

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode 39: Refusing to Run — Winning Friends by Giving Up the Race

Amy

How much time and energy do we waste competing with other people?

Cheri

And how much unnecessary misery do we add to our lives by comparing ourselves to other people?

Amy

One listener shared with us: "My biggest struggle is comparing myself to others and finding myself wanting."

Cheri

I so get that.

Amy

Me, too.

Cheri

Well, this is 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 discussing everything we learned from our two part interview with Emily Freeman, author of ***Grace for the Good Girl, Simply Tuesday***, and ***A Million Little Ways***.

Cheri

If you struggle with competition and comparison, too, we have some practical ideas for you!

As you went through and listened to the interview again in preparation for our conversation here, what really stood out to you and kinda hit you?

Amy

For all of our listeners, I think you should (like we have done) listen to it multiple times. The first time, really, I don't know what it is about Emily's voice — it is so gentle and calming and kind. Just her voice ministers to me! (laughing)

But here's the thing that has been interesting, and it's fun to get to talk about it now because our listeners have heard all these interviews now, is that there was this huge overlap between Glyniss and Shaunti and Emily.

Cheri

Yes! Ok, you saw it too! Yeah!

Amy

And for me, the big overlap was **comparison**: what **comparison** does to our souls.

Cheri

Keep talkin'!

Amy

Emily said, and I had to write this quote down, "When we're competing only one person gets to win."

Wow. That was amazing.

Then I thought back to the conversation with had about Glyniss's [episode] and how I had said "Originals don't have to compete!"

Cheri

Yes!

Amy

So, we have this crazy culture, and I actually push against this idea in our culture where kids who play on a soccer team, everyone gets a trophy. And I think it's kind of ridiculous. It's gotten to the point of ridiculousness. And I think our millenials are feeling the effects of this, getting out into the real world, where nobody's giving them a trophy and not really sure how to function there. Glyniss kind of talked about that.

However, **in the kingdom everybody gets a trophy.**

Cheri

Yeah, it's true.

Amy

I mean, God looks at each of us as an original and says, "**You don't have to compete because you win the most by being who you are.**" There's just so much freedom in that!

The other part that she said, as she was talking about competition. She said, "You can choose to take yourself out: **refuse to run.**"

That little three-word phrase is going to stick in my heart: **refuse to run.**

Years ago, I had a woman, a Godly woman that I dearly loved – but we're all human, we're flawed. When I would have conversations with her I started to realize, in retrospect, that there was this really weird pattern. The pattern was that I would tell her something I had done and she would tell me how she had done it 10 times more and then I would tell her something else I had done and then she had done it 100 times more.

Cheri

Sure.

Amy

I started thinking *This is so weird!* because I had her on a pedestal, yet somehow she felt a need to compete. It was mostly around busyness. And I think that as women we do this a lot, like, "I did this" and, "Oh yeah me too and, *I did this and I'm so exhausted!*" What? That's insane.

Anyway, at one point when I finally realized it, I thought *I'm not going to engage in that.* So she would come back with her "more than" and I would say, "Yeah, that really is incredible."

Full stop.

Cheri

So what happened?

Amy

It totally changed the dynamic of the relationship.

Cheri

Good for you!

Amy

Well, I've done a million things wrong ... but in this case I think I did get it right. I **refused to run** anymore. And it restored the relationship a lot.

Because competitiveness gets really ugly. And resentment starts to build up and lack of trust. And so **refuse to run**. That's one of my takeaways.

How about you?

Cheri

I'm still processing what you just said. And what I love about it is it sounds like you didn't have to have a talk with this person. You didn't call her out on what she was doing. You took responsibility for the part you could actually control. And the change you made changed the relationship.

And I think that's great especially as we talk about competition, because in some cases we're the ones who are competitive. In other cases it's a cycle the kind of feeds off of itself. And you know me: I'm always trying to change the other person. I've spent my life trying to change the other person.

Actually there is a quote from *Simply Tuesday* ... she describes sitting with her spiritual mentor (which is something I would've loved to hear about: like what is the spiritual mentor and how do you find one?)

I'm quoting from the book, "Sitting with Marion ... I share with her about a relationship that has faded away. One that I used to hold dear but is now basically nonexistent. I tell her that I fear it was my fault that I did something wrong but I don't remember. And if I could only figure out what that fault was, I could repair it. I'm trying to manage an outcome as well as uncover a reason for everything and the effort is eating me. It's having me for lunch and dinner and breakfast and afternoon snack."

And that concept of trying to manage outcomes is eating us. And I love that she listed lunch, dinner, breakfast AND afternoon snack. And that just really hit me powerfully because that's what I do when I get frantic and when I get anxious and when I'm not staying ... not celebrating my smallness. When I'm not focusing on the big God instead of me trying to do big things for God.

When I'm trying to make myself bigger and bigger and bigger as if it's all about me, then I'm constantly trying to control outcomes.

And it's exhausting.

But when ... really, what you did with the person that you were talking to and you just refused to run, you were okay with your smallness. You didn't need to keep building yourself up bigger and bigger—you recognized the absurdity of continuing to keep going with it, that it wasn't going to get you anywhere. But it was just going to end going nowhere with it.

Amy

This morning as I was thinking through this, I thought how countercultural it is to refuse to run.

Emily talked about what's valued in our culture, running is valued in our culture.

In fact it's interesting because Anson my oldest son, he's in grad school, he's a music major — he has talked about how much of the teaching that he's getting is coming from sports psychologists.

Cheri

Interesting.

Amy

But my sweet, kind-hearted, brilliant son is pushing back against that, because it's a competitive mindset.

