

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #102: How to Level Up Through the Power of Simple Truths

Cheri

Alright, so let's pretend you're in a social situation, everything is going just fine, and then the topic shifts and you suddenly realize everyone else knows exactly what they're talking about and you have no clue. So, how do you react when everybody else is in the know and you're on the outside feeling a little stupid?

Amy

Well, let me tell you what I used to do. I used to totally fake it. I would act like I knew exactly what you were talking about, but it got me into trouble a couple of times. I was sitting in one of my pastor's office, and we were talking technical things.

Cheri

Oh, no.

Amy

Now Cheri, you know, this is not my particular strength. And so, I faked it and I said a word that he looked at me like and he goes, "Do you mean?" And, he says the right word and so, I was exposed as faking it. I was so embarrassed. I was like, yes, and I don't know what I am talking about, so, I might as well just confess right here. So, I used to totally fake it. What did you do in that situation? What do you do?

Cheri

Okay, I've been known to try to fake it, but I'm a terrible faker. Like I just, I, it just falls apart. And, I'm a bad liar, too. I get mad. I just sit there and start stewing like how dare they know things I don't know. Or how dare they, how dare they not realize that I don't know. You know, like they should all know this about me, because somehow all of this is, yeah, somehow about me. Yeah, how do all of these always end up where, where the recovering perfectionist just thinks the entire world is all about her?

Amy

Exactly! My friend Tara has really helped me with this, because Tara never fakes it. Never. And she will ask you a million questions. So, I've watched her do this. And, so it's made me change my habit. I still want to default to faking it, but now I think, 'Be like Tara.' And so I'll start asking questions, which is great, because it's a connector.

Cheri

That's so smart!

Amy

So, anyway it's the better thing to do. You don't get exposed as a fake either. So...

<Laughter>

Cheri

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy

And, I'm Amy Carroll.

Cheri

And you're listening to Grit n Grace, good grace 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 interview with Donna Jones, author of *Seek*.

Cheri

One of the things I loved about talking with Donna is she said that she started with one audience for her book. She thought it was just going to be for women who didn't know Jesus, didn't know God, and just needed an entry point. But then as she was writing it, she fell in love with Jesus all over again and that seems to be who she hears from the most is women who are Christians, but her book has kind of helped them go back to the basics. And, I'm just kind of feeling like going back to the basics is a great thing to do.

Amy

I agree. It's a hard thing to do. It's a humbling thing to do in a lot of ways. But it was funny, because my friend Tara that I just referenced. I was talking to her on the phone one day and she's an amazing Bible teacher I told her, "God sent me back to Kindergarten this year."

<Laughter>

Cheri

Everything you need to know you can learn in kindergarten, right?

Amy

It's absolutely true. People bought that book by the thousands cause it was true. It's true. I have been sent back to learn about love.

Cheri

So, what does that look like? Tell me more about being sent back to kindergarten.

Amy

Well, it was an interesting year, because I was immersed in ministry. I was doing the work baby, you know. But in the midst of it I realized I couldn't feel God's love for me anymore at all. And I knew that that was a big problem. It's a big problem. I think about 1 Corinthians 13, he talks about, hey, you can do all these things and move in all these gifts, but if love is missing. You're missing all of it. And that's the Amy translation of 1 Corinthians 13 by the way. And I knew I was missing all of it. And he sent me back to kindergarten. Love is one of those real foundational things, you know, God's love for us. Jesus loves me. I mean we literally have kindergarteners singing that. And I needed to relearn it.

Cheri

You know, it's so interesting that your concern was you weren't feeling God's love, rather than being so fixated on, oh, I'm not showing enough love, demonstrating enough love. I think that's actually a really good sign. I think the old Amy might have been, "Oh, there's a problem, I'm not showing enough love, let me work harder in my own strength to show more love, and everything will be fine." But you're right, the song goes, Jesus loves me, this I know.

Amy

Absolutely. Well okay, true confession is that I got to the point that I understood the real problem after I had worked very hard to love others.

Cheri

And, it wasn't working.

Amy

It wasn't working.

Cheri

Alright. Alright. So you came. You realized you needed to come back down to the basics. It was time to get, it was time to come back to where it all starts. That makes sense.

Amy

It's interesting because when I think about back to my words for the years, for several years, they've been so basic. So, they've been trust, believe, pray. These are very, very basic terms. But I started thinking about when I went to teach elementary school, and I had taken, of course, I had gone through high school. I had taken Algebra, Geometry. I think that's as far as I got. I wasn't a big math student.

