

**Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules**  
**Episode 40: How You Can KNOW (And Tell Others) That God is FOR You**

**Cheri:**

Sometimes I feel like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

**Amy:**

How so?

**Cheri:**

Well, one day, perfectionism takes over, and I nit-pick people to death. The next day, people-pleasing shows up, and I become totally passive.

**Amy:**

It's **hard** to find a balance of grit AND grace! One of our readers eMailed us to say:

*I have struggled with perfectionism and people-pleasing all my life. I know if I keep my mind fixed on the love of my Jesus then these worldly issues will fall away.*

**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:**

Our guest today is Cindy Bultema, author of **Live Full, Walk Free: Set Apart in a Sin-Soaked World**. Cindy is a popular women's speaker, author, and Bible teacher who has endured single parenting, overcome bondage to addiction, and survived tragic loss. Cindy lives in West Michigan with her husband and their 4 children.

**Cheri:**

If you struggle to find a balance between nit-picky and passive, Cindy offers a unique perspective to help us all "live full" and "walk free!"

**Amy:**

And she shares four POWERFUL words that will help us to keep our minds fixed **not** on other people's faults — but on Jesus.

**Amy:**

Cindy, I just love the name of your book so much: *Live Full Walk Free*. When I read that even as I say it out loud there's this resonance in my heart. I'm like yes! I want that! So tell us how you got that title, where the book came from.

**Cindy:**

Oh it's so interesting. So I had a passion to teach 1 Corinthians. Years ago my very first women's retreat they asked me to teach 1 Corinthians. And so I studied it for like a year and a half, and I fell in love with the culture because I thought it so relates to our culture today. You know its like the modern day Las Vegas. In fact when I read 1 and 2 Corinthians, it really could be 1 and 2 Las Vegas. And I thought about what would it have been like to be a woman living in sin-soaked Corinth, surrounded by this immorality everywhere and then one day this new traveling pastor shows up and he teaches you a new and better way to live. And no longer would your inheritance to be a temple prostitute someday. No longer would your identity be based on how your body looked, but Jesus had come to set you free. And I could not get Corinth out of my mind. It's just been my passion to teach Corinth someday. In my mind I wanted to call it *Red Hot Freedom* and when I was talking with my publishing team, they wanted to go a new direction and I was stuck. I didn't know what the title was; I just kept saying, "it's all about how to live full and walk free. That's what I want to help women to know." And they were like, "There we have it. Live Full and Walk Free." So it's interesting how those conversations take place and now here we are.

**Cheri:**

You actually got to visit Corinth, right?

**Cindy:**

Yes. Yes. You know I love when we understand the culture. Because the more we understand the culture and the background, the more the Bible comes alive to us today. And so I felt like I had lived in Corinth just through all my studies and pictures from Google, and one day I kind of joking said to my husband, "It sure would be nice to like GO there." And so my husband surprised us with a trip to Greece; his grandmother had just passed away and had left some money for an educational fund. And he said, "This sounds educational. Lets go." So we went with the New York School of Bible, and we traveled Paul's second missionary journey...so from Northern Greece to Southern

Greece. It was 12 days not of shopping and eating baklava, but it was 12 days with archeologists from sun up to sun down, walking where Paul walked and understanding, you know, walking where the Isthmian athletes had been and smelling the salt of the Corinthian Sea. It was amazing.

**Amy:**

Oh. Your husband has bonus points that will last till the end of TIME!

**Cheri:**

Cindy, what I'm loving and that I have to tell our listeners, is that I'm loving the absolutely effusive smile on your face as you're describing all this. It is infectious.

