaining greater awareness and then from that awareness, being able to be more intentional in the living of our lives. A lot of that clarity that our clients gain comes through our asking of powerful

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questions. Well, structured assessment inventories are simply that – they are structured powerful questions. They provide a format for asking the kinds of probing, digging, prodding, clarifying questions that as people sit down and punch a keyboard for 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes or however long it takes or do a pen and paper kind of an assessment, provide clarity because they get a mirror back about self from those very structured questions of an assessment. It makes perfect sense. Why would you only use unstructured questions from relational coaching when you can add to that structured questions from assessments? It's a perfect fit.

Second I think with that awareness comes the clarity that you're seeking and that's clarity not just on self. What are my core values really? What is it that I most desire? What are my skills that I could actually play to here? What is my communication style? What are my interests and aptitudes? But also clarity for the sake of the coach. When the coach is getting back the results of a client's assessments and inventories, the coach is being equipped to coach that particular client more effectively. The clarity the coach is gaining about how that person processes information or what gives them energy is going to enable the coach to tailor the coaching approach to that specific client. So really, awareness is our first big benefit and clarity for both the client and the coach in the coaching relationship a second one

KIM: Along with those, I think there's a comprehensiveness that comes with formal and informal assessments. When a client is exploring a specific area such as their values or interests, perhaps potential occupations or personality styles, it's impossible to cover all aspects of that situation without turning it into a lecture environment in the coaching session, and that's definitely not what we want to do. Here, they have a written report, something they can refer to again and again that really quantifies what has been discovered, goes more in depth, and frankly, frees up the coach to coach during the coaching session and allows the client still to get

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this valuable insight, like you said, holding up the mirror and the reflection of themselves.

The last benefit we're just going to highlight today is the fact that these are objective or many of them are. They are reliable, they are valid assessments and so the information is received by the client. The client is often more open to receiving that information and giving it the credibility that it might deserve in the coaching conversation.

CHRIS: Good, good. Another application of that objective kind of feedback, when a coach is using assessments, not only can you use them with your individual clients but sometimes, you can use these assessment inventories with teams. When we're looking then for not just personal growth but we're looking for organizational growth or organizational health, when you get objective feedback about each of the members of a team and the team can then discuss, "Oh that's right. Wait a minute, you process this way. That's right, this strength is really yours. We should assign this project to you," the team starts to understand better how they can work together. Once again, you've increased their awareness, you've provided clarity for all of the parties, you've given them some kind of a comprehensive tool they can reflect back on long after the coach is done. They can go back to those resources, those assessment outcomes and look at them again, and you have given them some objective tools that they can pick up at any point that they need to when they are facing new challenges down the road.

KIM: Let me just throw in one other thing now that you bring that up about teams. It introduces a nonjudgmental, non-pejorative vocabulary. When you go into a workplace and you present something like the DISC, now we're not saying, "Well, he's bossy. He's always got his nose stuck in the details," or saying, "Well, she's a high I, he's a high D, she's a high C on the DISC." Everybody has a neutral term to discuss their different strengths and what, in some instances, may actually come across as weaknesses.

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Let's move from some of the benefits of assessments to think about the fact that there really are some limitations as well. Firstly, unlike therapy and unlike consulting, the coach and the client are on equal footing in the coaching relationship. We don't have a power relationship over them in any way and it can be tempting at times with an assessment to almost sit back in the armchair and deliver results as if from on high to the client. That is not the situation or the atmosphere we want to set up with our coaching clients. I would say just as a coach to make sure that you are taking a very coach approach to the assessment, sitting as it were side by side exploring the results together and definitely open to the client's input if what they are thinking or feeling is maybe even different than what the results of the test said. Don't let it elevate you to a power position.

CHRIS: Absolutely. Don't let it become diagnostic. That's how we would use it in the clinical setting. It's not really to diagnose. It's to provide additional information which is still to be processed always in the end from the client's perspective and understanding, and how they may want to apply it or not. Great point.

KIM: Right. Another limitation I think is it can be tempting sometimes for clients to think of an assessment as a silver bullet. I know when I've done career coaching, I've had clients say, "Yes, I want to take an assessment so it can tell me what I'm going to be when I grow up or tell me what to do in this situation or how to handle this." Well, no test is going to tell somebody what job they should get in life, not reliably. We just want to frame it correctly for our clients that again, it's going to provide good information to sort through and to spark some fascinating areas for discussion but no, it's not going to come in and make a decision for them.

