



REGENT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP

Beyond the Conversation: Coaching Practices that Foster Flourishing

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Roundtable: Professional Coaching

Abstract

This article highlights insights from two live panel discussions about professional coaching presented at the Regent University School of Business and Leadership 2025 Annual Roundtables. Three presenters from this event are featured in this reflective narrative. The live panels provided an opportunity for all professionals who recorded presentations to have a voice in the live element of the roundtables. These panel discussions advanced the professional coaching conversation, as presenters included research and ideas from recorded presentations. Among the highlights of the panels is the introduction of four little-known or new terms: First Lady Syndrome (Johnson, 2025), invisible labor, manufactured tension, and trauma literacy. The panel content elevated and advanced coaching understanding and practice. Our intention in this reflection is to honor the presenters' work and voice.

Keywords: coaching, First Lady Syndrome, manufactured tension, trauma, psychological safety

Beyond the Conversation: Coaching Practices that Foster Flourishing

In 2025, the Regent University School of Business and Leadership (SBL) hosted virtual roundtables. The overall theme was "Flourishing through Christ-Centered Business and Leadership Practices," reflecting the Professional Coaching Roundtable's (PCR) commitment to Regent University's mission of Christian leadership to change the world through "exploring the relationship between Christian business principles, leadership practices, entrepreneurship, innovation, and human flourishing" (Regent University).

Professional Coaching was one of eleven field-specific roundtables. A call for abstracts was issued to researchers and practitioners, noting the following:

At its essence, coaching is a profession honoring the individual. Coaches recognize and acknowledge the unique qualities of each client and work collaboratively with them to facilitate their personal growth and development. We invite practitioners and researchers to submit their work showcasing the distinct aspects of biblical approaches to coaching that lead to client flourishing. We challenge presenters to illustrate the effectiveness of the models they have developed and applied. Practitioners are encouraged to present case studies and best practices pertaining to coaching ethics, partnerships, trends, teams, and AI & technology. (Regent University)

Coaching is a profession honoring the individual, recognizing each person's unique identity, gifts, skills, abilities, and strengths, and partnering with them to foster flourishing and growth. In the live coaching panels at the Regent University School of Business and Leadership 2025 Annual Roundtables, practitioners and researchers shared how biblical approaches to coaching shape practice and lead to empowerment and authentic transformation. Out of those live engagements emerged integrative topics that led to flourishing: trust, empathy, future growth, identity, spiritual connection, hope, and resiliency.

The panels highlighted two central themes. First, they considered how Scripture and biblical narratives inform coaching. From Isaiah's call to bind up the brokenhearted to Moses's journey of leadership transformation, biblical wisdom provides vision and framework for guiding others. Rooted in faith, such coaching aligns practical support with God's purposes for human flourishing.

Second, they explored the hidden burdens many leaders carry – limiting beliefs, unhealthy habits, and distorted mindsets – that hinder identity, becoming, and flourishing. Coaching provides a safe, intentional space to surface these challenges, build awareness, and move toward lasting change.

Together, these conversations affirmed coaching as both a professional practice and a spiritual calling that nurtures authentic growth and flourishing.

2025 Professional Coaching Roundtable Panelists and Presenters

Dr. Brandi Humphries, a human resource leader with over 25 years of experience, drives organizational excellence and people development. Humphries is a senior certified professional through the Society for Human Resource Management and serves in the construction industry. She presented *Leading Through Manufactured Tension: A Biblical Roadmap for Leadership Change & Renewal*.

Pastor Cherelle Johnson is a pastor, pastor's wife, instructor, and an executive coach. Her passion is women's empowerment, specifically unfolding invisible leadership –

helping women name the burdens that exist within their roles. She presented *Beyond the Role: First Lady Syndrome and Coaching as a Pathway for Flourishing*.

Dr. Rebekah Lloyd is a leadership consultant, researcher, and the founder of Lloyd Consulting Firm. Her passion lies in equipping leaders and those who walk beside them. Lloyd's calling was shaped by her own story as an Army combat veteran, an adoptive mom, and a trauma survivor who has watched how unaddressed wounds can silently shape leadership, behavior, and identity. She presented *Coaching the Wounded: Trauma-Informed Practices for Faith-Based Coaches*.

Their faith, combined research, and practice advance the insight, awareness, and comprehension of coaching and its impact toward flourishing. Empowering others is a central theme, as the panelists expressed their purpose and motivation for sharing their research and insights.

Roundtable Components

The SBL Roundtables were designed as a multi-tiered learning experience, integrating three key components: a recorded presentation, a written article, and a live panel dialogue. While participation across all elements was encouraged, it was not mandatory. Each contributor was required to prepare a recorded presentation in response to the PCR theme, "The Relationship Between Christian Business and Leadership Practices and Human Flourishing Coaching: Purpose, Principles, and Practice." These recordings were made available to registrants in advance, enabling participants to engage the content thoughtfully before entering the live panel conversations.

In the PCR, all presenters were invited to participate in live panel discussions during the two days of the live roundtables event held November 13–14, 2025. Extended pre- and post-conference access for participants was available October 29–December 12, 2025. PCR presentations were delivered by professionals who integrate practice with research and academia. These combined roles advance the purpose, principles, and practice taking place in professional coaching today. Two panels were created within the Professional Coaching Roundtable to spotlight practitioners' research and experience in various sectors. During the live sessions, moderators and panelists co-created and furthered the professional coaching discussion and focused on two distinct forums.

Dr. Diane M. Wiater, Regent University SBL adjunct professor, served as the PCR chair and moderated the Thursday evening panel, *Biblical Narratives Shaping Coaching Practices for Flourishing*. This panel explored how Scripture and biblical narratives shape coaching practices that lead to authentic growth and flourishing. Drawing from stories such as Isaiah's call to bind up the brokenhearted and Moses's journey of

transformation, panelists discussed how biblical wisdom provides a vision and framework for guiding others through coaching. Together, they considered how faith-based coaching practices lead to clients flourishing.

