

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode 48: Friendship with God: Mining the Bonding Power of Scripture

Amy:
Hello!

Cheri:
Good morning! How are you?

Amy:
I am well, how are you?

Cheri:
I stink.

Amy:
Oh! <laughs>

Cheri:
I do!

Amy:
Well, I'm glad we don't have smell-a-vision!

Cheri:
<laughs> That would be the WORST!!!

At this stage, I don't know which is worse: we've had skunk smell for a week-and-a-half now, and then four days ago, maintenance came and they went under and they had gone on the Internet and seemed to believe that skunks don't like mothballs. So they put 10 boxes of mothballs under our house. So now everything smells and TASTES like mothballs. Like my mocha yesterday afternoon — every time I took a sip, it was mothball.

Amy:
Ewwwww! That's terrible!

Cheri:
And I'm all, "Bring back skunk!"

Amy:

<laughing> "Bring back skunk!" — wow! That's really bad!

Cheri:

I've referred to it as Skunkageddon. And I'm ready to move.

Amy:

Oh, that is terrible!

Cheri:

And it will be funny. It will be funny when it's over ... but finding humor in the middle of it ... well, actually, we've found a lot of humor in it, but it's juvenile humor that we can't share with anybody.

Amy:

Oh, that's hilarious!

I'll bet in the midst of all that stink, you could use something sweet, couldn't you?

Could I ever!

Psalm 19 says that the law of the Lord is sweeter than honey and that's what we're talking about today, God's Word. Ready to switch from stinky to sweet?

Let's do it!

Well, this is Cheri Gregory...

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

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

Today, we're reflecting on what we learned from our conversation with Denise Hughes, author of the Word Writers inductive Bible study series.

Cheri: I'll warn you right now: I'm gonna complain about my handwriting ...

Amy: I've got my red teacher pen ready!! Just kidding. Thank goodness God let's us focus on His Words and doesn't grade us on the neatness of ours!

Cheri:

So the reader struggle that we really wanted to focus on – I want to go ahead and read the whole thing because I think it’s so reflective of how so may women feel.

She said,

I have been a Christian since I was little. Gone to church all my life. I’ve come through some severe emotional hard times in the last few years to the point of extreme fear of conflict. I can’t handle when people have different opinions and I’ve kept a lot inside. I know I have scars that need dealing with to reconnect me to my Savior and my family.

On the outside I’m busy and serving Jesus, but on the outside I long to reconnect with God. So how do I truly know Him and see Him working in me? How do I know His presence and especially the assurance that I have a relationship with Him? I know all the facts – that I am nothing on my own, but all my righteousness comes from Christ. I so long to make it real in my heart and break me free from the bondage I love in ... into the abundant joy and assurance He has for me.

Amy:

It's painful to hear but it's beautiful too. It's the cry of our heart that we want to know God. And He created us that way that we want to know Him. And then I love it because He's always the one who always reaches out first.

A key verse that Denise gave us that we didn't really get to in the interview is Luke 5:4, and it's talking about Jesus when he had finished speaking he said to Simon, "**Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.**" And this was one of his first meetings with Simon (who later became Peter) and his brother they had been out fishing and they hadn't caught anything. And Jesus said "Go out again. Go out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch" and we know at the end of the story was they had this enormous catch. And it's such a picture of what Jesus calls us to—that he calls us to deeper things, deeper places with Him and in that there's abundance.

Cheri:

When I re-listened to our interview with Denise, I just felt myself exhaling and longing to linger in deeper places. So talk about what this has looked like for you ... when you feel like you've been in deeper waters.

Amy:

One of my first memories of doing something that Denise talked a lot about which is writing God's word, was ... I was probably I'm thinking I was probably about 5th grade.

I had two closets in my bedroom growing up. And so every once in a while my mom would let me take one of the closets and make it into a hideout. So I had you know all my stuff like a hideout in the bottom of my closet.

