

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #89: Unsinkable: Developing a Faith that Weathers Life's Storms

Amy

So Cheri, when you're in a really, really bad mood what is the worst thing that somebody can do?

Cheri

I mean like yesterday. Everything went wrong yesterday. Like the Internet was down, and I kept thinking it was my fault. Like I restarted my computer a hundred times. And, finally two hours in I discovered it was a like a nation-wide problem. Yea. Umm, you know probably the worst thing to do when I'm really, really mad is to make fun of me.

Amy

Oh.

Cheri

Yea, it makes my blood boil. And, I know. I know if I would just lighten up and laugh at myself everything would be better, but no, no way. If somebody makes fun of me, I just dig in my heels and I refuse to snap out of it. How about you? What's the worst thing somebody can do to you?

Amy

Well, the worst thing they can do to me is try to analyze me and tell me what my problem is. So, you know, crazy stuff like, so, are you PMSing?

Cheri

Has that question ever helped any conversation?

Amy

Well, and the problem is half the time I probably am.

Cheri

Uh-oh

Amy

Well at least a fourth of the time, right? I probably am. But not helpful. Or the other thing, my issue right now is I don't sleep enough. And so somebody might say to me, oh wow, how are you sleeping? You know, it just makes you want to smack somebody.

Cheri

You know, I think people try to be helpful. Like they are trying to help us move and change from where we are to where we need to be. And yea, yea, sometimes help isn't so helpful. And part of it is we don't even know what we need ourselves. We sometimes don't even know how to change. One of our listeners sent us an email that said, "As a perfectionist I have so many beliefs

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I need to change so I can move forward. I do want to make changes and forge a new path, but I feel powerless to change.”

Amy

Ah, powerlessness is misery, isn't it? I cannot wait to hear from our guest today, 'cause she has some concrete action steps towards change for us.

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

Amy

Today, we are talking to my friend, Tracie Miles, author of *Unsinkable Faith, God-Filled Strategies to Transform the Way You Think, Feel, and Live*. Tracie is the author of three best-selling books and serves as the Compel training manager at Proverbs 31. She has three children and lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Cheri

So if you sometimes feel powerless to change, Tracie has practical insights for how to change the way we think, feel, and live.

Amy

Tracie, we are so glad you are with us today. Tell us the backstory of *Unsinkable Faith*. What led you to write this book?

Tracie

Well, actually, in the very first chapter, I just kind of throw it all out there. Because it was a difficult season of life, and I didn't want people to think that I was just sitting in a field of daisies trying to tell people to think positive. It was really birthed out of my own personal experience of going through a very abrupt separation from my husband, very unfortunate circumstances and very heartbreaking and pretty overwhelming. So, there came a time when I got really tired of feeling sad and hopeless and discouraged and negative and upset and this whole doom and gloom mentality that was just like this black cloud hanging over my life and my heart. I was really leaning into God and trusting him and depending on him, but I was still sinking. I believed in all of God's promises, but it's hard to hang on to your faith when life is really hard. No matter how strong your faith was before some tragic situation storms in. So, it was really, I just came to a turning point to where I had to either decide I was going to live my life with a negative

mindset and hang on to that doom and gloom mentality, or I could start controlling my thoughts instead of letting them control me and take my life in a different direction.

Amy

And I want to say right here, full disclosure, Tracie is one of my dear, dear friends. And so I have been in her world enough to watch her walk this out. Like this, you know it would be easy to sit and write a book like this to think positively, and then not really live it out, to be quite honest, but Tracie has lived this out. So, friend, I just want to applaud you for that.

Tracie

Well, I just say it was one of God's tools in my journey to help me really get through that, because I was forced, because I had a writing deadline, and I had words that had to be written. And I had to think about being a positive thinker all day, every day even on the days I didn't feel like it. So, God really used that in my own life.

Cheri

Tracie, you've already used one of Amy's favorite words, which is mindset. And, one of the quotes that jumped out at me from your book, it says, "We always have the power within in to choose how we think about our circumstances and our lives overall." Have you always naturally been able to chose how you think or is this a skill you've had to develop?