I watched the video of one of your teachings and I absolutely loved it. Oh my goodness you are such an amazing teacher. And you talked about how to respond to people who don't yet know Jesus. Now Amy and I talk all the time- our audience is recovering perfectionists, recovering people pleasers, and highly sensitive people. And we talk about how perfectionists just love spotting other people's mistakes, pointing them out and telling them what they should be doing instead. We feel like that's our spiritual gift even though its not listed in scripture. But you take a very very different approach that you've drawn from your study of 1 Corinthians. So talk to those of us who are recovering perfectionists about what we might do instead of constantly having that "gotchya" approach to people.

**Cindy:**

Well I think before I answer that question its important for all of your listeners to know that I didn't come to know Jesus until the age of 26.

**Cheri:**

Wow.

**Cindy:**

And so I lived most of my life experiencing everything that the world has to offer and not understanding the truth and the freedom and the fullness that Jesus offers. And so for some of my friends now they grew up in this Christian bubble and its hard for them to understand but for me I've waited tables where I served many Bible carrying Christians and- I'm not trying to generalize- but the Christians I waited on, they were snotty and they were short with me and they wouldn't look me in the eye and they didn't leave me very much in tips, you know and here I was this struggling single mom. And no one ever whispered to me, "Hey, let me tell you about this god who loves you.

Let me help you come to church with us. Come to our home. We'd love to serve you and get to know you."

And so now that I'm a part of the "Christian Club" so-to-speak...now that I understand Christ in the fullness and the freedom that He offers, it makes my heart so sad when I see Christian women who use God's word as some kind of shaming stick. Like, "Don't you know you shouldn't talk like that" or "Don't you know you shouldn't watch movies like that...don't you know you shouldn't have 2 or 3 or however many glasses wine...don't you know." But sometimes people *don't* know. I didn't know. I didn't grow up in the church so I didn't know the rules. I didn't know the language. I didn't know the right movies to watch or not watch, or the right things to say or not to say. So it makes me so sad when I see Christians, and you know its not that they even mean to but sometimes they use God's word not as how He intended with its life-changing, powerful, amazing transformational word but almost as like this shaming stick. They say, "Don't you know" but sometimes they don't.

So that's the message that I'm trying to communicate in a graceful way- because I don't have it all figured out. I miss the mark all the time. But I think if we could put our shaming sticks down and instead- I kind of have these funny heart glasses- like have these glasses of grace, with a lens of love and seeing people how God sees them. Because I believe that's the message of 1 Corinthians because from beginning to end, Paul sees them not as their mistakes and shortcomings, although they were many, instead he saw them through this grace. It's a love letter from beginning to end and that's what I want to communicate to my sisters and brothers around me.

**Amy:**

Oh my gosh; that is so heart piercing. Because I know I have been the one with the shaming stick in my hand. And God has been working on me; it's a transforming work. But I think about what Jesus said to the Pharisees and it's the way we tend to be. We just want people to clean up on the outside, but when I think about the motivation for that, that is for my own comfort. "If you'll just behave it really would make me feel so much better." And that is not what Jesus came for. That is creating whitewash too.

**Cindy:**

Yes. Yes. And I love that the message of Jesus isn't shame *on* you, but instead its shame *off* of you. Not only do I see that in the scripture...I've experienced it. It makes no sense to me that a woman with a past like mine would have the humble privilege of teaching His word and serving others. So it's the love of Christ- like Paul says in 2 Corinthians, it's the love of Christ that compels me.

**Amy:**

So as Christians how do we take this truth that we have and approach a world that needs it so much and be truth tellers and yet be grace and love bearers too. How does that work? How did it work in your story, Cindy?

**Cindy:**

Well I'm so thankful that in the midst of my mess- which I should tell you, my bottom came and I hit rock bottom when I was a single mom; my son was 2, I overdosed on cocaine, so yes I should've known better, I was in the pit of sin and after the police were involved, I called a woman- a woman I didn't know very well but she came into the restaurant where I worked and there was something different about this woman named Carol- and so I called her and said, "I'm just released from the hospital. I overdosed on drugs, the police are involved, I've got to do something different." And she said 4 words, but words that changed my life when she said "Cindy you need Jesus." And so I thought *well good grief, what do I have to lose to give this Jesus a try?* And so this woman and her family...they bought me a Bible, they invited me to church, they took me to dinner. Now they told me the truth. Her husband looked me in the eye and said, "From what I have heard, if you use drugs again you will die. Do you have a will for your son? Is that what you want to do?" I mean –

**Cheri:**

Wow! That's truth.