But I remember that somehow I was in that closet – I have a picture of myself of myself in there with pillows and blankets and a light – and I ran across 1 Corinthians 13 for the first time in my childhood. And just thought that those were the most beautiful words that I had ever read. So I remember writing out 1 Corinthians 13 in my 5th grade handwriting into a journal – I don't think I have it anymore – but I have such a clear picture of that. And it just brought such peace and joy into my heart just to write those words.

Cheri:

Boy I love that picture of you in a closet as a hideout.

Now okay, As far as writing, did you put big circles over your 'I's or did you put big hearts over your 'I's when you were in 5th grade?

Amy:

I probably did.

<LAUGHING>

Cheri:

So you had never encountered it at church before? This was your first *recognition* of it, right?

Amy:

Yes. Not that I – not – it didn't – had never made an impact before in a way that it was memorable, but that time it was just...

Cheri:

So now when you encounter it, does it remind you of that? Kinda take you back?

Amy:

Every time. Every time.

God's word is so powerful. And it's interesting, you know both of us are brain science geeks. And so this whole idea of writing things out by hand, there's a lot of research out now about how students who take notes by hand have better memorization or remembrance of what they're learning than those who are typing out notes on their computers. There's just a lot of research out. So God has wired our brains – He created us in a way that some how this writing things out by hand connects with our brains and I believe our hearts.

Cheri:

One of the things that Denise that said struck me – and I've been thinking about it ever

since — “The more we read God’s word, the more we learn about who God is.” And then, “a clear view of God results in a clear view of who we are.”

That, probably more than anything else she said, made me think *I need to try this*. The goal is this immersive lingering where part of the message is to ourselves but to God that we are thrilled to just take this time with Him rather than the efficiency that the perfectionist so easily falls into.

Amy:

Yes. Well the slowing down of it I think is really key and that’s what writing things out by hand does: it slows us down.

I remember years ago at the end of one of Louis Giglio books is he has a Bible study method that you study a verse, you ask God to give you a verse and you study that verse one word at a time. So you spend a whole day on a word. And I really thought that is crazy. What would you do with the word *and*. But he gave an example of course he set an example in the chapter and it was amazing what God showed Him on the word *and*. So I think slowing down is really the key component that you’re talking about.

Cheri:

Yeah and you’re reminding me of the first time a Bible teacher challenged me to spend two hours studying a chapter of God’s word and showed us how to use concordances — back then they were actual books that we pulled out there was no searching anything on the Internet. And I remember going into it, I was a freshman in high school, and I remember going into it *How boring this is going to be*. And I just got lost in it. I just got lost! And I don’t remember — I know I went over 2 hours and I remember slowly coming out of it feeling like I had been transported someplace else where time stood still and it ministered to my mind for sure but also to my heart and I knew I had realizations that I knew I wouldn’t have had any other way. And part of it was that the good stuff happened like an hour or two in.

Amy:

And it’s so interesting that God’s word really is alive an active. It is an alive entity. And what you described in these long sessions in just becoming so immersed and so connected to God it sounds like you said that you were transported to someplace else — but it can happen in an instant too.

One of my favorite stories from my last trip to India — was, we were partnering with Mission India — one of the beautiful things they do in their literacy classes is they have scripture from the very first page of their curriculum. So these students are introduced to God’s word from the first day they are in class — it’s introduced as ‘wise sayings’ so it’s a lot of Proverbs in things at the beginning.

Well, this woman was telling us her testimony of how she had come to know the Lord. And what she said is that every day from the very first day when the teacher would share this wise saying, other wise known as scripture, that she would have this peace wash over that she had never experienced before. Finally after weeks of this, she went to a pastor who was kind of an administrator for the class, and she said, "Every day when the wise saying is read this peace just washes over me. Why? What is this happening?" And he was able to tell her that those were God's words and share the gospel with her. And she received Christ; before that she had not even known that those were God's words, but it was alive and that was the effect that it had on her. I was just – I was really taken by that story.

