

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #91: Finding Home: Digging Deep to Face Truth Instead of Running Away

Cheri

So, inquiring minds want to know, have you ever gotten caught red-handed in a big fat lie or even just a little white lie?

Amy

Oh, um, yes. And this is another one of these memories that's kind of like, *"Do you remember where you were when the space shuttle blew up,"* seriously, like...

Cheri

Oh, do tell!

Amy

Because I'm a bad liar, and in general, I don't like, I guess cause I don't get away with it, but also I don't know, there's just something in me... I try — I can't say I never — okay, now I'm babbling.

Cheri

<Giggles>

Amy

I'm a bad liar, and I don't lie very much, but I remember the first conscious lie that I ever perpetrated. I probably was about 5. I was young. So we had a backdoor neighbor that was an older, very cool girl, that moved away and she came back for a visit, and I wanted to go see her so badly. So I told my mom that I wanted to go see her and she said, "Did she invite you?" And I looked at her and said, "Yes, she did." Of course, she had not invited me. Cool older girl probably really didn't want me to come over, but I lied, and I got to go. But then, can I just tell you that it ate me alive? It was probably soon after that we visited my grandmother, and I remember specifically laying in my grandmother's second floor house with the fans going 'cause it was hot as anything in Kansas in the summer. This is how vivid it is, you know? And laying there and crying because I had lied to my mother. And finally I did confess it. How about you? Do you have a lie that you still remember?

Cheri

I just think it's so precious that your conscience was so tender. Yeah. I definitely do. And my only remorse was that I got caught. So, I stole brownies from the freezer, and I was so busy cramming them into my mouth on the way to my bedroom, I did not notice that I like Hansel and Gretel I had left this trail of brown crumbs so when my mother came to ask me, "Cheri, did

you take brownies?“ I mean she gave me an opportunity to come clean, and I also hadn’t looked in the mirror, and I hadn’t brushed my teeth.

Amy

Did you have brownie teeth?!

Cheri

I had, oh my goodness, I had brownie everywhere. And I look at her with a straight face, I insisted that no I had not. And she finally had to, like, show me the evidence. And then it was, like well, okay, I guess I can’t hide anymore, but I was absolutely determined not to tell the truth because those brownies were good.

Amy

Haha! I like your story better. I just like that you’re sorry cause you got caught. Well, you know lying really might really get us what we want for the moment, whether it’s brownies or a trip to the cool girl’s house, but it’s such a miserable trap. And one listener said to us, “My biggest struggle related to people pleasing is that I’m not able to tell the truth or say what I actually want to tell other people since I don’t want to hurt their feelings. This has caused many problems for me. I have created my own unhappiness.”

Cheri

Wow, and you know it’s so hard to think of this kind of people pleasing as lying because we do it for such seemingly positive reasons. We don’t want to hurt anybody. But it’s still dishonesty, which is another word for not telling the truth. Ouch.

Amy

Oh, ouch. Yep, it’s a trap. It doesn’t lead to happiness.

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 talking to Ginny Yttrup, author of *Home*. Ginny Yttrup is the award-winning author of 5 novels. *Publishers Weekly* dubbed Ginny’s work as inspiring as it is entertaining. When not writing, Ginny coaches writers, critiques manuscripts, and makes vintage style jewelry for her Etsy shop: *Story Jewelry*. She loves dining with friends, hanging out with her adult children, or

spending a day in her pajamas reading a great novel. Ginny lives in northern California with Bear, the entitled Pomeranian.

Amy

Well, Ginny this is not really supposed to be my role here, but I have to rave for a moment because... you know, it's so funny that even though I'm an author of non-fiction, fiction is really my favorite thing to read. *And* I have not read a better Christian fiction book than *Home* in a long, long time. I just, I can't say enough. So everybody who's listening, get a copy today. I get no commission for that, but anyway. Now that I've been the crazy fan-girl, we want to know what the backstory is. What inspired you to write *Home*?

Ginny

I wish I had a great inspirational story to share with you, but the truth is I wanted to write something fun. I had written four, pretty heavy, intense novels, and I was sort of over that, because they're emotionally a lot of work to write, and so I wanted to write something fun. And one day, a friend asked me a question that prompted the *what if* question that is the impetus for most novels and the *what if* question that came to me was, *what if a novelist became infatuated with one of her male characters?* And I thought that could be really fun to write. So I set out to write a fun story and ended up with something entirely different that was a surprise to me as the writer, if that makes sense. But that's often the case when I'm writing. It just kind of grew from that *what if* question, grew into what I believe God meant for it to be for my readers, and for myself, actually, as the author.

Amy

What you just said about that it was a surprise to you... I would love to be able to write fiction. It's just beyond me, but I often hear fiction writers say that their characters become almost really personified to them, and they unfold and kind of tell their own story as they write. Do you feel that way?