**Cindy:**

Yes. But they were so loving. They were so grace-filled. Not one time did they have the shaming stick and say "Shame on you. You're a mom. Don't you know better?" Or "Look at the mess you're in. Shame on you. Get your act together."

There was so much grace. There was so much love. I still had a potty mouth, I still went to the bar; it was definitely a process. Jesus met me in the midst of my sin but it's not like all of my messes and stresses were gone immediately. But thankfully in the midst of my mess I had new hope. I had new joy I had new strength and over time, yes Jesus has given me a brand new reputation. So I'm so thankful in my story- as you asked- this couple had the patience to walk with me and they didn't expect me to be perfect in the beginning. Because I didn't know what that looked like. And so my hope and my prayer is that I would extend that same grace to others.

I think sometimes we can air on too much grace. I think our culture needs to be reminded that there is truth. That there are boundaries and standards set in Gods word. And that it's okay to share truth. We MUST share truth, I believe. But also extending grace and not expecting perfection, but meeting people where they are and extending that same grace and love to them that Jesus has extended to us.

**Cheri:**

You know I am so struck by the example you just shared of this kind man asking you if you had a will. Because that's logical, that's practical, and it means that you can't ignore the consequences. But its not shaming, blaming, chewing you out; it's just kind of a dose of reality that you can choose to take or leave. And it sounds like they developed a relationship in which you gave them the right to speak into your life. They weren't an outside party that came in and just decided to take over your life. It sounds like this was all very relationally based.

**Cindy:**

Very much so, yes. When I called them they invited me in, they didn't force me; but I was so desperate for something. I wanted this community that they were a part of but yes, Cheri, like you're saying; they made it very clear. I had a choice in this. They kind of spelled out, "So this is one option: Either you can come to church with us. We will help you. Let's get you a Bible. Let's get you plugged into a bible study." They hooked me up with a mentor, who came to my house every single day to help as I lived this new life drug free. Every day, she would hunt me down if I tried to say "Oh yeah, I'm good today." "Oh yeah, guess what, I'm coming in and staying longer."

**Cheri:**

Wow. So they seriously invested in you.

**Cindy:**

Yes. "Or choice B, Cindy, lets think it through. If you continue this path, what is this going to look like?" It was very eye-opening and just what I needed.

**Amy:**

Well I love what you're presenting because in my life I've really struggled with this because I tend towards the perfectionism. So on one hand I tend to come in with a bomb. You know...

**Cheri:**

I love you Amy.

**Amy:**

I have detonated a few relationships for sure because of the TRUTH BOMB. Or I swing the other way to the people-pleaser where I don't want to say the truth at all, and that's especially to religious people. And when we look at Jesus- and I'm reading Luke and it just stuns me every time- he was so gentle with sinners and he was so ruthless with

religious people. And I'm the opposite. I'm like, "Oh. There's a lesson to be learned there." So speak to us a little bit more about this idea of the difference between using the truth bomb- the shaming stick- and this other extreme of not wanting to say anything at all. Just like the Corinthians, we have some really hard issues in our culture that are creating some serious dividing lines. How do we address this in the Church?

**Cindy:**

Paul says in Ephesians as he wrote to the church in Ephesus and to you and me today to speak the truth in love. And I think that is what we have been called to do and then we leave the results to God. And sometimes it doesn't turn out as we had hoped. I share another story in my new book about a relationship that I had. This was a woman who was my closest, dearest, bestest friend...had been around for many years, was there when I was having my babies, like I thought we would be rocking chairs someday and about 12 years ago she was going through a hard time in her marriage. Her husband was not willing to go to counseling and there was no abuse, but he definitely had emotionally checked out.