Cheri:

Oh absolutely. It sounds like she was incredibly receptive. And she didn't need time to drop barriers or slow down or get to the point that she could hear. Cause one of the things I realize is God is always speaking. And God's word I always – it's that I can't hear. I personally need the time to slow down and quit – I was going to say 'quit allowing the noise around me to...' No. It's always the noise within me. It's that I'm so busy chattering. It's the inner chatter that needs for me to quit down and then I don't even think God turns up His volume it's that I'm turning down the volume and I'm theorizing that just the act of slowly doing the handwriting of God's word is probably going to be a brain trigger to dial down the internal noise so that I can finally hear what God is speaking all along. Because I'm convinced that God is never far away. I don't believe that God goes silent on me or holds out on me. It's that I'm being too busy being a chicken with her head cut off running around elsewhere expecting Him to join me and He doesn't promise that part. I believe He stays put where He's called me to be and the closer I get to that, the easier it's going to be for me to hear Him.

You had some insights on the whole idea of creativity and creations.

Amy:

I was encouraged to hear Denise talk about all of these different ways of studying the bible.

I always call myself a rebel rule-follower because I am a rule-follower at heart unless I decide your rules are stupid and then that's when the rebel thing comes in.

<LAUGHING>

Yeah. Awesome.

Cheri:

This explains so much about our friendship!

Amy:

So, but when Denise started talking about all of these different ways we can study the Bible – that we can write God’s word, that we can journal based on God’s word, that we can create art based on God’s word – it just spoke to my heart of the freedom that God has been trying to instill in me — in the last decade or so.

Where before, I always wanted to approach God, “How do I do this right?” You know?

Cheri:

Oh yeah.

Amy:

So I’d follow your formula, and then I’d follow someone else’s formula, and then I’d follow somebody else’s formula...

Cheri:

Oh no, I didn’t just want to do it right, I wanted to do it better than everybody else!

<LAUGHING>

Amy:

Perfectly, and better than you.

Cheri:

That’s right. In my "bubble of better than thou."

Amy:

Wow. Everybody’s going to stop listening to us now. We’re horrible! Anyway!

Cheri:

We have to laugh about it otherwise we’ll be crying. I’m sorry. Go ahead.

Amy:

But when you think about what God’s word is, His scripture, you go back to Genesis and think about what His original words were and what they did. They were **creative** words. They were **transforming** words. They were so powerful that they brought things into existence that hadn’t been there before.

And I just thought if we would engage with God’s word and think of it as a type of creative outlet, how powerful would that be? Instead of ‘just checking this off my list’ this morning. That we brought that creativity and our own personality even to the process? There’s a lot of grace in that. I like that.

Cheri:

Oh, I love that! You know this morning I was studying a particular several chapters in 1

Samuel – I won't go into the details because they're not vital here – and I ended up with several questions that I had never asked before and of course you know me and that's got me really excited. And then I found that my first reaction was to go to Facebook and to go to crowdsourcing. And I'm like, no, I don't want to know anybody else's thoughts right now. I want to wrestle with this! I want to see over the days and weeks – cause it's not something I needed to have answered immediately, it was just a question that I had never thought of before.

So it's as if re-encountering God's word created this curiosity and this question in me. And then, I found myself about to text my husband because he's a systematic theologian and he would have The Answer and I'm like, *You know, I will do that – I will talk to Him, I will probably put it out on Facebook at some point but right now I don't need the quick and easy answer. I need to sit in this question. I need to explore and allow God to speak to me about it before I ... – because as soon as I get an answer, all o those creative avenues are going to shut down.*

So I love that. We think that God speaking and creating during the week of creation. I had not thought of reading His word being a re-creative act each time we encounter it. It's exciting.

Amy:

Well even hearing you say that has made my brain ping to a new challenge for me. I have been seeing all of this art that people are doing in their Bibles. I am so jealous of that. I have not one artistic bone like that in my body. Not one!

Cheri:

Me neither!

