

## Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

*Episode 34: Together in the Wait: Building Care, Compassion & Community in the Waiting*

**Amy**

Do you ever roll your eyes at someone who is whining about something that doesn't really matter?

**Cheri**

Do you mean something that really *doesn't* matter? Or that doesn't matter to *me*?

**Amy**

Ahhh, that's the thing about Perfectionism. It convinces us that there's only one true perspective: *mine*. I love how one of our listeners expressed this struggle. She said, "***I know that when I put on my costume of pretense and perfection that it prevents me from true connection.***"

**Cheri**

Well, I'm Cheri Gregory...

**Amy**

...and I'm Amy Carroll...

**Cheri**

...and you're listening to "Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules."

**Amy**

Today, we're talking about what we learned from last week's interview with Wendy Pope, author of ***Wait and See***.

**Cheri**

Are you ready to take off "the *costume of pretense and perfection*"? *To get better at connecting with others when you're waiting, or connecting with others when they're waiting?*

**Amy**

*Great! 'cause we're sharing some practical steps you can take today!*

**Cheri**

Let's talk about waiting...so much fun.

**Amy**

Our favorite topic!

**Cheri**

I could put this one off! We could just procrastinate this one indefinitely! *I don't want to talk about waiting!* You came up with a great bad rule for this one. But...I...this can't be a bad rule! I believe... what's the bad rule that you pulled out of this conversation with Wendy?

**Amy**

"Waiting time is wasted time." And Wendy really said that. I'm so enamored with Wendy anyway, she just makes me laugh so much cause she's so blunt. She just tells it like it is. She's like, "Yeah, this isn't the book I wanted to write."

<LAUGHING>

**Cheri**

Oh my word! Well and here's the funny thing—when she brought up the fact that she had to wait 13 years to do her book, you know what my first reaction was? My first reaction was, "Oh really? Try waiting 23 years, girlfriend!" And I realized my knee-jerk reaction was to compare, of course, and then to minimize! And you know, was my first reaction to *listen* to her and to have *compassion* for her? No, no, no! My first reaction was to be like, "You ain't got nothin' to whine about! I had to wait a decade longer than you! That's – you think you've waited?! You want to hear some waiting? Let me tell you my story of waiting." And I think that's just such a – okay, stop laughing at me now!

<LAUGHING>

I think that's what we do with each other. I think that's why this is such a hard topic for us to talk about because first of all we all end up with a different form of waiting, and so when someone is hurting so much in their particular season of waiting and their 3 years feels like my 30 years, but there's no way anybody DARE claim that they feel like they have any idea what I've been through, its like what is that about? It's like, here we are – we compare the best parts of ourselves and now we're comparing the worst parts of ourselves! We just – we have this compulsion! And it doesn't help anything!

**Amy**

My worst is worse than your worst!

**Cheri**

That's right. That's right, it's just wrong.

**Amy**

Well it's really – I love how authentic Wendy is. And how she – she just said that she's still learning the lessons of waiting. You know we are all so in process. Cheri, you always make me laugh so hard because I mean – I know, we all have these parts of ourselves, but you- you've learned so much in the wait too!

<LAUGHING>

**Cheri**

You're trying to say that I have so many! And I do –

**Amy**

No I – I was trying to think of the right way to say it!

**Cheri**

There is no right way to say it!

<LAUGHING>

**Amy**

Our listeners love you they know the truth. But anyway. You're not as wretched as you act like you are!

**Cheri**

Yeah, but I'm not as holy and spiritual as I wish I was.

But, here's the thing! And you know we've talked about this before: Shame thrives on secrecy. And so I figure if I can bring it up, and I can laugh about it because- there's a wonderful old quote from John Donne that I'll slaughter but he basically says that the devil – that proud spirit cannot endure mockery. And so, I think when we become aware of the strategies the enemy uses on us and we laugh at him – not in flippancy – as an, 'Oh you're not that big a deal,' but

we have a bigger God that can do better things. So my laughter is acknowledging that this is part of my life and hopefully also acknowledging that I can't handle it on my own. Because here I am! Almost 50, and I'm comparing my struggles with someone else's as if that's a valuable thing and of course, it's not. It's not!

But – but, so now, even just talking this out, I'm going to watch my conversations for ways in which I do this. Because prior to my conversation with Wendy, I didn't realize that waiting comes in so many forms. And it looks so different. It's the same thing for all of us. It's about our hopes and dreams; it's about disappointment; it's about feeling like we've been abandoned by God; we're feeling alienating from God, that somebody else is his favorite and we're the ones that are forgotten...all of that is a common experience. But because it looks so different, at least in my case, other people care deeply about things that I could care less about.

### **Amy**

Good point.

### **Cheri**

And I am not having compassion for them because –I'm like, "That's not even important." Well it's not important to *me*. But if it's deeply important to *them* – and one of the things I've realized is that my goal isn't comparison, it's to learn how to listen. And it isn't minimizing, but learning to have compassion. And the compassion comes from realizing – and some of this is a mental process of going, okay, I'm not feeling it on the topic they're telling me, so I need to translate in my own head, 'Okay what's something that I care a lot about, that I've had to wait for how did I feel?'