And I'll never forget the day we went for a walk and then we sat on this bench and she said, "Cindy, I feel like God has released me, I feel like He has given me the A-Okay. I'm gonna file papers and I'm gonna pursue divorce." And my heart was so grieved and I thought, *Oh God help me. How do I speak truth in love? Lord I know you do not speak contrary to your Word. I don't sense that this would be the message you would communicate to my friend.* And I thought what would I want someone to say at this moment? And I didn't want her to look back five years from now and say, "Cindy, how come you didn't remind me of how big God is, what a healing god what a restorer, what a relational god He is." And so I said in love, "Friend, how may I come alongside of you? Could I help pay for counseling? Can we pray? Lets fast. Our god is huge; don't give up. I'm here for you." I was stumbling over my words, but my heart, I just wanted to help her and be the friend- the Christian godly friend-sister that I felt like she needed. And I knew that my words weren't perfect but I thought everything was okay and it wasn't until a couple of months later that I heard that they were having a big surprise party for her and that my name was not on the list. Then I learned that the conversation in her mind did not go as I had thought it had gone in mine. And we did not talk for 12 years.

**Cheri:**

Wow.

**Cindy:**

12 years. And every once in a while she would send me a Facebook message and say "Good news, Cindy, I forgave you today. Let's get together." And in my heart I'd be like, "You forgave me? Great. But you have totally dissed me for 8 years." But just last month

we got together and said we need to figure this out. And we were together for 5 hours and our friendship has been restored. She was over here the other day again for another 5 hours. It's been a humbling lesson to my girls (I have a daughter in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) to say, "Yes this is my friend. She was there when you were born, but yes mom and her have not talked for 12 years" and trying to explain that to my girls when we're talking about friendship. So my point is sometimes it doesn't go as we had planned. And we look back to see that we both were bringing our own wounded selves into it. There's not always a happy ending. But I do feel scripture is clear that as Christ followers we are to speak truth, God's truth, but in love and grace.

**Amy:**

So good.

**Cindy:**

It's not always easy

**Amy:**

So I'm wondering the flipside now, Cindy. I know one of the results of great mentors in my life, like you've had great mentors...is that it's become a value of my life to have these people in my life who will tell me the truth. Are you like that? And how do you find those kinds of women to integrate into your life.

**Cindy:**

Every season of my life I have prayed that God would bring a godly mentor into my life and he has been so faithful. I've also had to do my part and when I find a woman and think *I want what she has*, I will hunt her down and say, "Please can I come over for coffee? Please can you come to my house for coffee? Please can I ask you some questions?" And I want to grow and learn in being more like Christ so I try to find women who I can hang around. I say to my kinds, "Show me your friends and I'll show you your future." And I think that doesn't just apply to our kids, but it applies to us today. So I invite women in who *will* tell me the truth. My best friend now, I say to her all the time, "When you see areas in my life that do not smell like Christ, will you call them out, will you kick me if you need to, but please...you are not serving me well if you see areas or issues and let them go. I have blind spots; we all do. So please help me be the best me that I can be."

**Cheri:**

So you've given permission ahead of time before something even shows up? That's incredibly brave but that's also a gift to the friendship. Because that means that if the



friend sees something she can say, “Hey Cindy, remember when you said...Did you really mean that? Because if so... I have something I’d like to share.”

**Amy:**

Well I want to know what your qualifications for those people are, that you give that permission to.

**Cindy:**

Number one: that they know truth. That they follow the scriptures. Not what other people are saying is true, not what culture, not what they think is their truth or my truth, but what is the truth from God’s Word and that they have that as a priority in their life. That they understand for their own life and for mine that our hope is that our lives would be fruitful; we are not trying to build platforms that point to us, that we want to make Jesus known.

