

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #49: Grace for Today — Believing You're Already Amazing

Amy

Let's start off with this eMail from one of our listeners ... I swear she's our twin.

Cheri

She said

*I strive so hard to please people that I am constantly worrying that I have done something wrong or said the wrong thing. I tell myself that I am only trying to please God in all my words and actions ... when if I'm honest I am just too worried about disappointing people. I am **never sure who I am because I am trying so hard to please other people.***

Amy

The crazy thing is that people-pleasing feels so right in the moment, like you're doing the best thing for everyone involved.

Cheri

And then decades later, you realize that YOU are not truly present in any of your relationships.

Amy

Knowing who you are turns out to be the best gift you can give another person.

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 talking with Holley Gerth, Wall Street Journal best-selling author of *You're Already Amazing*.

Cheri

Holley Gerth is a follower of Jesus, the co-founder of (in)courage, wife to Mark, and mama to Lovelle. She loves encouraging the hearts of women.

Amy

Why did you feel like you needed to tell Christian women that they're already amazing?

Holly

Well I was in a season of life where I already needed to hear that myself too.

Amy

Uh-huh.

Holley

You know? And I was also getting to connect with a lot of women online as a blogger, hearing women's hearts. And I was also doing an internship as a counselor at the time and so what I found myself saying to women too, I would have these women with beautiful hearts coming in doing their best and working their little tails off. And I found myself saying, "You know what? You're already amazing!"

And it felt a little scandalous because that's not what we usually hear. But the more I dug into God's word the more I felt like that's the message he really wants to speak to us.

Amy

It's such a powerful message. I felt my heart goes pitter pat just to hear you say it like that. I love it.

Cheri

Well our show is geared specifically towards reforming perfectionists and people pleasers. And then I keep waving the banner for those of us who are HSPs – Highly Sensitive People – and so I love your subtitle.

The first part of the subtitle is, "Embracing who you are." When I read it I could just feel the voice of perfectionism rising up in me and saying, "so who do you think you are? What do you think you've done that's worth embracing?" So what would you say to one of our listeners who's thinking, "I can't embrace myself the way I am right now. I'm still too much of a mess. I make too many mistakes."

Holley

Yeah, and one of the core questions that I think women struggle with is the same one that the enemy posed to Eve which is, "Did God really say..."

I think, "Who do you think you are" is sort of a modern version of that. But it's still do enemy trying to get us to doubt the truth of what God says - and in this case about us.

So I would say, "Who do you think you are? Who do I say I am?" I am the daughter of God, I am fearfully and wonderfully made, I am equipped with strength and skills and gifts for God who has called and equipped me to serve. I am covered by Christ.

Am I perfect? Absolutely not, but do I have grace for today, yes. So I think the answer to that question, "Who do you think you are?" is "I am who God says I am!"

Amy

That's beautiful. Well the series that we're entering into is about mentors and friends and so how can we actually deliver those messages to our friends?

Holley

Well I think just reminding each other and giving ourselves permission to be reminded. You know, I can sit here and rattle off these truths. But if I roll out of my bed when I wake up tomorrow and there's some stressful email in my inbox I will not be like, "Oh great. I'm just going to handle this so well! Let me go down my list of all the great characteristics I've been focusing on." You know, I'm probably going to have a little freak out. So, I have women in my life I can text to say, "I have forgotten what is true today, and I don't feel it."

And I have one friend in particular who will text right back and say, "okay Holly but I'm going to tell you all over again you're loved, these are the ways God is using you in this season of your life. And she'll tell me and then I'll do the same for her. So I think it seems counterintuitive but I think being vulnerable ourselves is the best place to start as a mentor. It sort of sacrificing and on behalf of each other right because no one wants to go first thing no one wants to be the first to say, "Hey, I need encouragement. Here's what's going on in my world. I don't always feel or remember these things that are true."

So I've found in mentoring that a gift we can give each other is saying, "I need to be reminded all over again of what's true today."

Amy

So good, so good. That's such a great insight because I think women are intimidated by mentoring or being a mentor because they feel like they have to be perfect. It goes back to the perfection thing again.

Cheri

Well, and I'm thinking that when I get with a group of women what comes most naturally to me is complaining and griping about the "ain't it awful" stuff. They commiserate with me but it doesn't necessarily open up to vulnerability. I think my heart cry is, "Please tell me what's true" but I'm definitely not saying that. So if anything either, they're going to distance themselves

because it's a mess — and who wants to be around someone who is busy complaining — or they try to fix me, and then I don't want to be fixed.

So how do you think our listeners can bridge that gap between what comes so naturally for us as women and what you just described as being very intentional. But ... who taught you to do that? How do you make the choice to do that?

Holley

I think it can be hard sometimes and I do think it takes time and practice and finding people we can be safe with and also being that safe person ourselves.

I think that sometimes we can be afraid and so it's easier to look at the negative or think about the negative. It feels safer — at least to me — because if I'm complaining or I'm talking about what's wrong in my life, then it feels like I have some sort of control over it. No one is going to say, "Who does she think she is talking about this?"