CHRIS: Well, the third limitation while we're exploring some of these, just kind of reality checks for our self is that the use of inventories should not be looked upon as kind of a cookie cutter approach to your coaching practice. As you are developing your areas of niche specialization and holding yourself out to the marketplace, it may be that part of your promo includes, "I'm certified to administer these various assessments and I use them," but we would both caution anybody to maybe not

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make it a practice. Just across the board, every single client that starts with you automatically take X, Y, and Z inventories or assessments.

I never use them with all of my clients across the board. It depended on what the client was wanting to coach around and it depended on what my sense was of that client's openness or receptivity to exploring certain areas of their being before I would say, "You know what might be helpful for us here is a specific assessment," and then I would talk about how that assessment is designed, what information it could give us, if they would be interested in it, whether or not there's a cost for it and what's involved and so I would introduce it. Again, not a cookie cutter approach across the board but directly pertaining to whatever they were exploring at the time. I think in general, that's a wise policy. Certainly, a few inventories are pretty much going to be helpful for anybody at anytime, like a strengths inventory, but other things that are more specific to career aptitude or perhaps spiritual gifting or whatever, if the client isn't exploring those things at the time, then it would be out of place really. It's the coach being too directive to just say, "We're going to take these inventories and then we're going to process them." That's programmatic. That is not coach approach.

Finally, just be aware, I don't know that this is a limitation but it's a reality check again for us on using assessments. Just be aware, when you're looking at marketing your practice, it can be a feather in your cap. It can make you additionally attractive. It's not a client magnet. This is not going to be the automatic thing that makes your phone ring because you're certified in that, okay, the world is beating a path to your doorway. Being trained and certified makes you better. It makes you stronger. It makes you more attractive. The bottom line of all effective coaching is your skill as a coach and then making sure that in your marketing that you let people know what the coaching is that you offer and how it benefits people. That's where your marketing is. I think we just tossed that in because sometimes, we find that people are hesitating on their marketing and when you press them on, they say, "Well, I really feel like I need to get certified in these

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inventories before I can market effectively.” No. We got a different issue going on here that certification is not going to suddenly make your phone start ringing.

KIM: And I just have to say, I resemble that last point of yours. I remember so many years ago sitting in what was then the Foundations Class of Coaching and not realizing but looking back, coming from my insecurity of using coaching tools and the real value it provided, I kept thinking, “I should go pay thousands of dollars and get this blue stamp of approval of this inventory or that inventory of my coaching practice then people will see me as valuable and they will hire me.” All to realize later as I look back, the lack of confidence wasn’t on the client’s part. That wasn’t the reason they were or were not hiring me because of assessments. That was entirely my own issue that I needed to deal with. Being trained in several inventories is not going to automatically attract tons of clients, but it is a beautiful tool in your toolkit and can serve other people very well.

Along with formal assessments which we’ll discuss in a minute, there are also some informal assessments. Before we dive right in, I’d like to ask our listeners three short questions, Chris. Here’s the first one. Right now, at this point in your professional life as a coach, on a scale of 1-5, where would you rate yourself on the scale of powerful questioning? Second question, I hope you thought of a number. One year from today on that same scale, where would you like to be? Perhaps people rated themselves as a 2 or 3 and they think, “Well, a year from now, I’d like to be a solid 4, maybe even a 4.5.” Here’s the third question, what are one or two things you could do now to move yourself closer to where you want to be? It could be taking a class, reading a book, engaging in more peer barter coaching, a number of things.

As a listener, if you participated in this simple exercise, you just went through an informal assessment or rating scale. Notice how quickly it was able to help you drill down to evaluate where you are, where you want to be, and discover the way to bridge the gap. Using simple scales like that in coaching can really help you and your client have more concrete things to work with. For example, I bring

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scaling questions when a client tends to have a topic, focus, or an objective that I think of as hard to measure.

