

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #84: Unlocking the Surprising Secrets to Building Closeness with Our Kids

Cheri

So, Amy, tell me....tell me about your relationship with the whole concept of apologies and apologizing. Is this something that just really like comes naturally to you? Do you have the spiritual gift of apologizing?

Amy

Well, I would definitely that say I fall in that category. Nobody likes to apologize. I mean it's a really humbling experience, and to me, it's always a scary experience, because you never know whether the other person is going to receive your apology, or blow it off, or you know, if you don't say it right, and it's one of those fake apologies....like, I'm sorry you feel that. Oh, man, don't bring that kind of apology up in my house.

Cheri

Oh, absolutely! Well, you know I think I kind of fall into the still recovering perfectionist camp where the best strategy is to not need to apologize. And if I do everything just right then there'll never be a need for an apology.

Amy

Ah, yes.

Cheri

Oh yeah, there's nobody who's taught me more about apologies than my daughter, because she is the first to apologize. And I don't think I've ever heard a fake apology out of her. I mean did you grow up having to do the fake apology, "Say you're sorry! Sorry!"

Amy

Yeah, a little bit. Definitely my parents were into you apologize if you've done something wrong and that didn't always come from the heart shall we say.

<Laughter>

Amy

Especially with my brother! You know...

Cheri

Hey, we definitely need, you know we should do a whole show in which we throw brothers under the bus.

Amy

Oh, we definitely should, and then we should send them the link.

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<Laughter>

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. The podcast that equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy

Today, we're processing what we learned from our conversation with Rebecca Gregoire Lindenbach, author of *Why I Didn't Rebel*. A 22-year-old explains why she stayed on the straight and narrow and how your kids can, too.

Cheri

I have to admit I kind of went into that interview with a really condescending attitude, my arms crossed, going okay, what's a 22-year old going to have to say that I don't already know.

Amy

Ahhh....isn't that funny? But wow, what great insights! It's like it was like stepping into my kids' heads.

Cheri

So, so true.

Amy

You know, one of my favorite points, Cheri, I want you to speak to it first, and then I'll add, but I loved how she talked about the difference between personality and rebellion.

Cheri

That was so fascinating, because I don't think I've ever challenged myself to define what we even mean by rebellion. And I think so often we label a kid as rebellious when they simply aren't doing what we think they should do. And her definition that rebellion was going against what God has called that individual person to do was a really good definition.

Amy

Well, I thought so too. And the thing that just kept running through my head is the internal versus the external.

Cheri

Yes.

Amy

Rebecca herself was so winsome, so for her to describe herself as contrary was hilarious to me. I thought well maybe she can be, but we're getting her best today, but evidently, she kind of pushes boundaries; like, she doesn't accept the status quo. Which sometimes people receive as rebellion, but as in the story that she gave about her youth group it was actually godliness.

Cheri

Absolutely.

Amy

Which is so interesting.

Cheri

Not accepting authority just because it's authority...

Amy

Exactly.

Cheri

and not bucking authority just because it's authority. But actually having a true mission where she really felt like this was something she was called to speak about, at 15. And neither of us asked her, during our interview with her, whether her parents helped her with any of that. But I got the feeling she did that on her own. This wasn't something where mom and dad made the phone calls for her or went to any meetings with her. This was something she did on her own. That's remarkable courage.

Amy

It is, and I thought about that too, later, that I was like, wow, we didn't ask her about that. But evidently, Sheila and her husband also did not stop her.

Cheri

Mhm.

Amy

Which is, really interesting that they enabled her to follow this course that she felt God had set her on. And I'm sure there were plenty of adults in the church that saw this as rebelliousness. I think that was the thing that was interesting to me. That sometimes we judge an external personality thing, or a pursuit as rebellion, when really, rebellion is an internal heart condition that manifests externally, if that makes sense. So it's really,

what we should be looking at with our kids and ourselves, what's the heart condition? What's the motivation behind this?