If I'm saying here's where my heart is in this tough situation and opening myself up. And I know we've all been hurt by women. I think it's maybe asking ourselves first, "What do I really need in this moment?" Because it feels like we need the situation to get better or we need this person to stop driving us crazy or you know whatever the dog to stop eating our homework or manuscript or whatever it is.

But probably what we need someone to say is, "You know what? You're doing a good job. You don't have to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. You are loved as you are." So maybe pausing to say, "What do I really need in this moment? And who do I trust to go to with that?"

And those relationships take time and intention to develop. It's not something you can go to just anybody with. But I think we can cultivate coming even really if we just have one person in our life that we can go to and say, "Here's where I really am and here's what I need today." And do the same for them, it can go along way.

Amy

Terrific advice.

For those of us who struggle with people pleasing, like maybe myself, and are trying to become like everybody else wants us to be.

Some of our listeners have expressed this that they've communicated with us that they have spent their whole lives trying to conform to what the teacher thought they should be over what the parent thought they should be and now to what their husband or friends think they should be.

So how can we start to discover who God created us to be and find the courage to connect with other women, some of the same people that you were just talking about?

Holley

Yeah, that's definitely something that I struggle with two is people pleasing: "Tell me who you want me to be and I'll try really hard to make that happen."

For me it takes really intentional time in reflection. I actually do that usually around this time of year is pausing to say, "Alright let me review who I am and what God is calling me to do in this season."

Like in my book *You're Already Amazing* there's a list of strengths. Those are characteristics. So if your listeners want to do a shorthand version of that: just think about someone who really loves you, how they would describe you. So maybe *kind* or *friendly* or *creative* or *responsible*, so write down three of those that resonate. So those are your strengths—that's who you are.

Then your skills are how you apply your strength. What does that look like in action? So maybe you're great at *hosting* or *organizing*. It's probably going to be a verb, with an *-ing* on the end, at podcasting or communicating. I would imagine that both of you have communicating as one of those skills.

And those are never just for us. So we can ask God, "Who am I supposed to use those strengths and skills for in this season of my life?" And this will vary. Our strengths and skills stay pretty consistent but how we serve probably varies. So if you have little kids at home you we'll probably be using that for them. If you're in a certain workplace or if you're in a classroom so just saying, "Who is God asking me to invest in?"

And then what is the next step in doing so? I think as perfectionists we think, "Alright now I'm going to save the entire continent of Antarctica, you know? And I don't even like the cold but you know I'll do it." Yes so that's the simple little process that your listeners can start there even if they're not sure what to do.

Amy

Those are great concrete steps. Thanks for that!

Cheri

Thank you! Well I don't want to sound like a stalker, but I remember back in 2014 when you published a blog post called, "There's Something You Should Know About Me." And you kind of confessed to being a highly sensitive person. So I'm curious when you first learned that you were an HSP and what impact knowing that you're a highly sensitive person has had on you.

Holley

Well it was probably around that time that I actually had a terminology to describe it. Because I had read the book *The Highly Sensitive Person*, and I thought *This is so me*. I've been highly

sensitive all my life so maybe someone listening, isn't sure: it's having a nervous system that is more responsive to external stimuli.

So I like to think of it's as if you're sitting in your car, everyone has their radio at a different volume and you hear those cars that are going down the road like BONK, BONK, BONK, BONK, and you think how can that person handle that. It's the volume that feels best to them. But as for me I usually have it on like a one, my radio, the lowest it can go without silence.

I am just sensitive to a lot of sound and noise and people, I get tired easily by a lot of those things. For me it goes along with being an introvert and so it just means that I need to know that and find ways to adapt so that I don't feel exhausted.

Cheri

I think I figured this out about four years ago and it's been so helpful to me in part of realizing I'm amazing – at first it was *I'm amazing even though I'm highly sensitive* and I'm moving towards *High sensitivity is a part of how God made me*.

I happen to be an ambivert, I love being with people but then I have to be alone. And I think what I love about the exercise that you suggested is that it gives each of our listeners a chance to really start to get to know herself rather than the way she *should* be. Amy and I have talked a lot about comparison. How do you see comparison messing with women understanding that they're already amazing and that God didn't make a mistake when He created them?

Holley

I think that's a great follow-up to what we're talking about earlier that if we don't take time to define who we believe God has made us, someone else will. Someone in our life or the enemy would definitely love to say that, "this is who you are" to us.

So having that to go back to I think is a really important filter and then again having those people in your life who will and after I go through those little steps I usually try to combine them into one little statement. And so for example, "Encouraging the hearts of women through words." So that's like one little statement that I can look at and say this is God's priority for me in this season of my life when it comes to ministry. And so when someone says, "Holly can you be on the math team for our ministry?" which would be a disaster for everyone, I can say you know what I know someone who's great at that and loves to fill out Excel spreadsheets but you will go to jail for tax evasion I am in charge of that.

So I think that's one more step, you know, if your listeners do that little series ... then turning it into one statement and then putting it up for you can see it every day. Stick it somewhere where you see everyday and say, "Okay God I'm just going to stay focused on this" and let Him adjust it as He wants to. But it just kind of gives you a little compass to go back to when people are trying to say, "No, you really need to be this, that" or "You need to apologize for who you are." And you can say, "You know what? I'm a woman on a mission!"