For example they may say, “I want to feel more confident about a certain decision.” For me I’m thinking, “Wow, it’s going to be hard by the end of the session to say do you feel more confident?” It’s all a little bit nebulous but if at the beginning when they say that’s their focus, I say, “Great. On a scale of 1-10, what would you say your confidence level is now?” About three-quarters of the way through the session, I can say, “You wanted to focus on your confidence regarding this decision. You said you were at 5, where are you at this point in the session?” “Well, I’m at a 6.” “Well, you said you wanted to get to a 7. So thinking about that, what’s going to be helpful in the rest of our time together?” It just makes everything more concrete, easier to wrap our minds around, and for clients to see the measurable value that they get from coaching.

CHRIS: That’s a really, really good coaching tip there for all of our listeners. Hear what Kim did there. You’re doing coaching, classic coaching. You’re staying in the question with clients but you’re inserting the use of an assessment, an informal assessment right on the moment - scale of 1-5, scale of 1-7, scale of 1-10 whatever – and you’re helping to rate where they are right now, where they would like to be, you can use it at various points throughout their coaching session. You can use it from session to session, have them write themselves on their prep form each week when they send their prep form in, whatever. The use of such an informal assessment is a great gauge and it can be turned right around and to say, “Okay, so what will it take to move you to that next point? What seems to be holding you back? How can we begin?”

Great use of an informal assessment and it springboards nicely into the primary points that we want to cover here of formal assessments. We’re encouraging again that you use these formal structured inventories and assessments, tools that already exist on the marketplace, some of them you have to be trained and certified to administer, others you can get for free or very, very low cost and don’t have to be

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certified to administer. You use them, at least in our way of encouraging, you use them in the same manner as that informal assessment – as you’re coaching, while you’re in the dance - and you begin to see, “Hmm, we need some more clarity here. We need to gain some greater awareness of something. We need to have some more measureable gauges or things that we could lay hold off to bring some change. That’s where such and such an assessment might really plug in for you.

I can recall very clearly as an older teenager, I was wrapping up high school. I was preparing to head off to college. My father was the district manager for a couple of steel mills in our area. He had access to the various HR people that were under his employ there. One of them was a psychologist that they had on contract. He arranged for me to go to the psychologist an MBTI, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and a Strong Interest Inventory. That was just to be able to help me understand myself better as a 17 or 18-year-old looking at college, trying to decide where to go and what maybe to pursue as a major that he proactively enabled me to access those two inventories – a personality inventory and a career and job aptitude or strengths type inventory, where you’re leanings and where do other people who have those same leanings seem to do well in the market place.

I’ll tell you what, it was a huge boost for me in feeling more confident about some of the decisions that I made. I wish I hadn’t fumbled around as much as I did still an undergraduate. I think I changed majors five times before I graduated, but I at least had much more information that was objectively reliable that I could look back to and I did from that point forward. Interestingly, I have since taken the Myers- Briggs two other times, very extensive Myers-Briggs analyses over about a 30-year span. All three times, do you know that my MBTI score is the same? Again, I underscore, these inventories are quite substantiated through outcome based evidence. They are reliable, they are valid. They hold true and again just a really, really helpful application of it at a particularly important transition point in my life. Dad was doing coaching. I don’t think he realized it at that time.

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Let's look at some of these babies. There are several different categories of inventories and there are far more out there on the marketplace than we could possibly cover, but I think we're going to hit quite a few of them here. Let's start with the personality inventories. We've mentioned here a couple of times already, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is perhaps the world's best known, most familiar inventory to look at just the way our personality and temperament work together to present to the world an individual unique person. Who am I? How am I put together? The MBTI basically measures four things, 1) where do you get your energy, what energizes you? 2) How do you take in and process information? How do you gather information for being able to make a good decision? 3) How do you make decisions? With that information and with the stuff that energizes you, how do you make a decision finally that you're going to act on something? 4) How do you like to structure the action you're seeking to undertake? How do you like to structure your life? Are you a planner, kind of a more type A or are you more type B, kind of play it fast and loose?

That's what the Myers-Briggs is looking at and this is based on writings that go all the way back to the very earliest writings we have in Western culture. The writings of Aristotle, the writings of Hippocrates and they were looking at the way that human beings seem to be wired. They have been called different things by different inventories but Carl Jung, the famous psychologist, wrote extensively on the development of the personality. He said basically our personality is the combination of the temperament we were born with. Every parent knows each child comes into the world hardwired a little differently than the other. That's your temperament. That's not your personality, that's your temperament. Then, that temperament mixes with the environment in which you find yourself, in which you're raised. The environment that shapes you, so that would be your family, your parents of course, it would be whatever other environments become important – the school that you go to, the community that you grew up in, the culture that you're around.