Tracie

Well, I don't think anyone, just by second nature, is a positive person. Some are more apt to be that than others, you know genealogy sometimes does play into that, but I did have a great role model with my mom. And she had a little saying, a handwritten saying in black sharpie marker on her frig for so many years I don't even know how long it was there that said, "If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at will change."

Cheri

Wow.

Tracie

I think that just rooted in my heart. She's always been so positive. She's been through a lifetime of hardships, just different situations, including cancer and divorce, and just lots of other things. So, she's just been a good influence, and I'm sure that that played into me making that choice as well. And her support, my family and my friends and God, obviously, that's number one.

Cheri

I am both a recovering perfectionist and what you call a Highly Sensitive Person, and so I spent the first four decades of my life literally drowning in the emotion ocean. So, in *Unsinkable Faith* you share three God-filled strategies that would have kept my thoughts and feelings from dragging me so far down. Could you talk about those three different strategies with our listeners?

Tracie

The good thing is that they are called strategies, but they're so simple. And they can be implemented into our everyday life, every hour if that's what it takes, to really start transforming our thinking. But what it boils down to is just to really seek after God, first of all, but ask him to help you start noticing the negative thoughts that are coming into your mind whether they are about yourself, whether they are about a circumstance you are facing, about someone else, about your life overall. We have to really recognize those thoughts before we can deal with them and since we so habitually get into these patterns of thinking, it's easy to be a chronic negative thinker and not even realize it. So, we really need to ask God to give us an acute awareness of those thoughts when they happen, so just to notice those. And then, as we do begin to notice them, we need to reject them. They're not, most likely, going to be backed up by God's Word. They might not even be true. And we need to reject those that are not true, and those that are negative. And then we can replace them with something that is more positive or more true or that really lines up with God's Word. So, it's just taking control and not letting our thoughts control everything: how we think, and how we feel, and how we live.

Amy

I really love that that first strategy is to notice, 'cause I think so many times our self-talk is such that we just let these things flow through our head unchecked. And, one of the things that we people-pleasers deal with is just this unchecked misconception. You say, "When we are tangled up in misconceptions, we interpret another's behavior to be about us and not about them." Oh my word, I've done this so many times over the years. So, what exactly are you implying here? Are you saying other people's behavior is not about me?

Tracie

Definitely not about us, but we definitely make it that way. And, I give a few examples in the book, and one even from my own life is that we can think that because someone treated us a certain way that that defines who we are and that their opinion is indeed accurate about us. For example, if a woman whose husband decides to leave or walk away from their family, she can think that I'm not good enough. I wasn't a good enough wife or a woman or mom or whatever that is. And we let that person's actions or opinions determine who we are. Or someone who is mistreated as a child or goes through some kind of abuse, so we give those people really permission to steal our joy and our self-worth, because we are consuming everything that they've said or done as an actual reflection of who we are. And that's how the enemy works in our minds, he wants us to believe those misconceptions rather than focusing on who we are according to God's Word.

Amy

So, how do we change that thinking and the way that we feel about other people's actions towards us?

Tracie

Well, the best encouragement I can give is to know what God's Word says about you. And, if what someone is saying does not line up with that, then it is not true, just because someone

says it does not make it true. We just need to stand firm in who we are in Christ and know that we are fearfully and wonderfully made just like we are told in Psalm 139:14 and just truly tell ourselves every day. Sometimes, I know for me, I've struggled with my own self-worth and identity and the insecurities that come when someone walks away from your life, whether it's a spouse or anyone. We just have to determine that we aren't going to let that define who we are, much less define our happiness, because it's God's Word that really defines who we are.

Cheri

Another quote jumped out at me is, "The more time I had spent worshipping God, the less time I had spent worshipping problems and letting them reign over me." Now I understand worshipping God, that's what we do in church. What do you mean by worshipping problems? I've never worshipped a problem.

Tracie

Well, that word does kind of give a new meaning to it, doesn't it, for sure.

Cheri

I'm worried. I will have to admit, I'm very worried about what you're going to say next.