Cheri

Hey, I'm impressed.

Amy

And then to college and taking college math, those kinds of things. But when I went back to teach the basics in elementary school, I understood the workings of math at a deeper level. And, it was interesting because I started making all these connections teaching children that I had never made in math before. So, it kind of goes back to that idea of yours of leveling up. That even if we go back to the basics as a mature Christian, it's a level up from where we were before.

Cheri

I love that. I love that. Well, and it ties into one of the takeaways that I had from talking with Donna. And she said, that our relationship with God has to be experienced personally to be real. And, you know, as a recovering perfectionist, it is, it is so easy for us to just collect data. Like let me study about God. Let me have bookshelves you know filled with books with second and third hand information because the goal is to be right. You know, the more information I have the righter I will be, right? I mean I can defend myself with all of this great head knowledge. But, just because I'm right in what I know about God, doesn't mean I'm in a relationship with Him. That chasm can get so big. It turns out God doesn't even ask us to be right. He offers us His righteousness and that He wants to be in a relationship with us. I know you listen to Emily Freeman's podcast, *The Next Right Thing*.

Amy

Yes.

Cheri

And in the episode, aptly titled, *Release Your Agenda*, I wasn't sure if I even wanted to listen to that episode. I'm like what will I have to quit after I listen to this. Maybe if I don't listen to it, I won't have to change. 'Cause, you know, I'm all about growth like that

Amy

Well, Emily is so wise. We should really ignore her every time.

Cheri

Exactly. But here's what she said, she said, the words of Paul come to mind as I remember he didn't say to live is to become Christ-like. It sounds almost right, but it's not quite. Instead he said in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." To live is a person, Christ himself.

Amy

Her first iteration kind of reminds me of Lisa Whittle how she talks about being "god-ish."

Cheri

Yes.

Amy

You know if we work at, if we work at becoming Christ-like there's, there's all this striving in that. There's this us working to figure it out, and in the end, we don't become more Christ-like, we become more like what we think Christ is or should be. And, so we put this layer of expectation in there that is "god-ish."

Cheri

Yep. Yep. No. That makes total sense. Well, and I was reading Donald Miller's book, *Scary Close*, this week, and I stumbled upon a quote that just blew me away. And I so, I so enjoyed and appreciated Donna's distinction of grace and mercy that one of them is not getting what you do deserve. Like in her case, she didn't get punished for scratching the car. And then the other is getting what you don't deserve. So, when her friend called, her dad said, sure, go ahead and take the car. And I was thinking about that, and I realized perfectionists, those of us who are recovering perfectionists, we don't even want to need grace or mercy. We would rather just skip it all. We try so hard to never make a mistake, so that we'll never need the grace or mercy. And so, at least for me, grace and mercy have felt like such a letdown. Like almost like the booby prize. Like if I had been good enough, then God wouldn't have to waste his time and energy on me. You know. And it's supposed to be freedom. It's supposed to be good news. It's supposed to be the best news there is. And, so here's the quote that I, that I just, it gobsmailed me, I think is the term. It's not a term I use very often but it gobsmailed me. He said, "We don't think of our flaws as the glue that binds us to the people we love, but they are. Grace only sticks to our imperfections. Those who can't accept their imperfections can't accept grace either." And I was like get off my toes, Donald Miller.

Amy

That made me tear up.

Cheri

Oh, grace only sticks to our imperfections. And it makes sense. I mean, like if we weren't imperfect, we wouldn't need grace.

Amy

Beautiful.

Cheri

And, so if we could achieve what we are trying to achieve, we would be God.

Amy

That's amazing.

Cheri

When we say it that way, then it's like oh no, no, no that's not right. Okay, no. Something must be wrong. And yet we struggle. I mean just yesterday, I once again, I'm in the middle of a fixing fast. I'm trying not to meddle. And it is very hard. And, yesterday, you know, you know I did

something again with Anne-Marie. And about two hours later I was like, oh goody, Cheri, you just meddled again. You made it cute and funny. You tried to turn it into a joke.

Amy

You disguised it.

Cheri

I disguised my fixing. But it was the same old thing again. And, I was like maybe I could pretend it didn't happen. I could just feel myself trying to do spin control, rather than, how about I apologize. How about I admit I was wrong? How about I admit that I fell short of the goal. And I know she'll forgive me. And I know that grace is available. And I fought it. I was like but it shouldn't need to, it shouldn't be... Who do I think I am?