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So that environmental shaping of that temperament you came born with molds a personality, which by the time you are in your mid- to late teens, psychology would tell us is largely set. It's not necessarily in concrete but it's pretty close. The personality does not change dramatically beyond about 18-21, 24 years of age. Somewhere in there, we're pretty established, sometimes that means for good or for ill, but there it is. Temperament plus environment, you get the personality. That's what that inventory is designed to assess and as I said, tremendously helpful, very deep dive on information.

Now, my experience is that's great for individual coaching. I have not found it to be nearly so helpful for group coaching and the reason is because that specificity comes at a high cost. It's a ton of information and it's too much in a group setting for people to remember. They can barely remember what their own assessment is let alone what the other five people around the table's assessments are and so we have other similar personality and temperament type indicators that are much easier. They are simplified. They are still based on the four basic things that the MBTI, the Carl Jung, and all these others were assessing.

In regard to those, here at the institute, we actually offer a course that trains in a series of those inventories developed by the company Right Path. The Right Path4 and the Right Path6 are two inventories that a person can train in and become certified to administer through a course we teach here. In fact, we did a podcast with Peter Beck who teaches that course for us on Emotional Intelligence from the Right Path4 and 6 inventories, but that's very similar as is the DISC, which Kim mentioned just a moment ago, the DISC Inventory. Probably most all of our listeners would be familiar with that.

Florence Littauer, the author and speaker in the Christian world wrote extensively on an inventory that she uses, which again is based on the same basic four categories. Listeners may be familiar with her inventory in which she assesses a person to be principally a sanguine, a choleric, a melancholic, or a phlegmatic. Of course, those are based again on the writings way back in ancient history of

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Hippocrates in which he was looking at our four humors - the blood, the yellow bile, the black bile, and the phlegm. I kind of don't like those terms and those assessments but okay, we're rolling with that.

There are other similar ones. They seem even lighthearted but once again, they get to the point of the primary leanings that we have. For example, there are assessments that say what season are you, summer, winter, spring, or fall? What element are you most like and they look at the qualities of the elements – air, water, fire, earth. There's one by John Trent and Gary Smalley in which they identify you as an animal type. Are you an otter, lion, beaver, or a golden retriever? All the same basic things looking at those same primary four categories that Carl Jung very clearly identified and that go all the way back to Aristotle and Hippocrates. There's even a very simple one that I was trained in at my previous institute called the People Map. Are a leader type, free spirit type, a people person, or a task person?

You should always get those same basic clustering of four primary types that break down into a dominant and a secondary type. That's why sometimes there are six possibilities that come out or you go the full enchilada with the Myers-Briggs and you have 16 different types, but those are still the four primary as the base.

KIM: Those are extremely helpful, Chris, not only as you mentioned, the client to get inside in themselves, in the environment, and how they interact but in relationship to other important people in their life, whether it's their work team, their marriage, or their family. I have to say just real quickly, I think taking the DISC test probably saved our marriage early on.

When we were first married, there was a training at our church in the DISC for whatever reason and we went. I'll never forget sitting there looking at my husband's results and thinking, "Oh, he's supposed to be this way. I thought he was just like really bad at being like me and he thought I was a really bad at being like him," and then to understand our distinctive indifferences in terms of that non-

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pejorative language and pointing to the beauty and the fullness of people being all different types, truly, it revolutionized our relationship and I think it can have that kind of impact in other people who come into coaching relationships and understanding the other people in their lives as well as themselves.

CHRIS: Very definitely especially because opposites attract, right? If we don't remember that and then remember, "Oh, that's right. They are different from me. How are they different?" Here are some inventories to help us identify how they are different.