Dr. Kelly M. G. Whelan, Regent University SBL adjunct professor, served as the PCR co-chair, and moderated the Friday panel, Coaching as a Catalyst for Authentic Growth and Flourishing: Addressing Hidden or Unacknowledged Challenges, alongside Wiater.

The live panels offered those who recorded presentations an opportunity to share their voice and engage with other panelists. Both live panels showcased the intersection of professional, scholarly, and biblical perspectives on coaching and flourishing.

Christian Coaching Understanding. In the 2024 proceedings, Wiater and Whelan (2024) noted the encouragement of Regent SBL faculty to use AI. While there is much work to be done in crafting a Christian coaching definition, after feeding keywords, themes, and definitions into an AI tool, it defined Christian coaching as “a collaborative relational process focused on fostering growth, purpose, and transformation through a Christ-centered approach. This process relies on a unique combination of supportive partnership, trust, self-awareness development, and faith-based, Holy Spirit guidance (OpenAI, 2023)” (p. 212). Christian coaching understanding and definitions continue to evolve.

***Flourishing.** The live roundtable event featured three plenary speakers. Dr. Jennifer Holloran presented *The Bible’s Impact on Human Flourishing*, Dr. Matthew Lee presented, *Integrating Flourishing and Operational Excellence in Leadership and Business*, and Dr. J. Lee Whittington presented *Led by the Spirit. Leading by the Spirit*. (Regent University).*

Holloran noted that an important part of experiencing flourishing is that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the power and relevance of the Bible for themselves. And we (American Bible Society) believe that that’s an important part of how people are called to be able to experience human flourishing, both in this life, but also for eternity. (J. Holloran, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Lee in presenting about flourishing in operational excellence, stated that “what we aim to achieve in operational excellence, is the abundant life or what we might refer to as flourishing.” He uses well-being and flourishing interchangeably, noting that “there is an opportunity in our leadership to lead for the flourishing of all, the abundant life for all” (M. T. Lee, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Whittington challenged leaders and asked, “How can leaders use their power and influence to create environments God has entrusted to them?” He emphasized the role

of the leader in creating environments where people can thrive and flourish and where “they can become all that God designed them to be” (J. L. Whittington, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

The Professional Coaching panel presentations focused on practices that lead to flourishing. In response to the question of “What is flourishing?” their responses were as follows:

Lloyd, as it pertains to trauma-informed leadership, stated that coaching helps people learn how to use the trauma experience for future good. Many who have experienced trauma develop empathy (R. Lloyd, personal communication, October 28, 2025). Lloyd noted that one way people who have experienced trauma flourish through coaching is they learn how to harness empathy in relationships. Adding from Lloyd’s conference presentation, “flourishing is more than the absence of distress, it is living with purpose, resilience, and joy rooted in Jesus” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, October 28, 2025).

Johnson noted in the context of First Lady Syndrome and, making a case for how women who are invisible can be seen, said that coaching toward flourishing is about healthy identity, and “coaching helps people lean into the most healthy part of themselves” (C. Johnson, personal communication, October 28, 2025).

Humphries, in looking for the organization and the individual to flourish, explained that

flourishing in my particular context is being inspired and supported by biblical teaching ... and really creating a workplace where people feel seen, supported, and inspired to reach for and connect with the Lord, ultimately. Even when I can’t necessarily wave the flag and call it that. (B. Humphries, personal communication, October 28, 2025)

In academia, for Christians, flourishing is increasingly understood as becoming who God designed you to be (Messer, 2021). It requires supportive and empowering relationships and environments (p. 287). VanderWeele (2017) summarizes, “flourishing is about well-being” (p. 8149). VanderWeele goes on to say, “most would concur that flourishing, however conceived, would, at the very least, require doing or being well in the following five broad domains of human life” (p. 8149). Among those five domains, and most reflected in the roundtables, are mental and physical health, meaning, and purpose. The explorations, stories, and discoveries of the panelists bear this out.

Terms Introduced. A highlight of the PCR is the introduction and use of four little-known or new terms:

- **First Lady Syndrome:** “First Lady was the term given to the pastor’s wife, as a name of honor, in a sense. ... and then later it became this image-bearer of leadership without authority” (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025).
- **invisible labor:** “work that is essential yet unrecognized, uncompensated, or excluded from formal job descriptions” (Johnson, in press, p. 10). Invisible labor is not just a personal issue, it is a structural and gendered problem embedded in church leadership culture. In the context of FLS (First Lady Syndrome), it fuels burnout, role confusion, and systemic inequality.
- **manufactured tension:** a purposeful disruption that surfaces organizational dysfunction and propels renewal. Humphries used a biblical example to describe this:

when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, they soon found themselves positioned between the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh’s advancing army behind them. And this moment of pressure wasn’t incidental; it was divinely orchestrated. And the tension was purposeful. I believe it was intended to cultivate a deeper trust and strengthen obedience and shape the identity of the people as they transition from bondage to nationhood. (B. Humphries, personal communication, October 28, 2025)
- **trauma literacy:** “Is understanding trauma and understanding how widespread it is. ... This term comes from the trauma-informed leadership framework that I (Lloyd) created, there are four behaviors and four attributes” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, October 28, 2025).

Conceptually, three of these four terms involve identity. Coaching assists leaders in exploring and understanding self. A common and much touted outcome of Christian coaching is transformation.

Live Panel 1: Biblical Narratives Shaping Coaching Practices for Flourishing

This panel explored how Scripture and biblical narratives shape coaching practices that lead to authentic growth and flourishing. Drawing from stories such as Isaiah’s call to bind up the brokenhearted and Moses’s journey of transformation, panelists discussed how biblical wisdom provides a vision and framework for guiding others through coaching. Together, they considered how faith-based coaching practices lead to client flourishing.