Amy:

Not one! And both of my kids do! I'm like, where did that come from? And I'm really kind of jealous of it. But what I have to realize is that God – what I used to say is that I'm not a creative person. And I've stopped saying that...

Cheri:

Good!

Amy:

...because, we are all created in God's image and He is a creative God. So we are all creative. I realize that my perfectionism shut down my creativity for a long, long time. But I need to ask God how can I be creative with your word?

I love to write, I used to write poetry when I was less critical of myself. I may need to unleash some poetry on the world! You know!

Cheri:

You do! Have you ever done found poems? Found poetry?

Amy:

I haven't.

Cheri:

Oh my goodness! It's the best thing in the world! Do you know what a found poem is?

Amy:

No.

Cheri:

It is – its poetry that even recovering perfectionists can do. Because what it is you choose a work of literature, and a section of it and you create poem using words that you found in that piece.

So you could do a found poem out of a Psalm or an entire chapter of scripture. You take the words that jumped out at you, and then you use them to create your poem. So it's like you've been given the mix to make this amazing cake.

And of course you can use other words – you're not restricted to it. If you've gone through and studied and done some highlighting or some annotating you can just pull those words and phrases and then just see, in prayer and pray-essing, how it comes out into a poem, so, it's fun.

Amy:

Oh that's beautiful I might have to try it! I used to be the haiku queen!

Cheri:

You could do things in just a few – never mind. That's not very nice of me!

<LAUGHING>

I'm vastly impressed. I'm vastly impressed.

Cheri:

Listening to Denise reminded me of listening to Cindy Buletima. They both have this profound joy about God's word. You can tell that it's their life line.

Amy:

Oh yes. I want to pray for that in me. What they have been doing is mentoring us, inspiring us to go deeper into God's word. I want to be that woman who is the mentor

that inspires other woman to go deeper into God's word. To dig in there and go deeper with Him.

Cheri:

I'm just going to confess what comes to my mind. My natural urge is I want to be *seen* as that kind of woman. I want to look good on the outside. And it almost feels like too much to ask that I actually have the joy. That I actually experience that. That almost seems like too much to ask.

Maybe that's why I've settled for the external for so long. Because that seems to be as good as I can get. You know when the woman comes to Christ and asks for something from Him and he says basically that the dogs don't eat from the table, and she says, "But they lick up the crumbs from underneath."

I've always felt grateful for crumbs. I really have. I've always been like, 'Nope, I don't need to sit at the table, I'm good on the ground. As long as there's crumbs I'm good. And so to actually pray to have that joy, not so I can look good, but actually to have it for myself. And of course, it'll naturally spread after that.

I've got to think about that. It almost feels like too much to ask for.

But after our conversations with Denise and with Cindy and with Emily, I feel like I can. I feel like I have permission to say, "I want that kind of joy."

You had – you pulled out from these episodes a great bad rule and then a great truth fact we can focus on instead.

Amy:

Okay so the bad rule is, "It's my **duty** to study God's word and share it with others."

But we can change that whole mindset with one word. By saying, "It's my **delight** to study God's words and share it with others."

Cheri:

I love that because I have to admit that the grit part of these two episodes has been just this feeling of obligation. And the inconvenience of the time – *I'm going to muscle past the gag reflex – I'm going to buckle down and read God's word.*

It's almost been my attitude, similar to my attitude Sabbath that we talked about with Kathi — and you brought up what a gift it is! It's not an inconvenience, it's a gift!

So instead of being a **duty**, it's a **delight**. That's kind of the – maybe that's the switch that flips us over from the stress – we stress when it's a duty but we feel more joy when it's a delight.

Cheri:

Head over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode48

Amy:

You'll find links to this week's Digging Deeper Download, Bible verse art, and transcript.

Cheri:

If you've enjoyed Episode #48 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules, would you share it with your friends? You'll find super easy "share" buttons on the web page for every single episode.

Amy:

Be sure to join us next week, when we'll be talking with Holley Gerth, author of ***You're Already Amazing.***

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!