KIM: Yeah, it's a beautiful thing. Along those same lines, another category of assessments are 360 Degree Assessments. Peter Beck covers this in his Right Path Course when he trains in that because they have a 360 Degree Feedback Assessment as do a number of other companies. They are certainly helpful in organizational relationships where you're getting feedback from the people you work with, the people who are above you, your direct reports so you can understand not just who you are but how people experience you, how they perceive you. We all tend to look at the world through our own lens and I think it's incredibly valuable to see what impact am I having on others. It's also useful to take a 360 Degree assessment I think when it comes to personal branding. Coaches often go out and build their businesses and it's built on them as a coach. So what words do I use to communicate the fact that I'm energetic, I'm comprehensive, or I'm extremely relational? When you get a 360 degree feedback and the results come back for you and your client, it's almost as if other people write your website copy for you. It's just a nice way to go about that.

Following that thinking about leaders and organizations and relationships, there are also Emotional Intelligence assessments and inventories. You think about Daniel Goleman who is, in a sense, the father of giving us words for this concept we call Emotional Intelligence. He has a specific assessment called Emotional and Social Competencies which may be interesting to some people as well as the Emotional Intelligence 2.0 book which came out several years ago, Chris. They have one of

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those secret codes in the back so that you can go online and get the emotional intelligence appraisal and find out the results from that. Again, this gives you good feedback on yourself in those areas where you and I tend to have blind spots and not see things that other people are clearly seeing.

CHRIS: We don't realize how we're coming across to others and you take an Emotional Intelligence assessment or you get some 360 feedback from other people around you and your world and you go, "Whoah, wait a minute. I'm coming across how? When? What do I do? How can I change that? I don't want to come across that way." Well that's tremendously valuable for your own personal growth which you would not have likely ever caught unless you had assessments like this, just huge value here for coaching again, when the client is ready for it and desiring that kind of insight and self awareness.

Continuing on to some other categories of assessments, I mentioned a moment ago in talking about my father having me take some assessments. I took not only the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator but I took an inventory called the Strong Interest Inventory. That inventory looks at your areas of strongest interest. It doesn't necessarily say you would do well in that field but at least it says these are the career pursuits that seem to be attractive to you and perhaps equally or maybe even more importantly, these are the career pursuits that don't seem to hold much interest for you at all. Don't waste your time or your money in pursuing this.

An aptitude and interest inventory like that can be huge. The aptitude piece of it actually in the strong not only looks at what are your interests but then it says, okay, so other people who have taken this inventory over years and decades who showed those same interests seem to do particularly well with these kinds of tasks, projects, or jobs. So you're hedging your bets. You're making an informed decision by saying, "Well, if they like it and they had inclination toward it, chances are pretty good. I'm probably going to like it as well even though I've never done it. Maybe I should go shadow somebody who is doing that. I never thought about that career possibility before."

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So the strong interest inventory, there's also the Campbell Career Direct. It has a great assessment that I used to use several years ago now. I haven't done career coaching for quite a while but Career Direct. SkillScan I think, Kim, is one you've used, right, in this area?

KIM: I really enjoy using the SkillScan because the entire experience, like most of these probably, is online, but as they give suggested occupations that you may want to explore, they have links right there so that you can go to the database of the government explaining the different careers. You can see what the future outlook of that career is, the typical day looks like, the kind of people, the average salary for people in that career. So all from that one inventory, you have links to all sorts of other information that comes and supports what you're discovering as you go through the SkillScan.

CHRIS: Wow, I'm not familiar with that one so that would be tremendously helpful, not just I might like this career but oh, that's how much they are making, that's what that would require from me in terms of my work day or portability in the marketplace, travel, whatever else. That would be huge.

Okay, let's continue looking at some other categories. Marriage or relationships, premarital kinds of inventories, once again, we're looking here not to use these as Kim and I both did back in our marriage therapy days, when a marriage is falling apart and the couple are talking about possible divorce, but instead in premarital work like I did enjoy doing sometimes back in my old practice. Parents would buy a series of successions for premarital counseling for their kids as a wedding gift. Even then in a marriage that is saying, "Okay, our marriage is not really bad. It's just not really great. It's not vibrant. It's not dynamic. I don't sense that it's growing. Our marriage is not like so and so that they say. I want a marriage like that." Well, great. That's marriage coaching. You're looking there at enrichment work, enhancing an already okay marriage.

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That's where inventories like Prepare and Enrich. Those are two different inventories created by the same company. I think probably many of our listeners will be familiar with them. I used to use those back in my counseling days, have still been using those in my coaching days, and here more recently, I've become very excited about a new one that just came on the market this year 2016 by my friends Les and Leslie Parrott.