Conversational Inquiry and Insights. In her introduction to the live panel, Biblical Narratives, Shaping Coaching Practices for Flourishing, Wiater declared “Christian coaching of all the professions is most suited to yield human flourishing. Coaching is a profession of hope, it’s a redemptive and restorative profession” (D. Wiater, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

In the opening question, as panelists introduced themselves, they were asked about their passion as it's connected to their work, presentation, and calling.

Johnson expressed that her "passion is women's empowerment, specifically unfolding that invisible leadership that exists, and really helping women name some of the burdens that exist in leadership spaces." Her research presentation was titled, *Beyond the Role: First Lady Syndrome, and coaching as a pathway for flourishing* (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Humphries introduced herself as "a senior certified professional through the Society for Human Resource Management and strives to inspire servant leadership by fostering growth through empowered, value-based interactions." Her presentation was titled, *Leading Through Manufactured Tension: A Biblical Roadmap for Leadership Change & Renewal*. Humphries noted that "using the biblical teachings and life of Moses as an enduring faith, a model of faith-driven ethical leadership. I think Moses's principles remain relevant to even modern executive and organizational practice" (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Lloyd, opened her comments, sharing,

My passion lies in equipping leaders and those who walk beside them with trauma-informed skills that create safety, trust, and flourishing in every environment they lead. My calling was shaped by my own story as an Army combat veteran, an adoptive mom, and a trauma survivor who has watched how unaddressed wounds can silently shape leadership, behavior, and identity. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Her presentation was titled *Coaching the Wounded, Trauma-Informed Practices for Faith-Based Coaches*.

Through these presentations, the invisible is being seen, passion for Christ is leading to leadership development, and the expression of a trauma-informed framework through which coaching takes place are all demonstrating the use of coaching as a means leading to flourishing.

Johnson's narrative thread through the story of Zephora in exploring invisible identities. Lloyd noted that her presentation "explores how Scripture, specifically Isaiah 61 and neuroscience can join together to guide Christian coaches as they support clients walking through life's hidden challenges" (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025). Humphries noted her "passion for Christ, ... leadership development, passion, organizational renewal, and a people-first culture by applying biblical principles" (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

The panelists recognize the importance of fostering safety and trust in coaching relationships. Whelan (2021) notes, “Within the juncture of trust and psychological safety, a coach can step in and do meaningful work” (p. 8). Through trust and safety, coaching engagements open client discovery, which is a core coaching concept.

Coaching Applications and Discoveries. Whelan asked panelists to expand on their research and note discoveries and applications they were excited about.

Lloyd noted that her experiences — as a veteran and as someone who has lived through trauma — have shaped and informed her calling. She explained that “trauma-informed coaching protects and empowers, staying within scope while still acknowledging clients’ lived realities ... faith and neuroscience can work together in ways that support human flourishing” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Addressing its importance, Lloyd said, “We are living in an age of collective and individual trauma.” Lloyd continued “Many Christian leaders and professionals are quietly carrying wounds that coaching is uniquely positioned to address if coaches have trauma literacy” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

“What excites me most is seeing how trauma-informed coaching can create spaces for flourishing. Like Dr. Wiater said, it’s uniquely designed for the human flourishing component” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Lloyd’s key point was that “when clients feel safe, their brains can re-engage, their identity strengthens, and their purpose becomes clearer.” In closing, Lloyd said, “Watching or hearing someone say, I can breathe again, or I finally feel like myself, is what keeps me coming back to this work” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Johnson, from her position as a pastor’s wife and through her research, became aware of the burden of women in leadership without the title. She pondered, “What happens when women carry the weight of leadership, but none of the title, none of the recognition, or none of the boundaries that can be put in place because we have acknowledged that they’re leaders, right?” (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025). Johnson came upon a concept which she then “designed as First Lady Syndrome.” The term represents

women, pastor’s wives, [who] are in spaces where there’s a burden of leadership on them, but usually, lack of training, support, and then even a title. Coaching is a means of addressing the constructs of First Lady Syndrome. ... I believe coaching can help flourishing directly. It addresses them all. It provides this peer-to-peer dynamic, a safe space for leaders to discover themselves. (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Additionally, Johnson, in her conference presentation, proposed “coaching as a strategic intervention to support pastors’ wives as they navigate unseen, high-impact leadership roles” (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Humphries, who emphasized she is an internal coach, noted she attended Regent University and completed the Doctor of Strategic Leadership (DSL) degree. The DSL program equipped Humphries to help her organization get out of devastating cycles of poor leadership. “Poor leadership, poor guidance, not driven by biblical principles. It felt like we were in the middle of an ocean in a boat” (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Humphries presented a case on her organization, noting her number one recommendation was for the organization to have coaching. “The coaching initiative has helped not only my organization flourish, but every individual within the organization and the surrounding community.” “So, I very much feel like the poster child for (a) the DSL program, (b) the power of belief, biblical principles, and real-life application – secular organization or faith-based organization – and the power of coaching” (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Coaching is a transformative process. While not all of the panelists are coaches, they advocate coaching for leadership, team, and organization development toward flourishing.

Wiater noted the panelists were from different professions and different industries. The significance of this is the awareness that coaching influence has a broad professional reach. She asked them to describe coaching and flourishing.

Lloyd responded around the trauma model,

Coaching here, forward-moving, strengths-based leadership, coaches, they don’t diagnose or treat, we don’t fix, we can help clients access their strengths, clarify their values, and take intentional steps toward the life that God designed for them. And that connects this, then, to the flourishing piece. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

In the panel exchange, Humphries noted from Lloyd’s presentation a distinction between counseling and coaching was that counseling looks at the past and coaching looks at the future, but that coaching looks at the past only to remove barriers to client flourishing. “In my organization, we don’t want to drum up the past and relive it, which I assume is part of your process in the trauma-informed realm, but I love that” (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Many clients carry trauma responses, such as people-pleasing, perfectionism, or avoidance, without recognizing them as adaptations to past harm. A trauma-informed coach recognizes that behavior communicates a need.