And I think it's so fascinating that musicians have even fallen into a competitive mindset, when musicians — artists — have always kind of led the way in being countercultural and being authentic. And they even are reverting over. So that's very interesting to me.

But I wrote down: "That very act will lose friends." So if you're countercultural—if you refuse to run—**that very act will lose fans.**

Cheri

Yes!

Amy

But then I thought about that. I wrote that, I put a period behind it, then I added two more dots and put two more dots: **but they were never your friends anyway.**

Cheri

Oh, such a good point!

Amy

You may lose approval and the gold stars. And you may stop getting the plaques of perfection if you refuse to run, because you lose fans.

But those aren't your real friends anyway.

And even as I say that, I tear up at my own words listening to myself say it and go ***How long have I worked for fans instead of really investing in friends?*** People who don't want to compete against you, aren't trying to compete against you. People who, as Emily said, "welcome you with open arms"?

Cheri

Well and you're illustrating one of the problems with competing: **If you compete, you might win.**

And then what?

Then the real problems begin because then you spend your time trying not to lose whatever it was you won.

What you're describing once again – let's say you have this fan base or friend base, whichever it might may be – and the willingness to say *we're going to let it dwindle*, if that's what ends up happening—*we're going to be okay getting smaller.*

In a world that says you need more shares, you need more friends, you need more people to like you. But when you make those counter-cultural choices, some people are going to say, "Nope, I'm not playing with you anymore because it was only when we were playing the competition game that I could engage with you."

What I loved that Emily said toward the end of our interview with her, and it is so so countercultural, but it just appeals to so much to both of us. It's the other time I pulled out the white flag of a Kleenex and had to wave it — when I asked her if she had any parting words. And I don't even remember why I did that.

And here she says to us, "It's worth doing the work to find out who you are because the world is waiting for you."

And then she said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could draw each other out, welcome each other with open arms and say, 'There you are! I'm so glad you're here!'"

Amy

It makes me cry again hearing you read it!

Yes.

To go back to your idea that you were just talking about: What happens if you win? Well, as Emily said, there's only one winner. What a lonely place to be!

Who wants to win anyway?!

Cheri

Yes!

Amy

It occurred to me when she said that.

Winning is not winning; it's actually losing!

The winning is in this community that Emily described — the friendships, the depth of that, the beauty of that — *that* is true winning.

Just like so many of the things she talks about, this is countercultural. It turns everything in culture on its head.

And yet this is the way of the Kingdom. This is the way God prescribes for us. He prescribes this for us because He created us, He knows us, He knows what will fill us.

These other things leave us empty and alone. Why do we pursue them?!

Cheri

We're done!

And you know, listening to you know makes me think *What could this look like?*

I'm not practical, but when I have had an experience that even comes close to what Emily described of noticing something in another woman and calling it out to her and celebrating it, it's never been big. It's never been on stage.

It's always been in a small moment when I've noticed this one little thing, and I felt the nudge to mention it. And it turns into this small, tiny, little private moment between the two of us where we both walk away feeling — I was about to say we walk away "feeling bigger" — but the truth is that we walk away aware that we are part of a big God. And we both walk away thrilled that we're different, thrilled at each other's uniqueness.

And so for me the takeaway is gonna be instead of competing—which means that I have to focus on the huge goals and everything I'm not getting done and maybe even tearing people down—I can focus on noticing the small things in others.

And trust that the Holy Spirit is going to be guiding me to the one small thing that woman need to know for this particular day.

I love the other thing that Emily pointed out which is how much she second-guesses her own motives. Because I have a life time of almost doing something, and then realizing *Oh, but then people would see me and then I would be proud and so I can't have anything to do with it.* So I love her comfort that says our motives are probably always going to be slightly mixed but Jesus can handle it. He's going to work out the results anyways.

Amy

So good, so good.

Cheri

All right, well, you came up with a fabulous bad rule that both of these episodes are going to break with our listeners. Tell us about that rule.

Amy

The bad rule is: **We have to prove ourselves to the world.**

Cheri

I just want to get out a stack of rulers and start snapping them

I don't have to prove myself! I don't have to prove myself! I don't have to prove myself!

I love that.

You talked about the **grit** that it takes to be countercultural and to refuse to run.

And then we talked a little bit about the **grace** of being able to welcome each other with open arms and say, "There you are! I'm so glad you're here."

So what is the fact that we can focus on after we break the bad rule?

Amy

We are created to celebrate our smallness.

I love that the greatest apostle, Paul, talks about this very thing. I do a message on this; it's a scripture that I dearly love.

It's 2 Corinthians 10:12-13.

The background is that he's being compared to other people by the church, by the outside, which feels is particularly bad. We do it to ourselves, but he was being compared by other people.

And he says, "We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."

Phew! That's a word right there, **we're not wise**.

But verse 13 is where I want to focus: "We, however, will not boast beyond proper limit but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God Himself has assigned us to, a sphere that also includes you."

So here's the greatest apostle, and he's is saying *I've got boundaries, I've got limits and God's given them to me* which, I think, speaks to our smallness.

Look, I'm not called to go into your territory, I'm not called to go into Emily's territory, anybody else's territory.

God's given me limits. I'm going to stay right there in my limits, and I'm going to boast of those things because that's what God's given to me.

So our smallness is not inconsequential, it's not unimportant. It's just staying within the boundaries that God has given us because that's what He's appropriated to us.

And that's wonderful.

Head over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode39 where you'll find this week's Digging Deeper Download, Bible verse art, and transcript.

Cheri

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #39 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

Amy

Join us next week, when we'll be talking with Cindy Bultema, author of *Live Full, Walk Free*.

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 'n' Cheri

BREAK IT!