I think women who have displayed fruit in their lives. This summer I went through a hard season of marriage...some things were exposed that some friends might have said to me, “You’re done. You’re done. You’ve got reason. Let’s just be done.” And I called one friend who had journeyed through something very similar to what I was going through. And I called this girlfriend a mess and I said, “Tell me what to do.” I was so vulnerable, so broken. She recognized that her words would have significant weight in my life and she said, “Cindy, you need to forgive him.” That was the last thing I wanted to hear, but the exact thing that I needed to hear. And she said, “You think about how much forgiveness Jesus has extended to you- you need to forgive.”

**Amy:**

Whew. That takes some grit!

**Cheri:**

What parting words would you have for our listeners?

**Cindy:**

The four simple words that I would want to leave, that feels like the message that God has really placed on my heart for this season is that *God. Is. For. You.* You think about our god: our amazing, creative, personal, holy, awesome, god. God is right at this moment- not if you could get your act together, not if you cleaned your house more, not when your clothes are organized; not might be, would be, could be, should be- but God is, right at this moment, He’s FOR (and that’s where that cheering hockey mom encouraging) like God is for- He is cheering for you. I like to think the God is wearing a button with our picture on it. Nobody ever wore a button. But God is cheering for you. He’s calling your name. Do we hear Him singing over us? *God. Is. For. You.* YOU in the

yoga pants, you with the baseball hat, you with the messy hair, lipstick no lipstick...God is for you. YOU. Not someday, not for everybody else. So let's stop comparing. Let's stop trying to earn it or strive for it, and instead just soak in it. God is for you. And I really believe if we would receive that and believe that in the marrow of our bones and then go share that message, we could rock our world.

**Amy:**

I needed that right this morning to sink into my soul. Thank you.

**Cindy:**

Awh.

**Amy:**

Oh my word! That was church girl. That was good!

**Cindy:**

You know what I love about God is who He is. Really it makes no sense that I would have the privilege of sharing about Him. I'm reminded everyday. In my neighborhood I live, my old house where I used to do drugs is right around the corner. So I live in the same neighborhood, just where the nice houses are. I remember when I lived in the little duplex I would think, *Someday I wonder if I could ever live in like the normal houses?* But everyday I have to stop and look at my old house to come into my new neighborhood. So everyday I'm reminded of the sin I've come through. That pit. And I think sometimes people look at me and they think *oh but did she...*

I did! And 100 times more. And what I share is so cleaned up and a sanitized version. Because it wouldn't serve my savior well to talk about my sin. So I'm just so blown away that I would get to share His word or encourage you two in any way or anyone that would listen but I joke with my kids now, "If God can use a donkey, He can use a messed up ginger." You know? So He get's all the glory. And its just fun to see what He'll do.

**Cheri:**

There's so many things floating around Facebook that says, "When the past calls don't answer. It has nothing new to say" as if we're just supposed to completely ignore the past and only focus on the future. I don't hear you say you're dwelling in the old house, but you are seeing it and being reminded, and that reminder is part of your motivation for this very moment.

**Cindy:**

Yes! Yes, exactly. Because I know who I was before Christ, I know that there is no one too far gone. If God can get ahold of my heart, and put such a passion in my heart for

Jesus and the Word, He can do it for anyone. And that is exactly the love of Christ and the desire to make him known because I know that no one has to stay in their sin or stuck in their self-defeating behaviors- no one.

**Cheri:**

Head on over to [GritNGraceGirls.com/episode40](http://GritNGraceGirls.com/episode40) to enter this week's drawing for a copy of Cindy's book, **Live Full, Walk Free**.

**Amy:**

You'll also find beautiful printable A to Z Scripture cards from Cindy, this week's Digging Deeper Download, Bible verse art, and transcript.

**Cheri:**

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #40 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

**Amy:**

Join us next week, as we share what we learned from our conversation with Cindy!

**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!**