When asked to describe coaching, the panelists noted that coaching

- goes back in time to help the client identify strengths from it and move forward (Lloyd),
- acknowledges the past only to remove barriers to flourishing (Humphries),
- is co-creative (Humphries),
- provides a pathway forward toward success toward flourishing (Humphries),
- is transformative (Johnson),
- helps clarify roles (Johnson),
- helps make visible the invisible (Johnson),
- helps sustain emotional resilience (Johnson), and
- provides safe, judgment-free space (Johnson),

Johnson also noted of coaching,

one of the constructs that I identify with First Lady Syndrome is image management ... [coaching] gives a space of authenticity for individuals ready to reflect on what are their values and who are they, and specifically, who are they rooted in the Lord." (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

In these descriptors of coaching, practitioners address what coaching is and what it accomplishes. These understandings are important to the profession because measuring coaching is a continual priority. As with all organizational initiatives, stakeholders want evidence that coaching works. Leader experiences are paramount. Wiater, in expressing leadership development (Golden Trifecta of Leadership development, see Wiater, 2022), notes there has to be a context of experience for leader development to take place. She further notes "feedback when given in and through honoring partnerships leads to flourishing leaders" (Wiater, 2024, p. 272). Coaching is a means of supporting leader development in making meaning of experiences.

Biblical Narratives. Humphries began her presentation by addressing the biblical narratives with Moses's encounter with the burning bush.

The entire experience and learning there, the self-realization and where his self-realization and his divine and calling came into ... to intersect, which is somewhat how I have felt as an internal coach, if you will. I also think our transformation requires courage, which would be in light of the way Moses crossed the Red Sea. ... faith, decisiveness, the transformation of entailing a vision. We have to create a vision for our organization to move forward. Moses's

life and guidance of the Israelites towards the Promised Land was a fantastic example of having a vision and going. And so, I think all along the way of Moses's journey." (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Humphries continued:

And bringing in the Lord every chance I get, which is just who I am, and who I represent, who makes me who I am every day. And then for others that don't appear to be as tolerant, if you will, that you can tell by their body language they're not receptive to it. There's just a simple shift in vocabulary sometimes, where I am not literally able to convey to them directly that, you know, faith in what we cannot see. I don't need to necessarily quote a Bible verse, so I believe there's many healthy ways to bring glory to God in everything that we do. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Johnson explained,

I'm trying to bridge coaching, which is an evidence-based practice into a space that may not use as many scientific models and tools. I love the conversation, how I'm in a secular place. ... I'm even coming from a place of faith, but I'm trying to still bridge *the gap*. (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Lloyd noted she works with a variety of organizations and said,

But, you know, the beautiful thing about science is that the smarter we get and the more we learn, the more it's just proving God's Word. That, you know, what science ... the science community used to say, well, you know, that's crazy, there's no way the world could be created in seven days. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Core Themes from Panelist Presentations

In continuing the conversation, Whelan drew from the PCR presentations' core coaching themes of reference identity, resilience, transformation, and purpose, and asked how within the coaching context these are achieved.

In her response, Humphries noted her role as an internal coach, her invaluable experience through the Regent University SBL DSL program, institutional knowledge, and an external coach as invaluable. "Especially ... within my organization. Resiliency for me, personally, as a believer, comes from the Lord. Having faith in what I know His power is, is what instills that resiliency in me that I can't lose," Humphries noted (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025). She continued,

It's encouraging those in my organization to have faith in what they cannot see, although I know my reliance comes from the Lord. And that resiliency and believing in faith and building trust and rapport with my people, if you will, then leads to ... that flourishing transformation where we're really getting this traction, and we're really getting this amazing momentum where we're doing things we've never done before, and it's stunning every time we turn around. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Lloyd focused on resiliency and said,

As resilient as they once were ... I think that has a lot to do with that ongoing, pandemic where the whole world just stopped, and it's like, are we ever going to get through this? And so, in the coaching space, it's important to ... show what you have overcome, and then make small goals, and you, okay, we can do this, and we can do this until the person is comfortable with, with their own level of resiliency, and knowing that they will be able to overcome hard things." (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Johnson added,

When I think about resiliency, I don't just think about a bounce back, but a bounce forward, right? So, when someone is resilient, or they are able to not just get back to the posture, back to the place, but actually forward. And so I think coaching provides language to individuals, and liberation. And I think that is what contributes to flourishing, because now that I have clarity, and just a real passion of mine is leadership clarity. Not even so much title or role, but I have clarity, and that can be clarity in my position, that can be clarity of who I am with the Lord, that can be clarity of where I'm going. I think then we can flourish, authentically. And I think coaching just ... gives a space that gives language and liberation, and so that then alludes to emotional resilience as well, and spiritual flourishing. (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Lloyd added,

I like how you explained resiliency not as bouncing back but bouncing forward. I think that's very important to understand is that after we've gone through things, we're never going to go back to who we were before. Right? And in the leadership space, I define resiliency as positive adjustment under adversity. There's always going to be challenges, but yes, that's ... a very important distinction about between bouncing back and bouncing forward. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

In a summary of well-being items, core features, and additional features, Seligman (2011) presents resilience as an additional feature and measure of flourishing. Learning from setbacks and experiences strengthens leadership.