Ginny

Absolutely. Absolutely. I am always surprised by my character's stories. And even if I set out to write something specific and I have a plot, I don't outline a lot, but, I have, you know, a beginning and ending in mind. I know the topic I'm dealing with. I know what the theme is. The characters tend to veer off, and they go in the direction that they want to go. And I know that sounds odd, because they're not real, but they are, in a way, a manifestation of myself as the author and of many, many people within my sphere. And so they do, in a sense, have their own personalities, and I know that the Holy Spirit is involved in that process very much, and so He will lead through those characters.

Cheri

Are you a plotter or a panzer?

Ginny

I'm a pantsier.

<Laughter>

I really am a pantsner. That for me is so much fun. Like I said, I have a beginning and an end usually in mind. And that's about it. That whole middle section is free game.

Cheri

Boy, just hearing that makes we want to grab a paper bag and start hyperventilating into it.

<Laughter>

To not have that full plan, but I can see in your face the joy of discovery that comes along with it, and the serendipity, and thus, then, the flexibility to shift as the Holy Spirit leads. That's very cool.

Well, one of the core issues that you address in *Home* is just this whole thing of the truth. You have characters that are withholding the truth, that are evading the truth, intentionally pushing it away. So what drew you to address this whole topic or issue of the truth in a piece of fiction?

Ginny

I didn't set out to address that topic. And in fact, I didn't even realize that was a part of the story...

Cheri

...Really?

Ginny

...until I read through some of the questions that you were going to ask me this morning, and I thought, "Truth? What?"

Cheri

So you're just now learning the truth about your own book.

Ginny

Yeah, exactly. So I considered the story I've written in *Home* and every other novel that I've written, and they all — that is the core theme of each of my books. It is, evidently, a core theme of my life. And I have known that, and I think because that's so much woven into who I am it naturally comes out in the stories I write. I was writing a story about running away, about escaping, about not wanting to deal with the hard things in life. Well, what do we run from? We run from the truth. When we are trying to escape, we are escaping the truth that we don't want to face. So, yeah, it's definitely there.

Cheri

Interesting. Interesting. So how, especially in *Home*, how did truth and grief end up being connected?

Ginny

She was, the character, running away from grief. She didn't want to have to face her own truths. And we only heal from grief, we only move through grief, if we're willing to look at it and experience it and feel the truth of it, which can be very, very difficult. And many people, myself included, have worked very, very hard to ignore that truth, to turn our backs on it, to walk away from it, to do anything we can to not experience the pain associated with grief. But the flip side of that is the truth will set us free, so once we're willing to focus on that truth, and the truth being the truth of whatever circumstance has led to that grief, but also the truth of Jesus Christ who is our Healer, our comfort. That's when we can begin to move through it and beyond the grief to a place of healing.

Cheri

This is so countercultural. There's so much "pull yourself up by the bootstraps," "just move on," "don't linger in the past," and I love the balance that you had with that. I didn't sense any wallowing being encouraged or any camping out in the past. If anything, it was fascinating how stuck in the past your characters were. They thought they were moving forward, but the problem is they were actually stuck because they hadn't truly processed and healed their pasts.

Ginny

Absolutely. And you're right; it is completely countercultural. We live in a culture where escapism is easier than ever before, so we don't have to look at the painful sides of our lives if we don't want to. Social media alone provides an outlet that can be all consuming, so.

Amy

Well, one of the topics that we're always talking about and joking around about on the show is the C-word, which is control. And what are some of the lessons about control that you hope your readers learn vicariously when they're reading *Home*? There's one character in particular that struggles outwardly with control, although several of them are trying to control their situations in different ways that are more under the surface.

Ginny

Sure. I guess the lesson that I've had to learn, and embrace for myself, is that attempting to control our circumstances is futile. We can work hard to manage and to control things, but we really do ourselves a disservice. And ultimately we don't have control in a lot of the circumstances that we encounter, so that grasping and clinging, that I'm, you know, somewhat familiar with. It just doesn't work. I've had to learn. I prolong things so much more when I'm trying to work to control them.

Amy

Well, and you delved into even when control becomes an extreme that goes into a mental illness with one of the characters, Jill, that was OCD and probably had some kind of post-

traumatic stress disorder as well. So what kind of research did you do? How did you handle — you handled that so sensitively. I read an article — I read a magazine where the editor just had to do an apology, ‘cause she kind of tossed off OCD like, “Oh, my OCD kicked in,” and some people that genuinely had that diagnosis were offended, and she apologized. You handled this with such sensitivity. Tell us how you did that.

Ginny

I did a lot of research. I did a lot of reading personal accounts of people who suffer from OCD, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. I became fascinated by it. It’s a heart breaking, all-consuming disorder for those who suffer from it. Again, it wasn’t something I set out to explore when I was writing the book. And, it’s very much something where I felt like God led me to that topic. The first chapter where I introduce the character, who you mentioned, who struggles with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, she was wiping her kitchen counter. It was just one of those things in fiction: you have to show your characters doing something. And then, she wiped it again. The third time it hit me, oh, oh, and my heart literally broke for her. I felt that sense of, just weight, of what that must be like. So, in each of my books, I typically will refer to a counselor, a therapist, and have them read passages so that I’m certain I’m representing things in a respectful and accurate manner. So I’m grateful to have access to people who are willing to do that for me.