Cheri

And you know, in the classroom, one of the things I've had to learn over the years is, it is so easy for me to prefer the student who just agrees with me. Just don't make waves. Don't rock the boat. And often the kid who is constantly asking questions, constantly — and I used to feel like they were picking on me. And I realized, no, it's not personal. And honestly, would I rather have a kid who just goes with the flow, and you know, maybe I've handed something out, and there's something wrong on it. Like, the date is incorrect. Yeah, it's a little embarrassing to have that called out in public, but wouldn't I rather know that I'd made a mistake, and let's fix it? And so the student who raises their hand and actually asks that question and points it out, they're not being rebellious; they're noticing; they're being aware. They are doing something, and those of us who might perceive that as rebellion; we may have some insecurity issues we need to deal with.

Amy

Yes. There's a t-shirt out there with a quote that I love, "Women who behave, rarely make history".

<Laughter>

Amy

And I love that. And I thought, you know, in addition to kids being expected to behave, with quotation marks around them, I think women are expected to behave, with quotation marks around it, in a certain way. And we know science backs that up, and lots of anecdotal information backs that up. But when we behave, I think that's an external thing that sometimes culture puts on us or parents have put on us, or you know that kind of thing, that's not necessarily moving us forward towards godliness. So I thought was just an interesting. It just made me think a lot about how we define rebellion.

Cheri

I'll also admit when I first heard her title, I thought, well, sweet thing, she's gonna end up actually having a mid-life rebellion if she didn't rebel as a teenager then certainly it's going to erupt out of her and be really ugly sometime in her late 30's or 40's, cause that's kinda what happened with me. Supposed well-behaved women, who behave externally for a few decades, often when the kids hit their teenage years, or just getting out of the house, they can go through a quote, rebellious phase, where they're doing what they should have done...okay, I'll speak for myself....in my 40's I did what I should have done in my teens in terms of asking a lot of questions, and um, it was a good thing to do. I don't regret it. But, some of it came out as immaturity. I so wish I'd gone

through that in my teens, so I could have gone through my 20's and 30's with that added level of maturity. So, absolutely.

Amy

Okay, so Cheri, another thing that she said that I thought was just so interesting, and also something I hadn't thought about, was this idea of just chatting.

Cheri

I know.

Amy

So how did that strike you?

Cheri

I was like, that's so simple! How could it be that easy?

<Laughter>

Amy

I know! It's funny, because years ago, I remember reading an article that challenged this idea of quality time with our children. And this intentional, we have to make it something, and that it also kinda challenged the idea that you know we could have 15 quality minutes that replaced several hours of quantity minutes. And what she said really upended that.

Cheri

Yeah.

Amy

Which is, look, you can't create this. This is something that has to happen organically, and it requires time. And listen – I don't want to heap condemnation on working moms, because I think working moms can still do this if we follow Rebecca's advice, which is take kids to the grocery store. Listen, it's so much easier to leave them at home, isn't it? Please don't make me take my kids to the grocery store used to be what I would think! It's so much easier to leave 'em at home, but take 'em along, and the rides in the car, and things, too.

Cheri

You know we talked about this in the past about how listening requires lingering. And I think that whole idea of quality time tempts us to project ties. It's like, okay, we have the 15 minutes of quality time so we will get eyeball to eyeball, and we will pick an important topic. And okay, well you and I do that for the podcast, but we're adults. But you can't do that with your kids. You can't do the equivalent of a podcast with your kids. I mean, they're where they're at, and the other thing is they may need to talk.

They may suddenly start a conversation when it isn't the quality time that you have scheduled. I know Jonathan used to be one who, I couldn't predict when he would get on a roll, but when I would finally find the right question to ask. And one time, this was many years ago when he was deep into Legos, he had a new set called the Rock Raiders — he went on for 4 hours, Amy, 4 hours...

Amy

Oh my heavens.