Anchoring and Momentum

In closing this session, the panelists emphasized their presentation goals for audience impact and offered the following:

Lloyd posited on professional coaching,

what I want the audience to hear and understand the most, coaching has the power to become a redemptive space when it's trauma-informed, biblically grounded, and ethically practiced. So, coaching doesn't replace therapy, and it shouldn't. Each one has its own rules. But it can become a sanctuary where clients experience safety, agency, and the presence of God. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Johnson concluded,

I believe that First Lady Syndrome is not and will not just be confined to the church. It ... will appear wherever women are that are leading in leadership spaces without authority, whether that's nonprofit, academia, businesses. And I think coaching will advocate for flourishing and become almost a form of justice in these spaces, as it names these invisible systems and empowers the women within those systems. And so I look forward to the conversation going further outside of just one dynamic of a pastor's wife, but to other women who feel this same invisible burden in spaces and that coaching can help, as I said before, give language, whether the language is First Lady Syndrome or give other language that helps individuals feel liberated and thrive. And, also, just recognizing that First Lady Syndrome helps the church even repent of invisible systems and really reclaim God's vision for flourishing. I think coaching becomes a very practical tool to support, God's vision in individuals' lives. (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Humphries encouraged participants.

Recognizing the need for more resources and tools, I will plug Regent University's DSL program till the day I am no longer able to. So never stop learning, never stop serving, and never stop believing in the power of Jesus Christ. If I had at any point acted on my own stubborn, self-sufficient power, I would have quit my organization years ago. And, the chaos, the mayhem, the bewilderment of the entire kind of miserable cycle that we were in would have

served as a great excuse to leave. I mean, I had every reason to just walk. My life could have been easier. I am in a season of my life, I don't need that anymore and just walk away. But feeling called to be there, and my faith in the Lord's ability to make all things possible, helped transform the organization. The transformational process has been absolutely an honor to be a part of, but we are nowhere without our coach. We are nowhere without our individual sessions. We are absolutely nowhere without our team coaching sessions. And so, ... the transformational journey that we are on is blessed and guided by the Lord and by our coaches. And my organization is tangible proof, and we are going from crisis mode to a path of redemption, where both the people in our organization and ultimately the families that they provide for in our community can thrive. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Integrated with faith, coaching empowers and enables leaders to flourish. Coaching is an essential leadership development tool; it's a redemptive and restorative force. Coaching practices help leaders bring the hidden to the visible to move forward.

The Future of Coaching

Lloyd shared her thoughts about coaching's future.

For the future of coaching, especially in Christian context, moving toward integration between Scripture and psychology, integration of emotional safety and spiritual formation. And then, also, an integration between evidence-based practice and spirit-led wisdom. So, I don't think trauma-informed leadership or coaching is a trend. I think it's going to be ... I honestly think this will be the next frontier of Christian leadership and human flourishing, because we are looking at the whole person, a holistic approach. And as coaches learn to honor both the fragility and resilience within each climate, our client will see a transformation that reflects the heart of Isaiah 61, where we have the beauty from ashes, strength from despair, and the flourishing where there was once fear. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Johnson chimed in stating,

I love that you said calling in that, too, and I think when we feel we are in a space where we're not just working, but we're in a space of calling, we will see how coaching can elevate that for flourishing, too. (C. Johnson, personal communication, November 13, 2025)

Humphries rolled into advocacy for coaching and declared, "We are nowhere without our coach. We are nowhere without our individual sessions. We are absolutely nowhere without our team coaching sessions ... my faith in the Lord's ability to make all things

possible, helped transform the organization” (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Chairs’ Summary and Comments on Panel 1 (Level 2)

In the first live panel discussion, Humphries, Johnson, and Lloyd – a trio of practitioners – represent diverse professions. This supports Wiater’s assertion that “coaching of all the professions is most designed to yield human flourishing.” Lloyd introduces trauma-informed leadership. Humphries highlights the importance of integrating biblical principles into coaching for organizational sustainability. Johnson stresses the necessity of coaching toward identity healing.

Key themes from the panel included psychological safety, trust, resilience, and transformation. The panel described coaching as co-creative, future-oriented, and a pathway to flourishing. Together, they show that coaching rooted in biblical principles and Christian character has redemptive power and fosters God's vision for flourishing.

Live Panel 2: Coaching as a Catalyst for Authentic Growth and Flourishing: Addressing Hidden or Unacknowledged Challenges

Researchers in this panel (Humphries, Lloyd, Whelan, and Wiater) understand many leaders carry unseen burdens that hinder flourishing – limiting beliefs, unhealthy habits, and distorted mindsets. Coaching, when done right and well, offers a safe and intentional space for developing client awareness, leading to transformation and client flourishing.

Conversational Inquiry and Insights

Dr. Kelly Whelan welcomed the audience to Friday’s panel discussion and introduced her co-host, Dr. Diane M. Wiater. The afternoon session began with prayer, followed by insights from the earlier plenary session.

During the informal chat preceding the panel discussion, Whelan and Wiater reflected on insights drawn from earlier conference presentations. They highlighted the significance of empirical findings demonstrating associations between practices such as Scripture engagement and key indicators of human flourishing, including meaning, purpose, resilience, and personal confidence. These findings align closely with established coaching principles, particularly the role of personal exploration in facilitating growth and well-being (K. Whelan and D. Wiater, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

The conversation further emphasized the relevance of the concept brought forth by Holloran (2025) of *Shalom* – defined as holistic flourishing characterized by the right

relationship with God, others, creation, and self – and its resonance with coaching frameworks. Attendees observed that the statistical evidence presented provides meaningful validation for coaching as a discipline that supports individuals in moving toward greater wholeness and flourishing. Overall, the dialogue underscored the natural convergence between emerging research on human flourishing and the practices central to professional coaching.

Whelan started the discussion by asking the panelists, “What is your role and passion around coaching?” Lloyd, founder of Lloyd Consulting Firm, responded, “My passion lies in equipping leaders and the people who walk beside them with trauma-informed skills that create safety, trust, and flourishing” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

Lloyd’s recorded presentation was titled, *Coaching the Wounded: Trauma-Informed Practices for Faith-Based Coaches*.