Cheri

I love that!

Amy

And I'm sorry you're not on board with my mission! Here I go!

Holley

You have this Jeremiah 29:11 people, right, who are like, "I have a plan for your life!"

Cheri

You added something that I haven't heard somebody say in terms of turning down the math team. You added that instead of just turning it down you would recommend somebody you know who has the strength.

I love the idea of knowing other people well enough and this is something that I think perfectionists and people pleasers have a hard time with because we end up so self absorbed and the comparison turns us looking inward.

If I am being my true self then I'm going to be able to check out what everybody else is good at and have a mental Rolodex of who is good at what so that when the request comes up I'm not going to be as twitchy to say, "Yes I'll do it! I have no idea how, I'm no good but you need *me*."

I'm going to be more likely to refer somebody. I like that. That's a whole new thought to me.

Holley

That's been really freeing for me because I used to think that if something came to me that meant I was supposed to be the final destination.

But I realize a lot of times that I'm just the bridge.

Someone emails me and says, "Hey can you speak at such and such," and I can't but I think, "Oh my gosh — I know someone who's wonderful and they live like 5 miles from there!" But the person who contacted me would have no way of knowing that had they not gotten in touch. So then I think, "Well God, I'm just the bridge."

And so it's fun to just see that connection happen and I can just letting go or I can know that if someone is gifted in that area and this is their sweet spot - and I try to be careful in saying yes - am I going to be for filling someone else's spot if I accept this opportunity. Is there a woman out there who was called to do this and I'm saying yes to this out of fear and guilt. And so I think it can actually be counterintuitively and act of generosity when we saying no to what's not in God's bull's-eye for us.

Amy

Absolutely. And that's a beautiful because we've talked a lot about how to celebrate other people and that's exactly what you're talking about. You're celebrating yourself because you're already amazing because God made us that way, and then you get to celebrate others. It's neat.

Cheri

We have a fabulous intern and she is fresh out of college, she's newly married and she has made the disheartening discovery that it's really hard to make friends once you're out of college. Do you have any words of wisdom for her or any of the women who are just looking for good friends. They're hearing what you just described and they would love to have friends like that, to be a friend like that, but they don't really have anywhere to start.

Holley

It's so funny I say to my husband like no one told me how much making friends as a grown-up would feel like dating.

Holley

You know? It's like you're going to get coffee and you're like what should I wear, what lipstick should I put on, is she going to like me? It's so nerve-racking. And in school you're just kind of thrown together all the time and it just kind of happens. When you're an adult you really have to be intentional.

I've realized that everyone is as scared I am. And we all kind of look on social media like we're all going from this thing to that thing and we all have all these people in our life, But we're all probably more lonely than we confess. And it can be an act of love to, again, go first, to extend the invitation. Everyone wants to be invited and included and we all assume that everyone else is invited and included and that's probably not the case.

So if we can be brave and courageous and say, "I will bear the pounding heart in my chest and take the risk of rejection and be the one to go out and say, 'Hey let's go have coffee and let's see what happens!'" then that can be the starting place.

Like my best friend that I was talking about, we're in the same small group and I just thought she was such a woman of character and kindness and I wanted to get to know her and I prayed and I was like, "Jesus please let her like me!" And after small group my husband would be like okay stop because every week I would be like okay maybe she'll like me and we ended up finally getting together. And it turned out that desire was there because God wanted us to be good friends, but it was scary.

So I'd say for your intern or anyone else that's listening who thinks this must be easy for Holley or Amy or Cheri...let's all just say that this is a hard thing, It's a hard thing to be vulnerable with our hearts. It's a hard thing to go first. And I think that's one way that we can serve each other.

Amy

Do you have any parting thoughts?

Holley

I've been doing research on the names of God and the one I missed recently looked at is cornerstone. And I had never really paid much attention to that name because it can seem like a manly, construction word, you know I always thought all focus on a different one. But I found out - and my husband to is trained as an architect - what a cornerstone does.

It's the stone that takes the pressure like the whole structure back in like the first century leaned on the cornerstone. So I am a woman who tends to say, "It all depends on me. "

Knowing that Jesus is the cornerstone and the pressure is off, I've been saying to myself in the past couple of days when I feel a little panicky or overwhelmed I just say, "Jesus you're the cornerstone. Jesus you're the cornerstone. It all depends on you." I just didn't know that so maybe someone else hadn't learned that either.

It's really freeing to know that the world is not on my shoulders. It's okay. And that means I'm allowed to be imperfect because not everything will come crashing down if I take a nap or say "No, I can't do that right now." So that has been a freeing truth for my heart this week.

Cheri

Head over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode49 where you can enter to win a copy of Holley's book, *You're Already Amazing*.

Amy

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

Cheri

If you've enjoyed Episode #49 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules, would you take a moment to leave us a review on iTunes?

Amy

And be sure to come on back next week, when we'll be processing together what we learned from our conversation with Holley.

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!