I think maybe this is one of those topics that take a little more inner work, and then we can still arrive at the compassion and go okay, for me it looked like this, and it sounded like this, but it still felt – I still felt – I still know that feeling that they're going through.

### **Amy**

And you're talking about comparison leading to a certain set of emotions, but what I have experienced even this week in a situation that a lot of times comparison leads to judgment of other people, cause you're saying, if they're waiting for something you don't care about, its easy to look at them and go, 'what's their problem? They just need to get over it. Why are they so upset?' I was part - and thankfully I wasn't on the negative end – this time - of the conversation, but I threw out a situation, a problem in a group setting and there was instant judgment against a group of people. And I was like, I was floored by it, and I thought, 'it's so easy when you're in the easier spot – or the majority.' I think this even applies to the racial situation in our country. It's so easy when you're in the majority – the easier spot – to judge, to say, "you shouldn't feel, you shouldn't think, you shouldn't act that way." And – applying this weight situation to infertility, to marriage, to a calling – to all these different places - you're

right, to see, 'oh, there's a connecting point here.' And just because I don't care about what you care about, doesn't mean that your goal is less worthy.

**Cheri**

Well, and now you're actually making me think because I'm actually taking a course on social responsibility, and so I've been looking at things like race relations and realizing sometimes I don't understand cause I've never had to wait for what other people are still waiting for. Like *never*. There's no parallel experience in my life.

And so when there is nothing in my own life and experience I can draw on, I have to listen to them, because otherwise I absolutely will judge. And so that's been a paradigm shift for me to realize I need to actively seek out people and actively listen because their story – I need to hear it because otherwise I believe that my version of the way the world works is the only version of the way the things happen in the world. And of course, that's not true. There are people in the world still waiting for things that they shouldn't be having to wait for, and I've been unaware of it and I'm trying to become more aware of it. So that I can take action rather than stay in ignorance. Wow – I didn't see that connection at all, but that's true.

Sometimes we judge, and we don't connect.

Sometimes we do the hard work of trying to connect with somebody who's wait is different than ours.

And sometimes we need to realize, we don't get it at all. And that's a very dangerous position of being – of sitting in judgment out of total ignorance.

**Amy**

Well and I think when we listen to each other, there's so much comfort in that. One of the things I was comforted by in the book and in our conversation with Wendy was the obstacles that she listed. I go way back to when we talked to Michel Cushatt when we started the podcast and there was this moment of tears for me when she said something about, "I just needed to allow myself to be human." Well that list of obstacles pointed to our humanity. And Wendy even said that those obstacles have to do with our humanness.

**Cheri**

Yes.

**Amy**

And so, when I look at those obstacle so many times I've been hard on myself about obstacles. And my friend Lynn Cowbell the other day said something to me about a struggle I was sharing

and she said, “Amy I believe that until that thought becomes entrenched and you act on it, it’s not sin. The thought is just a thought. If you take that thought captive to Christ, if you banish that thought, if you deal with that thought, THAT’S not the sin.” And so when I listened to Wendy list those obstacles, I thought, wow, that is comforting to me.

The obstacles aren’t because I’m bad, the obstacles are because I’m human. It’s how we then deal with those obstacles is that divide the line. And one of the ones she talked about was fear one of the ones that she shared, that I really connected with was fear. And then the other one was doubt.

**Cheri**

Yeah.

**Amy**

You know I think I feel like I feel I fall more in the category more of doubting myself than doubting God, but it spills over into doubting God a lot of times, like I’ll start doubting myself and then it spills over into doubting God. But most of the time its like, well no I trust what God said, I just don’t know if I can do it or follow through with it.

**Cheri**

I think women especially struggle with second-guessing. They’ll have a conviction and they’ll hear something from God and then – then they start – if things aren’t turning out right, they start back-peddling. They doubt themselves and all of those natural insecurities of you know, ‘I’m not the right person, somebody else could do it better’ – all those kinds of things that are part of our humanity, then suddenly become evidence that they were wrong, rather than just a normal part of you know life on this planet and a normal part of the waiting and the learning process.

I was so encouraged by the idea that waiting is a learning time.

A few years ago I was teaching half time, I was teaching AP seniors and I was teaching sophomores and I – what I really wanted to do was quit teaching and write books full time because at that point in time, the writing seemed so much more fun and glamorous. You and I know the truth about it but at the time that’s how I felt.

And so I was really praying for permission to do that.

What I wanted to do was I wanted to slay giants. I felt like put in my time, I had dealt with kids long enough – I don’t remember what had happened that day. Probably there was a discipline problem. The thing about being a highly sensitive person is that say there was a discipline

problem in class, when adrenaline is triggered, it takes about 25 minutes to clear the system. So if I'm teaching 50 minute class periods all it takes is two squirrely kids – one at the beginning of the class period and one of them about 25 minutes in, and I can be hit with adrenaline all day long and just come home exhausted. Now, there are techniques like square breathing and other things that if I'm paying attention, I can keep [the adrenaline] from really flooding my system. But when I'm really having a bad day, I forget all of the good practices.