Humphries, followed by describing her background and commitments, explaining,

I’m an administrator in the construction industry (the organization has) 15 LLCs, and my key roles include human resources and chief financial officer. I’ve been a human resource professional for going on about 30 years, and I’m very passionate about driving the organizations through excellence in people development. I’m very heavy into the people-first culture and doing that through applying biblical principles. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Humphries’ recorded presentation was titled, *Leading Through Manufactured Tension: A Biblical Roadmap for Leadership Change and Renewal*.

Whelan then returned to Lloyd with a clarifying question about her topic. “Trauma-informed practices may be a new concept for some, help us understand this a little bit better.”

Lloyd elaborated, stating, “Trauma-informed practices mean that we recognize that many people carry wounds that we can’t see – experiences that have shaped how we think, how we feel, and how we show up in the world.” She referenced a statistic noted earlier by Holleran in the morning plenary session, explaining that “about 70% of people in the U.S. have experienced a trauma,” and noted that this percentage is even higher globally. Lloyd further clarified that trauma-informed coaching differs from counseling, emphasizing that coaches do not diagnose or treat trauma but instead create supportive environments that acknowledge its presence (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

Humphries drew parallels with manufactured tension to modern organizational life.

In the modern organization, manufactured tension may manifest as market disruptions, financial losses, quality control issues, things of that nature, and that tension that occurs within an organization will actually expose dysfunction. And that dysfunction creates an urgency that the old system or old ways can no longer ignore. Manufactured tension, essentially, is an intentional, strategic disruption that forces and pushes growth. It's not considered chaos, but rather a purposeful discomfort that encourages innovation and new thinking. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

She concluded, "intentional discomfort leads to healthy flourishing for both the humans, but also, ultimately, for the organization and the community that it feeds." (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Hidden Burdens in the Workplace

The panel then shifted to the question, "What are some of the hidden burdens that you're experiencing in your role, either as a coach or as a team member?"

Lloyd responded,

My work with a trauma-informed space, a hidden burden can be an internal weight that someone carries, but you don't ever see, and it shapes and impacts their lives. This oftentimes is past trauma that's never been named. But we also see it as chronic stress, shame, a fear of disappointing others, quiet exhaustion, and another interesting one is moral injury. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Humphries added,

The most ... significant ... kind of invisible labor things, if you will, challenges that I face every day. Burden, blessing, depending on how you look at it, is ... finding ways to stay connected all day. Connected to God, connected to the Holy Spirit, being in a secular organization With my role that starts at about 5:00 a.m. and stops late into the evening, a lot of that control chaos that happens throughout the day, it's really easy to disconnect, and one of the things that I've been blessed enough to work intimately with my executive coach on how to stay connected, and establishing rhythms and a cadence to my day where I pause, and I take two minutes to pray. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Humphries credited her faith-driven executive coach for being able to keep her “flourishing in all of the chaos” (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

Whelan then shared recent workplace statistics, stating, “31% of people in the workplace are engaged ... 16% are actively disengaged,” (Gallup, 2025; K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025). She further highlighted stress levels.

In the U.S., 50% are stressed coming into the workplace. 17% are angry. 22% sad, and 15% lonely. When we think about this as coaches, as leaders, how are we creating space for these people who are coming into our workplaces?” (Gallup, 2025; K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

She followed with a reflective question: “Are you seeing these? Or are they hidden?”

Lloyd responded,

I think those statistics, the behaviors that they describe, are manifestations of the hidden burdens. So oftentimes, it does show up as burnout and stress when it can be from the hours, the work demand, but it can also be traumas and experiences that they’re having in their home life. So, we don’t lose our identity when we walk into the workplace. We don’t put on a mask or become someone different. We’re coming in there with everything that we’re carrying. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Humphries has found that for her people, it is connection and curiosity.

Ultimately, walking in every day is an opportunity for me to influence everyone I come into contact with, and whether it’s drawing them closer to Christ because they’re an existing believer, getting them on board with achieving an organizational goal that we have, reconnecting. Reigniting their commitment doing it all with curiosity, right out of the gate every day. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Humphries maintained that by doing so, her people feel cared for and valued. She stated that we must be more than a vision statement and shared that she expresses love for people every day.

Whelan brought in preliminary 2025 Belem Leaders We’re Still Curious research data conducted in partnership with Wiater, noting burnout, imposter syndrome, and not having the right relationships wear on leaders and teams. She suggested overwhelmingly that the research shows spiritual influence is what the future world

needs from leaders, followed by empathy, courage, and innovation (K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Both Humphries and Lloyd suggested organizations are more successful when values, purpose, and servant leadership is exhibited. (B. Humphries and R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

Client Awareness and Readiness. Wiater summarized the dialogue thus far, highlighting the central role of awareness in facilitating meaningful change, both for individuals and within organizations. Loyd emphasized that trauma-informed coaching places initial attention on cultivating awareness—either by training coaches to recognize the patterns they bring into their work or by helping clients identify how they show up in various contexts. This emphasis was echoed in Humphries’ organizational perspective, which underscored how leaders’ self-understanding directly influences their teams’ capacity to engage and perform. Together, these approaches contribute to what is broadly understood as client awareness, achieved either through systematic coaching processes or through individualized relational connections.

The data from the “We’re Still Curious survey—now in its fifth year—continue to show that many leaders lack confidence in their people,” (K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025). This trend aligns with Humphries’ observation that individuals are often promoted without adequate preparation, reinforcing the need for coaching as a developmental tool to support leader readiness. Finally, as Loyd suggested that many leaders carry unaddressed or unhealed experiences that inhibit their sense of wholeness, further emphasizing the importance of coaching practices that foster awareness, healing, and integrated professional growth, (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025). This starts with client readiness.