It's from their bestselling book, Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts and the letters for that are S.Y.M.B.I.S. or SYMBIS, a made up word but the SYMBIS Inventory is one that takes a lot of the best of what the Prepare and Enrich does and really kind of puts it on steroids. The usability, the information that you get afterwards, kind of like what you were talking there with SkillScan, Kim, is just so tremendously helpful for couples, giving them some very clear exercises, discussion points, and measurable information that they can use to close some gaps on some differences between themselves, very helpful tools. Actually, I'm happy to say we have a marriage course coming out in 2017 here at the institute that will include training and certification in that SYMBIS Inventory, maybe more on that at the end of the podcast, huh?

KIM: Well, I'm really looking forward to that class when it does come out. That will be great. Thinking about relationships with other people and within yourself, there's also values assessments. When we talk about values, we're not talking about things that are valuable or not valuable, or things that are good versus bad versus I value honesty and you value dishonestly. Hopefully, that wouldn't be true but when we think about values, we're thinking about the fact that woven within us does tend to be the strong preferences for certain things. For example Chris, as I have gotten to know you over the years, I've realized you really value nature and God's beauty and creation, so much so that you left Florida and moved to the foot of the Ozarks with your family, another huge value of yours. Well, I'm going to be honest with you, Chris, I value air conditioning and climate control. I think nature is gorgeous from my picture window as I sit in my office in my city with all

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the conveniences of city living. It's not that your values are better than mine or mine are better than yours, but they are very different.

Unfortunately, sometimes these differences get into relational difficulties especially between married couples or people trying to make a joint decision. They don't really understand why somebody doesn't see their point of view. So giving some words and a little bit of clarification to the values could be very helpful in those kinds of situations. You can take a free assessment by Rokeach, Rokeach Values Inventory online where it's a simple ranking system. Do I value freedom more or do I value structure? You're just ranking the values and it helps somebody sort through and think through those things. You can take the VIA, which is a free values and action inventory.

I think my favorite though is the one that is put up by Cheryl Weir called Needs and Values Program. For me, it's a lot easier for me to take and my clients to take because it's not saying, "Kim, do you value freedom or walking in nature?" Well, I don't know. I sit there and I look at those sometimes and think, "They are both nice. They are both equally important to me. She asks easier to answer questions, I think. For example, pick from one of these: spending the day in the museum, spending the day in the park, spending the day reading a book, or going to a party with friends. That question I can answer. I don't really have to understand the vocabulary of the author and how they are using certain values words. At the end of the test, there's a ranking system and she puts vocabulary to all of those things. Needs and Values Test, I think can be helpful.

Also, there are the strengths finder and the other strengths test. People just learning what makes them special, how God wired them, the things that they are really good at, not just things they've learned to do like skills but their innate areas of strength. I have to say, there are very few clients who probably wouldn't benefit from a strengths finder test at some point in the relationship when it's appropriate. We all tend to, I think, take our own strengths for granted and think, "Well surely everybody can do math computations in their head or is good with

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people or is strategic,” when in reality, not everybody is all of those things. Those are strengths that you can step into and really contribute to the world by relying on them once you understand what they are.

CHRIS: Yeah and so an exciting piece of information there, we’re actually working on a new course in 2017 to be taught by one of our students who is coming on faculty on the strengths finder, so another exciting thing to look at there. He was the very first certified coach in the strengths finder in the Gallup family and so we’re going to be rolling out that course. Yeah, good stuff coming on here where you can get direct application in the coaching world with these various assessments and tools.

Well, let’s wrap this section up by looking at an eighth category in which we sometimes use assessments as coaches and that’s in the area of spiritual giftedness or strengths or leanings. There are many free spiritual gifts assessments and inventories online that can be found. One of the ones I love especially is from the book Sacred Pathways by author Gary Thomas. You can find that online. I believe the link is with North Point Community Church. They have it called You’ve Got Style, I think. It’s a very quick and easy assessment to take online and get your results back. Very, very helpful in terms of understanding some of your leanings but one that I use with many of my clients who are looking at growing in their areas of spiritual giftedness is called the Wagner Modified Houts Questionnaire.