And so it was probably at the end of a week where every single day I'd had those two students – one 5 minutes into class one 25 minutes into class – and I hadn't been doing what I know helps me stay calm under fire because you know I'm the adult...I've done this for so many years – you know so it was probably the end of one of those weeks where I thought, *I deserve better than this! I shouldn't have to deal with sophomores who don't care about literature! You know, it's been a quarter of a century! Surely God has bigger better things in mind for me!* And I wanted to go slay my giants, which for me was writing books – and I remember so clearly getting the impression **I needed more slingshot practice**. And, that I wasn't ready. That my aim wasn't good enough yet – that the energy and the power behind my throwing arm...I was just sitting and just waiting for the giant. I wasn't actually learning what I needed to learn. I wasn't practicing whatever it was I needed to practice. Whether it was patience or endurance or whatever it might be that I was just kind of cooling it until the big opportunity.

And I realized, *This has to be my big opportunity! These student, this year, 5 minutes into class. 25 minutes into class. Those are my big opportunities!* I need to treat those as my Goliaths! And until I do I shouldn't even trust myself with a Goliath. I should turn and run if a Goliath shows up!

And I'm not going to say I did those years perfectly, but I realized, *I can't just hang out and wait twiddling my thumbs and tapping my fingers waiting for what I think is my big opportunity. I need to do whatever it is that God is asking me to do, whatever it is that he is trying to teach me during this time, I need to become conscious of it and I need to become intentional about it.*

### **Amy**

So good. Hey – and the thing that many of our listeners may not know about you that I know about you is I've watched you. At least part of that wait. Cheri, you've done things like – I mean the way we met each other is you hired me to be your coach, and then we became friends. And you take classes on blogging and you take classes on memoir writing. You are constantly and intentionally learning.

So I think that's a really huge takeaway I hope for our listeners that if God's planted a dream in your heart – whatever it is, whatever area of life it is, that in the wait, don't just be passive. Don't sit back and just and cool your heels and wait for manna to fall from heaven. I mean sometimes it does happen that way. But, really be intentional about leveraging this time and taking this time and putting it to use so that when the opportunity comes, that you're ready! It's a great takeaway.

**Cheri**

Well now I have to confess something because I appreciate the affirmation, but I have been known to take classes rather than take action, because I love school. Remember how Wendy talked about how she would've just loved it if God would lay out the path for her and let her know what was going to come next? Sometimes I have taken classes so that I would know what was coming next. Because the teacher at least gives me a syllabus. We talked about this with Glynnis. God does not give me a syllabus!

**Amy**

Alright you nullified my point! I made such a good point Cheri!

**Cheri**

No, no, no your point was a good one! Your point was an amazing one, and I agree with it, and I'm talking to the one woman listening who's like me, who's like, 'I have permission to take classes! I'm going to go sign up for classes because what are gonna do this!'"

And the only thing caveat I'm trying to give is you take a class, *and then you put it into action.*

**Amy**

So good, yes.

**Cheri**

I became a collector of classes. I was a serial class taker, but I took no action. I was a hearer of the word, I was not a doer of the word. So a rhythm of taking the class and then implementing what you've learned. I for too many years thought that taking the class was the magic and paying the money was the magic.

That's where coaching with you was actually such a perfect blend because if I didn't come to a coaching session with you having done my homework, nothing moved forward. And if I had done my work, then we had results to talk about. That's where whether it's a formal coaching relationship but or an informal coaching relationship how valuable it is not to wait alone, but to have people who understand the waiting season and to have people who aren't 'rah-rah' necessarily but who are encouraging, who are being prayerful about the next step, and probably you're all going to be at different stages at the same time you can't – you're not going to be able to move forward together because that's not how this kind of thing works, but to recognize that there are specific intentional goals – I don't remember exactly how Wendy said it but to do what you know to do. And if you can have people holding you accountable for that part, then I think a lot of the rest is going to fall into place.



**Amy**

So that kind of leads us to the truth statement, which is "**While I'm waiting, God is training me.**"

That is so helpful instead of *while I'm waiting god is disciplining me, while I'm waiting god is displeased with me*. Which is kind of how I've treated wait in the past. This was a paradigm shift, it really was.

**Cheri**

You know, waiting can feel so isolating. And then we make it even worse by judging ourselves ... and judging others.

But it feels so totally different to think of my waiting time as God's training time! Kinda revolutionary!

**Amy**

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**Cheri**

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #34 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

**Amy**

Join us next week, when we'll be talking with Shaunti Feldhahn about her new book, *The Kindness Challenge*.

**Cheri**

For today, grow your grit, embrace God's Grace, and when you run across a bad rule, you know what to do! Go right on ahead and...

**Amy & Cheri:**

...break it!