The Safety, Trust, Empowerment Cycle. The panelists turned to the topics of psychological safety, trust, and the importance of allowing individuals the space to fail. Whelan emphasized the foundational relationship between these concepts, stating that “trust becomes the outcome of psychological safety. If you don’t have psychological safety, you can’t have trust ... without that foundation, we’re asking people to [blindly] trust us,” (K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Lloyd suggested, “Psychological safety is one of the components of trauma-informed leadership. It’s one of the five domains of safety within regulating distress,” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Wiater added, “again, this environment that we, as leaders, as coaches create for the people that we are working with, and how vital that is,” (D. Wiater, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Whelan rounded this out by mentioning the importance of the safety, trust, empower cycle (K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

In the trauma space, Lloyd noted that empowerment is essential and one of the “five principles that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

identifies as being relevant and necessary to help people that have experienced trauma,” (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025). From there, Lloyd was prompted to create the Trauma-Informed Leadership Framework. She noted that healing and confidence can be attributed to empowerment – particularly when leaders are able to express themselves and their voices are heard (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

The organization where Humphries leads has experienced significant confidence and growth. She believes it first comes from the coach demonstrating confidence,

even if I’ve got an insecurity or two, my confidence comes from the Lord. ... I have confidence that we’re not always going to be in control, and that’s okay. That we’re watched over and guided by a greater power. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

As her organization receives executive and team coaching, confidence is built. Humphries added, “Without hesitation my organization would be sinking” (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Whelan shared, “When we have leaders walking in confidence, the value of coaching has been realized” (K. Whelan, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

The need for writing about the value of coaching and why-how it works is an area for which Wiater continues to advocate. “We really are still and need to find these ways to, to integrate what we see as a result of coaching into those pieces of research so that we know it works, and how are we measuring that,” (D. Wiater, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Having evidence, writing about the evidence, and publishing the outcomes is vital for the coaching profession. These outcomes can be as simple as

we know coaching’s working because our people are eating lunch together, and they’re doing things in the community together, and that is the evidence for you that people are growing, changing, becoming healed, becoming ... that development of the leaders in that community that’s being built goes back to that values alignment and what’s trying to be accomplished through that organization. (D. Wiater, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

An audience member asked the question, “How do you see trauma-informed leadership being impacted by coaching ... giving the (client) a voice, looking past empowerment?” This question was directed to Lloyd. she responded that

When someone has been through trauma, what is stripped away from them is their decision-making power. Their ability to speak for themselves. And it might be something that ... was done to them, or it might just be how they feel, but they don’t feel comfortable speaking up, or they don’t think they can speak up,

or that if they do speak up, they won't be believed. That's a big one right there, especially when working with, victims of domestic violence where the perpetrator is a ... role model in the community, for example, or a child that experienced severe abuse and tried talking about it and wasn't believed. And so what happens is they're losing their voices. When they get into the workspace, they might not feel comfortable speaking up for themselves. It might be because of psychological safety – those do go hand in hand – but it could also be the fact that, well, no one's going to believe me anyway. Or we can take this in a different direction and look at imposter syndrome. Well, maybe I don't know what I'm talking about, maybe I'm not sure what I'm saying. But when that person feels equipped and comfortable and confident in being able to speak up, then they can ... their ideas are going to start coming out, they can be more creative, more innovative. And, more comfortable in their decisions that they were making. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Closing Reflections

As the panel discussion came to a close, Whelan asked each panelist to reflect and comment on the final question: "Where would you like to see your research go from here?"

Lloyd shared that she looks to a day when

Trauma-informed coaching becomes a standard in leadership development, rather than an exception. I want to see the research expand into three different areas that I've thought about here. Training coaches and leaders to recognize trauma responses ... with confidence, with compassion. Secondly, how to measure the flourishing outcomes. How do we identify tools that can be used? Not just performance outcomes, but the goal of coaching is flourishing ... looking at spiritual, emotional, relational, behavioral changes, and we need to find ways to be able to assess it in real coaching relationships. And then lastly, I hope that it will open doors for people to be seen, as we've discussed, the importance of that, for them to feel supported and empowered. God is all about restoration. I've seen it in my life, and I believe trauma-informed coaching is one of the ways that he can use our wounds to help bring healing to others. (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

Humphries stated she would like to see the industry, her experiences, and scholarship connect to the practitioners and vice versa.

As a practitioner, I feel somewhat like I'm on an island using resources that I have, hence the framework that is in the presentation. But I, as a practitioner, don't always have the time to do the research to support it. Whereas the scholars

and the researchers are focused on what works, what doesn't, providing data, that can then trickle down to me and a practitioner's role. And then either be, you know, piloted, tried out, tested to give a practitioner more resources. Know the value of coaching and need to work on a way to articulate that value, and kind of scream it from the rooftops. And doing all of it based on biblical principles. (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025)

When practiced with excellence, coaching becomes a strategic, sacred space where voices are restored, confidence is built, and professional growth is realized. The panel's research and insights position coaching as a growing movement—one where the profession has become more than a discipline; it has become a catalyst for transformation, restoration, and a place for continued human flourishing.

Chairs' Summary and Comments on Panel 2

In the second live panel discussion, Humphries and Lloyd joined Whelan and Wiater to examine how leaders carry unseen burdens—limiting beliefs, unhealthy habits, and distorted mindsets—that inhibit flourishing. The panel affirmed that coaching, when practiced with skill and intentionality, creates a safe and purposeful space for client awareness, transformation, and sustainable growth.

The panelists shared their passions around trauma-informed leadership, executive and team coaching, and human flourishing. Each noting many leaders shoulder hidden weights, such as past trauma, chronic stress, shame, moral injury, and quiet exhaustion. Lloyd emphasized the importance of psychological safety as the foundation for supportive, trust-filled environments where trauma clients can be seen, heard, and supported, being clear in the distinction between coaching and counseling (R. Lloyd, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Humphries introduced the concept of manufactured tension—a purposeful disruption that surfaces organizational dysfunction and propels renewal (B. Humphries, personal communication, November 14, 2025). Together, the panel emphasized the rising importance of empowerment to position leaders toward flourishing.