Cheri

describing every single character, and what their powers were, and everything. You know I realized I had a choice, I could change the subject, because I could kinda hear my brain cells screaming as they died, but he was so excited about this. And it was important to him, and he tends to be my quieter kid, so... What I remember about that more than anything else is that he wanted to spend that amount of time talking to his mom. I mean, how could I complain?

Amy

That's so awesome. Well, and we talked about this idea of Jesus doing ministry while he was on the way, and for me, if I think about things in terms of quality time, I'm like 15 minutes spent with my child. Check! And then I check out, right?

Cheri

Ooohh...

Amy

I just check out, and I just go and do my own thing, but that's not the way Jesus operated. He was always available even when he was on his way someplace else. That's the harder thing. It's the harder choice. That it is — I thought that was just such an amazing insight.

Cheri

Okay, this is not my happy face. You just stomped on my toes. When we check off people from our list, we then check out of the relationship. Ugh, ugh. And so this whole, Rebecca said it several times, kind of this ongoing conversation. It's not a talk, it is over days and months and years, whatever the conversation may be, so when there's a crisis or when something comes up it's not that we're dealing with it for the first time. It's something we've already been talking about, and it's just another phase of that same conversation.

Amy

Yes.

Cheri

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I was really struck by her contrasting parenting out of fear vs. parenting by faith. How did that hit you?

Amy

Oh, I just harken back to our conversation with Erin MacPhearson so much. You know my brother has six children, and so he is a parenting expert by just pure experience. And so one of the things that Jason always says is, “I don’t want to raise white-washed tombs.” And you know, that’s that picture of it’s shiny and bright on the outside, and there’s dead rotting stuff on the inside, right? So I think that when we parent out of fear we default to managing behaviors. And when we parent out of faith we are paying attention to what’s inside, what’s in the heart, molding and shaping and addressing that. And as Erin said, and as we’ve said when we discussed it, that is so much harder, so much more time consuming.

Cheri

Yeah. I realized that so much of my parenting out of fear was so shortsighted. When my kids headed off to college I helped them register for their classes. And I helped them order their textbooks, even though they were already supposedly out of the house, and it was out of a fear that they might not register on time. And then what would happen? They’d have a fee that somebody would have to pay, or they might have to come home for the quarter if they weren’t registered. We had never had conversations about that kind of stuff. It was just I had packed them off to college, and so now my fears were mushrooming, so I had to take care of my own fears. One of the reasons that I ordered their textbooks for them is I had heard rumor that some kids in order to save money would share a textbook. And I was horrified at the idea of college kids trying to share a textbook, because what if my kids needed to study and they couldn’t get a hold of it? They were supposed to highlight every page. I wanted their books to glow in the dark. All of this came down to the word we talk about so often, which is control. And I was trying to micro manage my kids to manage my fears, and what I really needed to be doing, and I am very late in the game in learning, is surrendering. Surrendering, not just my kids, but myself and my own concerns as a mom. And my other problem of course being a perfectionist — all or nothing, is I either micro managed or I threw up my hands. Okay, fine, I can’t do anything. And so much of what I heard from Rebecca was just this ongoing dialogue, keep having the conversation, and not worrying about doing it perfectly.

Amy

And there’s such a balance there between the micro managing and the throwing up your hands. This summer we had a circumstance where I just, my first reaction was to just throw up my hands and say, well it’s time that people, you know, face the consequences, and I’m done. And I was outside doing yard work, and ironically, I was pruning a tree. And God started speaking to me and go, “Seriously? You’re done? Well aren’t you glad I didn’t throw up my hands on you?”

Cheri

Oh my.

Amy

“I constantly and lovingly prune you, just like you’re pruning this tree, and that’s still your job.” So there’s some place in-between.