That’s quite a mouthful but Houts, H-O-U-T-S, originally developed a spiritual gifts inventory and Wagner came along and modified it. So we have the Wagner Modified Houts Questionnaire, a tremendous quick assessment that can be done online or pencil and paper version. You can do it in large groups. It doesn’t take more than just a few minutes. You can use it for retreats. You can certainly obviously use it one on one with your clients. I always charge a very small markup for that but hugely helpful for people who are wanting to understand how God knit them together spiritually, their areas of natural spiritual leaning. There are specific Scripture passages referenced when you get your results as to where

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your spiritual strengths lie then you can go to Scripture and read passages where other persons who showed forth that spiritual gifting are written about and you can come to understand yourself and lean into those gifting more consciously.

KIM: Beautiful. I think it's similar to the strengths finder in that people are so close to their own spiritual gifts. It's easy for them to overlook what they are so that outside validation really helps them lean into that.

Let's wrap up this discussion of assessments by just briefly touching on what's a coach approach to assessments. When you think about assessments, as Chris and I were talking earlier from a therapeutic point of view or the medical model, or a consultant's point of view or a teacher's point of view, in each of those situations, the person delivering the assessment is the expert, as it were, explaining, teaching, and delivering the results to the person who is listening. There's nothing wrong with that and there's a lot of good applications for that model, but as a coach, we want to remember primarily that the client is the expert on their own life. They may have spent 15-20 minutes taking an assessment. It could have been a rainy day. They could have been off. While these are reliable instruments, they are not fool proof.

The goal of the client taking assessment is always whatever the client's goal was. It's not the assessment in and of itself. We don't give it and deliver results so we can all celebrate now we've taken this assessment. Instead, the client probably took it to get more clarity on a decision, to find out what they want to do with the situation at work, to better relate to their wife and their teenage son, to understand how to use their spiritual gifts as they minister in the community, etc. There's a larger overarching goal and the assessment is simply part of the tool.

When we think about that, again, picture you and your client at least metaphorically sitting side by side looking at the assessment together, nothing evaluative about it and then you can just of course clarify what the goal is for that particular session with the assessment and then start a discussion. What was your

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experience with the assessment? What did you like about it? What, if anything, didn't you like about it? What surprised you? What stood out to you as important for us to discuss and further explore today? I was thinking an interesting question is what did you disagree with on this assessment today?

I've had clients who, for example, I could think of one assessment it said, "You might make a good farmer." He said, "That just gives me hives. I can't even imagine in my wildest dreams being a farmer." Well, the assessment is not right and he's wrong. He's the expert on his own life. He knows his preferences. So I said, "Okay, instead of farmer there, let's scratch that out. What would fit better? What would you say as a result of that section would be a good fit for you?" He's still learning, he's growing, he's discovering. It's not a right or wrong situation. That is more the approach we take as coaches.

CHRIS: I love it and it can really ramp up and strengthen the coaching service that you're providing to your client. You've added significant tools to your larger coaching toolkit that can give clarity as to where to focus, what you have to work with in that particular client, and what may need to be strengthened. That's tremendously valuable.

I hope this episode has been helpful for our listeners. If you're interested in accessing a free inventory, some of you have taken advantage of it already and some of you aren't even aware that it's out there. If you go to our website, there is a wonderful inventory called Align Your Life. It's free for the taking. All you got to do is register on there at ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com and then click that link for Align Your Life. That is a tool that you can use for yourself to get a quick sense of where you are in regard to all major areas of life and then you can use that same link of course with your clients, any of your clients who want to take a quick assessment of where they are in all major areas of life that will give you an immediate reading, 1-10, on areas of great congruence between what they desire and how they are living out their life and great conflict or incongruence perhaps. How they would like to be living and what they are actually doing right

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now. That can give you clarity as coaching client then as to where to focus. That's free again on our website, ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com.

Again, we always remind you of the institute itself and we've mentioned some of the courses that we have there and some that are coming online. If this has piqued your interest there, you might want to check into that. That is at the school's website, ProfessionalChristianCoaching.com. That Right Path Inventory Assessment course, that trains in the Right Path4, 6, and 360. I mentioned the upcoming marriage coaching course that will include the SYMBIS Inventory and the Strengths Finder Course and Inventory, so lots of good things there.

Until next time, keep raising that standard of coaching and changing the world.

KIM: God's richest blessings to you.