The panel consistently demonstrated how research on human flourishing directly supports and strengthens the need for professional coaching for today's leaders, teams, and organizations. Burnout, imposter syndrome, disengagement, and relational misalignment continue to erode leader effectiveness, reinforcing the need for development grounded in awareness, connection, and spiritual practices. The session concluded with a call for deeper collaboration between researchers and practitioners to measure coaching outcomes, communicate the value of professional coaching, and publish evidence that strengthens the field. Collectively, the dialogue affirmed coaching

as a strategic pathway to confidence, aligned values, and thriving individuals and organizations.

A Continuing Call

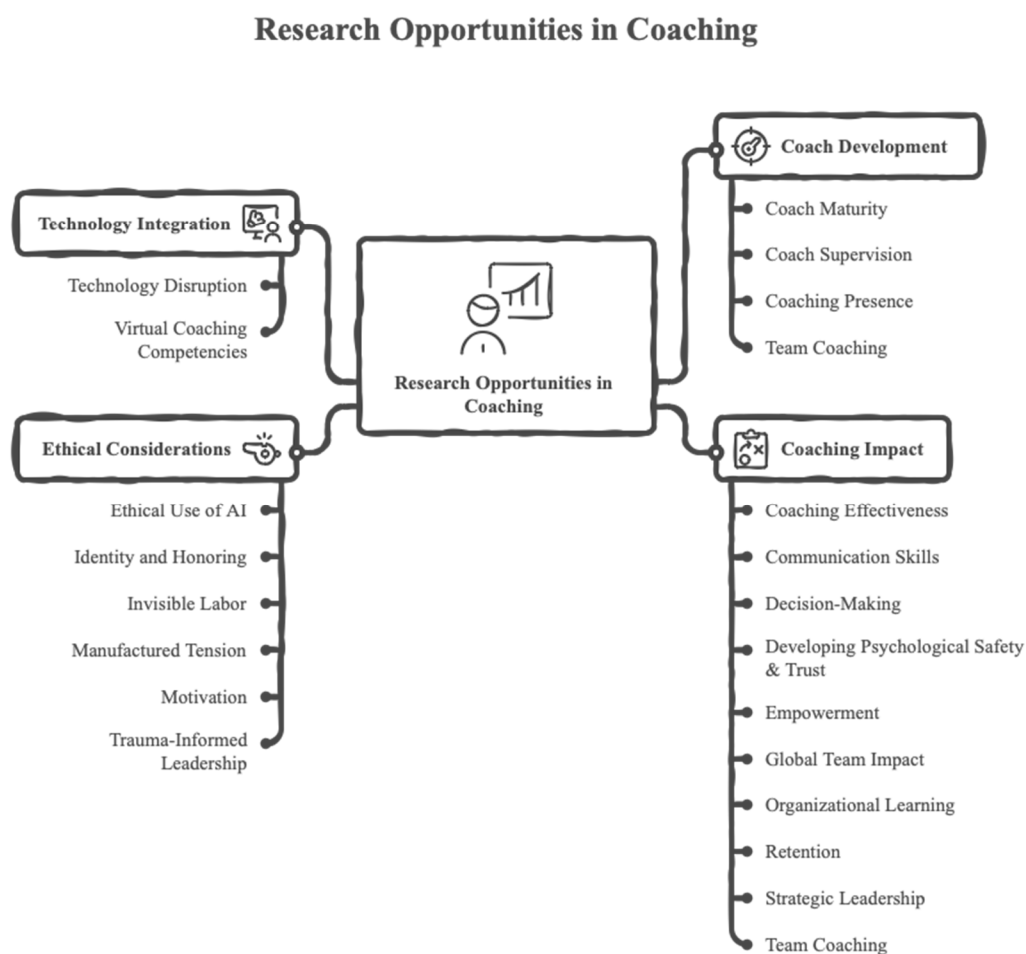
The overarching theme for the 2025 Research Roundtables was Flourishing Through Christ-Centered Business and Leadership Practices, reflecting our commitment to Regent University's mission of Christian leadership to change the world. In the 2022 call for research, Wiater notes, "Coaching is people-centered. Coaches serve clients through trusted relationships and coaching competency. Coaching competency includes skill, wisdom, relationship, and process" (p. 5).

Coaching is maturing. Christian coaching is growing up. Whelan and Wiater are among Christians who believe it is a sacred calling. Whelan (2024) notes, "Coaching is about creating a sacred space where transformation can take root with flourishing and impact as the outcomes" (p. 266). As the research develops, it is imperative that Christian practitioners and researchers join to forward biblical coaching practices. This includes developing the theory, identifying the practices, gathering the evidence, understanding what works, and why it works in Christian coaching.

It also includes preparing the vessels ourselves, and maturing as Christians. Competency in coaching, teaching coaches, and developing as coaches is beyond skill and process and must include spiritual and character development.

Christian coaching of all the professions is most suited to bring about client flourishing. In the 2022 Chair Reflection, Wiater (2022) notes, "Coaching is a means of bringing about transformation and flourishing for individuals, teams, and organizations. There is no sector untouched by coaching and coaching experiences, particularly when we look at leader development" (p. 9). It is a profession of hope, redemption, restoration, and becoming. Wiater and Whelan (2024) note, "Researchers need to develop and replicate quantitative and qualitative means of measuring coach behavior, heart, and skill, coaching processes, client experience, and coaching outcomes, including client flourishing" (p. 213). That remains in this call.

In addition to the topic trends, the challenge and opportunities remain for collaboration and multi-author work, lifting the Christian coaching profession into maturity (see Figure 1). Step into the journey through the Regent Roundtables, Belem Publishing and/or Connecting Coaches Research & Writing Collaborative.

Figure 1: Research opportunities in coaching

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Note. AI image generated by Napkin, November, 25, 2025.

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