Cheri

Yeah, that messy middle. That’s the thing I realized, I don’t do that messy part, and I don’t do complexity well. And again, we’ve talked about this so much — we want the easy answer, we want the recipe, we want the instruction book — which, none of our kids came with, so....And then Rebecca’s answer to the concern of what if we say the wrong thing was really kind of mind-blowing to me, because to her that didn’t seem like such a big deal. She said, “Well you just apologize.” Part of me wanted to argue and say, “No you don’t understand Rebecca; it’s way more complicated than that.” But she didn’t seem to think it was. How did you find yourself reacting to her almost cavalier attitude towards — well, if you mess up, you just apologize.

Amy

I was stunned by that. And I actually had an experience with this, like a couple weeks ago. My niece, one of my brother’s wonderful children, who’s an adult and an amazing person, travels with me when I speak. And I just love it. But we can talk for 5 hours in the car together, and we had done that. And towards the end I said something. It came out of my mouth, and I sounded like a total jerk. I mean I just sounded, it just sounded mean, and it wasn’t the way I meant it to come out!

Cheri

Oh dear...

Amy

Now, in the past, what I would have done is just agonized over it and not slept that night and thought I’ve ruined everything, she’s never gonna want to travel with me again. But over dinner, we were sitting over dinner, and there was this little pause and I said, “ I need to circle back around and go back over something with you. When I said *this*, that is not the way that I meant that to come out. I am so sorry, can I re-explain what I meant there?” and she was like, “Sure.” And she received it. She’s such a godly girl, but she received it so well. And it encouraged, when you have an experience like that, it encourages you to do it again. It builds on itself, cause it’s like oh, wow! I slept and I didn’t have to agonize and feel like a worm for 5 days, and you know, like all I had to do was immediately say, “Wow, that was terrible, so sorry about that.” You know?

Cheri

I love it. Cause that’s probably the thing that’s going to stick with me the most from our interview with Rebecca is she said, “ It’s not about making about making mistakes. It’s

about how we handle the mistakes.” And so, you recognized it, and you immediately did something about, and so that whole groveling, perfectionistic misery, you just cut it off at the knees. Good for you, Amy Carroll! That’s encouraging.

Amy

It was a big step of growth. It was a big step. But it also, her answer also reflects a lot about who Rebecca is as well. And my niece’s response reflects a lot of who she is. And I had a pastor years ago, he was talking about marriage and he said, “When somebody messes up and they’ve made us really mad, we need to ask ourselves is this that person’s general character?”

Cheri

Ummm.....

Amy

And look, I can be a jerk in the moment, but I would say, like, I’m not generally a jerk, you know? Barry can be a jerk, at times, but he is not generally a jerk. And so to remind ourselves of that, and that’s what Rebecca and my niece did for the people that they were talking to. They just, it sounds like Rebecca would just say, “Well my mom said something that hurt my feelings, but I know my mom.” You know, I can forgive easily. So it’s two-sided.

Cheri

And one of the things that I’ve been astonished with, with my kids, at least, is how willing to forgive they are. Their view of who I am as a parent doesn’t match up to all my obsessive worries. And I think the more we are able to shorten our obsessive worry-rant that we go off on, the closer, who we see ourselves as, who they see us as, and who God created us to be and is inviting us to be as their parents are going to match up.

Amy

Yes.

Cheri

So what scripture did you match up with this episode?

Amy

Proverbs 23:25, “So give your father and mother joy. May she who gave you birth be happy.” I just love that. You know Proverbs has a lot to say about wise children and wise parents. Basically they matched up wise parenting with happiness later in life with your children.

Cheri

I love it. I love it. So what’s the bad rule for these two episodes?

Amy

Managing our children's behavior drives out rebellion.

Cheri

Managing their behavior can often trigger the very thing we are so afraid of, and we're trying to control. So what's the truth? What's the fact we can focus on instead?

Amy

Molding our children's hearts helps them to reject rebellion.

Cheri

Oh!