Amy

My heart broke for her, too. And I was so glad that you gave her such a wonderful husband. So thank you for that.

<Laughter>

Cheri

So true.

Amy

He was so understanding. So, but the solution to the problem of control is ultimately surrender. But that sounds so simple, but it’s not simple. So how did you write about it without being trite?

Ginny

There’s a principle. You’re both writers so you know this that we use often in fiction, well always in fiction, but you will use it in non-fiction, too. *Showing verses telling*. So for those who are not writers, I might write, “She cried loudly.” Well, that tells you something. If I want to show it, if I want to draw you in to the story and help you as a reader feel what the character is feeling, I will write something like, “Her eyes welled with tears.” I will show that emotion. And I think it’s true in our lives as well as our writing. When we just tell the lesson, share what we learned, but if we share the actual story and the emotion that we experienced and we’re willing to be vulnerable, its hard to be trite then. Our truth isn’t trite. And so, I think the important

piece of it is vulnerability. And we're never more vulnerable than when we've finally reached that point of surrender.

Cheri

I really love those scenes because for me they were a glimpse of, "Oh, that's what it could look like." And then for another character, "Oh, that's what it looked like for that character." There was no cookie-cutter. You know, each person's experience was different, and yet each of them were completely convincing. And I felt like I was there without feeling like it was intrusive and each one was beautiful and realistic for that particular character. So...

Well, when I read your first novel, *Words*, which just blew me away for so many reasons. I remember thinking to myself she's got to be an HSP, because she writes with so much depth and feeling. And then, as we've gotten to know each other, I have found that you are indeed a Highly Sensitive Person, and so since our podcast is for reforming perfectionists and people pleasers, and those of us who are Highly Sensitive People, I wanted to ask, how being an HSP has been a blessing for you and what has been maybe a primary draw back of being an HSP?

Ginny

I think the blessing for me is that sensitivity has come through in my intuitive side. So, with people, I often have a strong sense of emotion or conflict or joy. Whatever it is. I seem to have an elevated sense of the internal goings on of people. Or I can walk into a room and sort of sense the mood in the room. And that's a gift, you know, that I've had to embrace and receive and learn to be okay with. Sometimes it feels a little odd to think, "I'm sure I know what that person is feeling. I may not understand why or — I can't even begin to image what their circumstances might be, but my heart feels what they're feeling." If that makes sense at all. I know to some HSPs out there it will make sense. So that's been a real blessing. To really have a sense of what people go through and feel and hopefully I translate that in my writing.

Cheri

And then how about the flip side? What would you say has been a major drawback of being an HSP?

Ginny

That exact same thing.

<Laughter>

I feel EVERYTHING it seems like, so for me, it plays out very strongly physically. I'm very connected with my body. And because I deal with quite a few health issues, I feel those. They feel overwhelming sometimes because every little twinge, or whatever it is, I'm aware of. So I've had to learn to go, "Okay, it's not that big of a deal. I feel it. It's okay to feel it. And I can leave it at that." So, yeah, that part I'm not always too fond of.

Cheri

I think for HSPs our hashtag is, “all the feels, all the time”

Ginny

Exactly. Exactly. That’s exactly it. There’s all those sensitivities. Too much sound. Too much stimuli. It’s always too much of everything, so.

Amy

Well, for our listeners, those who have been listening to you and thinking about how they’re wrestling with their truths, and trying to find a place of surrender, dealing with all those emotions that we deal with, what kind of encouragement do you have for them? What kind of takeaway do you want them to have today?

Ginny

Be willing to sit with whatever it is that you maybe have tried to turn your back on. Whatever truth it is. Be willing to remain in the moment, present. One of the things I write about in *Home* is that God lives in the moment. So when we turn our backs on the present moment, if we are escaping or running from truth, we are in effect running from God and His desire to be with us in that, to offer His comfort and His peace. So just be willing to remain present and with God in those circumstances.

Cheri

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode 91.

Amy

You’ll find this week’s transcript, digging deeper download, Bible verse art, and a chance, and a chance to enter this week’s giveaway of *Home*.

Cheri

If you’ve enjoyed this episode of Grit-n-Grace, won’t you share it with your friends? If you go to the webpage, you’ll find really super easy share buttons right at the bottom of the page.

Amy

Next week, we’ll be processing together what we learned from Ginny.

Cheri

For today, grow your *grit*, embrace God’s *grace*, and when you come across a bad rule, you know what to do...go right on ahead and...

Amy & Cheri

Break it!

Outtake

Cheri

Well, that was fun.

Amy

She's so fabulous.

Cheri

Yes, she is.

Amy

Well, and I just think she's so smart and cool like novelists should be.

Cheri

Yes, she is.

And you know it just occurred to me as we hung up, she helped me with a proposal that got rejected that turned into this podcast! So she's part of the failure that turned into this success!

Amy

It was meant to be.

Cheri

It absolutely was.