Tracie

I mean I'm guilty of this, and I think most people probably are. Is that when we are dealing with a really, really difficult problem, whether it's small or huge, it can consume us. It can consume every thought. We think about the problem. We worry about the problem. We talk to our friends about the problem. We worry about it going to bed, and then, it's the first thing we think about when we wake up. And we are literally worshipping the problem. We are spending all of our time thinking about and focusing on that problem instead of thinking about and focusing on the only One that has control of that problem. And we are just enslaved to it. That's really what that means when we are worshipping our problems. We are enslaved to thinking about it. And it's stealing our peace and our hope our joy.

Amy

So when we are in that rut, Tracie, like, practically, what do we do to stop worshipping the problem.

Tracie

Well, the first thing you can do is just to realize that as much as we wish that we could change our circumstances, or wish that we can control other people, we simply cannot. So, we can continue to wish and fret over not being able to control those things or we can decide that we are going to control our thoughts about those things. Because the way we look at things is going to determine how we begin to feel and that determines our actions and that determines are behaviors, and how we live our life. So, we have to make a conscious choice that we aren't going to let circumstances or other people dictate how we live our life and our joy and our self-worth. We have control over our own thoughts. Maybe nothing else, but we do have control over that. And no one can tell us how to think. That choice can be life-changing. We are either

going to think positive or we are going to think negative, but it's a choice we make every single day.

Cheri

Amy, she's using that control word.

Amy

Oh, mercy.

Cheri

That word keeps coming back up again. Well, I understand what you mean by letting problems reign over me when they are little ones like breaking a fingernail when I get out of the car. I understand I shouldn't let that kind of problem reign over me, but what about really big problems? Like devastating fires, flooding, shooting. Everything that's happening feels so completely overwhelming. How much choice and control over our thoughts and feelings do we really have when things are that big?

Tracie

We have one hundred percent choice, because despite how big the problem is, we can choose our thoughts about it. None of us could see the things that are happening on the news today and not just be questioning why is all this happening. And why is there such evil, and why is there such hardship? We can feel disheartened and discouraged and think Lord please come back today because there's nothing good happening. But there is so many good things happening. God is still on the throne, and He is still at work. So, we have to determine, are we going to let those things just drag us down into this pit of fear and discouragement or are we going to continue believing that God is on the throne and that we are living in a broken world, but we have to take control of our minds. Otherwise, they will control of us.

Amy

Absolutely. So, Tracie as you imagine all of our listeners out there, sitting there listening with their cup of coffee to us today, what would you say to them? What closing words do you want to encourage them with?

Tracie

I would just encourage them to, number one, just stand firm and stay in God's Word, because life is hard. And so many of us, I'd dare say most of us seem to have more problems than our fair share. I think we all feel that way. And life is going to have problems. If life is going great today, it might not be tomorrow. So, we really have to prepare our hearts to stay grounded in God's Word. And then just seek His, like I said, awareness of our negative thoughts.

We have 50,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day, and that's a huge amount of thoughts. And 95 percent of those are the same thoughts that we thought yesterday. And eighty-something percent of those are negative thoughts. So, think about the tens of thousands of negative thoughts that just, inadvertently, subconsciously, run through our minds every day

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and the toll they are taking on us. But we have the power within us, and through inviting God to really start that transformation in our mind, to start creating new pathways in our brain so that we more naturally think positively as opposed to falling back to thinking negatively. And lastly, would just be to start trying to implement those three strategies. Notice them, reject the ones that are negative, and replace them with something that's more positive.

Cheri

Head on over to Grit n Grace Girls dot com backslash episode 89.

Amy

There you will find this week's transcript to the interview, the digging deeper download, Bible verse art, and you'll have a chance to enter to win a giveaway of *Unsinkable Faith*.

Cheri

If you've enjoyed this episode of Grit n Grace, come find us on Facebook. We have a Facebook page and a Facebook group. Just search for Grit n Grace Girls, and you'll find us.

Amy

And, don't forget to join us next week when we will be processing together what we learned from Tracie about changing the way we think.

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 break it.

Amy & Cheri

Break it.