Amy

I mean, we... I think that's the thing that I realized with Rebecca. Our children have to choose to reject rebellion. Rebellion is our natural, human state. It's our sinful, fallen nature. But our kids have to make that choice, just like we had to make that choice.

Cheri

Absolutely. So what do you see as being the grit and the grace aspects of all of this?

Amy

The grit part for me, has been letting go slowly and letting them experience some of their own consequences. That is really, really hard especially for a reforming perfectionist, because really at my core, I want to look like a good mom. If I'm just honest, and sometimes letting them experience their consequences makes me look like an awful mom to some people.

Cheri

And that's hard.

Amy

It's hard.

Cheri

That's hard. You know, I think the grace for me comes back to this whole apologizing. What's so ironic is the people pleaser part of me has spent my life apologizing, but it's not the really apology. It's the, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." I apologize when I bump into furniture, okay. I mean it's that kind of fake apology. But the true grace is the knowledge that, like you illustrated, we can have do-overs. We can't change the past but we can be contrite; we can be repentant. And I think for a lot of us this is hard with our kids. We think we're supposed to always be right, or we're supposed to set the role model of, I don't know, perfection? And yet, when we do apologize, we role model for them the whole process of seeking forgiveness from God. And so the grace,

in all of our relationships, that we can seek forgiveness and especially our relationship with God.

Amy

And I want to say one last thing to our listeners, because you and I have raised children that have largely avoided rebellion at least externally. They haven't been perfect, nobody's kids are, cause we aren't either, but we have raised kids who have generally chosen to reject rebellion. So, for those listeners that are raising, you're in the middle of raising little kids or teenagers, this is possible. We want to encourage you. Those teenage years were my favorite years with my kids. It's a joy to be able to say that. It's not out of pride, 'cause goodness knows I think we've aired lots of the mistakes here that we have made. It wasn't because I was a perfect parent. But we just want to encourage you this is possible. Don't feel like you have to accept the status quo, like Rebecca said. All teenagers do not rebel. You don't have to settle for that.

Cheri

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode84.

Amy

There you'll have access to this week's transcript, our Digging Deeper download, and Bible verse art.

Cheri

We would love it if you would share this week's episode on Facebook. You'll find super easy share buttons at the bottom of the web page for each episode.

Amy

And don't forget to join us next week when you'll get to hear our interview with Heather Dickson, author of *Ready: Finding the Courage to Face the Unknown*. It's one of our most moving interviews yet.

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...

Cheri & Amy

Break it!

Outtakes

Cheri

And live your one life well.

Amy

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Girl, I do not have this open.

Cheri

Okay.

Amy

I'm so sorry. All of a sudden I was like, "Oh, yeah. Now I'm supposed to say something. Where is it?" I'm so sorry. We were on such a roll.

Cheri

No, we're good.

Amy

Ahh...

Cheri

You'll find it.

Amy

Did you send me the link?

Cheri

Mhm, I did. I can send it again.

Amy

I've got the other....

Cheri

This is 84.

Amy

Good grief!

Cheri

I can resend.

Amy

Now I'm sweating, okay. Let's see. Ah, I found it!

Cheri

Wonderful.

Amy

Good grief! How did I..uh!

Cheri

It's all good. But if you want to cuss that'd be a really good outtake.

Amy

Well, I do have a go-to word, and I do feel like saying it right now. Okay, let's see.

<Laughter>

Amy

Oh no, this is today...we're processing. That's right, right? Okay, here we go. Today we're processing what we learned...

<Laughter>

Cheri

What's the scripture that you've pulled for this particular episode?

<Laughter>

Amy

Cheri, I am so ill-prepared this morning! Let's see...

Cheri

It's at the top of 84 document... I dumped it.

Amy

Oh okay, you put it at the top. I was about to say. Thank you.

Cheri

You're welcome.

Amy

Thank you.

<Laughter>

Cheri

So what scripture did you match up with this episode?

Amy

Proverbs 23:25.