Amy

Well, that quote is so beautiful. And it really expresses what you're experiencing with Anne-Marie, too, though, but that apology will be a glue that binds you to her.

Cheri

Yeah.

Amy

And so, you know this whole idea of our flaws is the glue that binds us to other people. Our acceptance of God's grace is what binds us to Him. So, the more we accept grace, the more we're bound to Him. And so, maybe that's part of our problem, right? Is that being bound to God is amazing, but it's also scary, 'cause it's a giving up of control. There's that C word again, man.

Cheri

Are you still talking?

Amy

Wah, wah, wah, wah.

Cheri

Wait, we're breaking up. Bad connection, Amy!

Well, but you're reminding me of reason why this quote was so important to me. This whole idea of our flaws as the glue that binds us to the people we love.

I've recently been thinking about how we talk about certain groups of people, I'm just going to be vague, as being fragile. You know, they're so fragile, so fragile, you know, and we make fun of people who are fragile or snowflakes or orchids or whatever. And I was thinking to myself cause I done a survey of a bunch of high school students that Kathi and I were about to speak to. And what hit me so deeply is these kids weren't fragile so much as they were brittle. Like

they lacked resilience. Like, for some reason, they just they were so overwhelmed I could tell that they were shattering. But they, I think of fragile as being like a spider web or you know an eggshell. Like, you know like something really flimsy. These kids aren't flimsy, but they were easily broken.

And so, I was thinking about that and I talked to Jonathon, and I was just running it by him because he's kind of part of this generation. And he said that's really interesting, mom, he said because in the process of refining steel, he said the more refined it becomes the stronger the individual molecules of steel become, but the weaker the bonds between them become. And so even though each individual molecule is strong in and of itself, he said, the entire thing will shatter because the bonds between the molecules are weakened. And, I was like, oh! And so, he was basically saying that this idea of being brittle was accurate. And so, in order to have some flexibility, in order to be strong, but also able to bounce back from adversity we've got to have these bonds with each other. And I thought this is the problem with kids and all of us today is we are isolated. And perfectionism does this. You and I've talked about this so many times. It makes us isolate and stay away from people and not want to show our true selves. And like you said, grace is the glue that binds us to God and then, recognition and acceptance of our own imperfections and thus others. That's going to allow God's grace to be the glue that holds us together that keeps those bonds strong and makes us able to flex.

Amy

That's beautiful. Well, and I've seen this in my everyday world with my friends, so, two friends, in particular, that I think about Melissa Taylor and Wendy Blight. You know Melissa Taylor has talked really openly and written very openly about the sexual abuse that she suffered as a child. Wendy Blight has talked about the rape that she was subject to when she was in college or finishing up college.

And those two people, they draw others like nothing else I've seen, and it's because they've been so deeply vulnerable about the things they've suffered. About just some of the flaws that came as a result of being victimized at one point in their life. And so, but the response to them is so wholehearted, because people are just waiting for us to be real. For us to tell about what we've suffered or tell about our flaws, because that's what the whole "me too" movement has really been about, right?

Cheri

Yeah, so true.

Amy

Is that people can finally say, I'm not alone, I'm bonded to you. Yeah.

Cheri

Yeah. Well, and you know what strikes me listening to you, is, since I know both women a little bit. Their primary connection and bond is to God.

Amy

Yes.

Cheri

They are getting their grace; they're getting their needs met through their relationship with God so that when they connect to other people, it's a healthy connection.

Amy

Yes.

Cheri

What those of us who are recovering people-pleasers have done is we've known we've needed connection. We've known we need grace, and we try to wring it out of other human beings. And I don't have to tell you how well that goes, do I?

Amy

I don't know about that. I don't know, Cheri.

Cheri

'Cause let me tell you when I try to get grace from somebody who won't give it to me; I am not pleasant to be around. You will give me grace!

<Laughter>

Okay, so on to a much more pleasant topic. I want an update on how your word of the year is going.

Amy

Oh, it's going well. Here's what's interesting, 'cause I had one of our interns, who is a friend, ask me the other day, "What are you learning about prayer?" My word for the year is pray. And I knew that she expected that I have been reading like George Mueller, or you know. like really digging in deep. And the truth is: the things that I have been led to are so simple, Cheri. They're just so simple. One of them is Kelly Stanley's. She's got a prayer calendar for every month.

Cheri

Oh, cool.

Amy

And look, Cheri, you know what's so awesome? This month she has a super hero theme going on, so there's like Wonder Woman and Superman and stuff on my prayer calendar.

Cheri

I love it.

Amy

She wrote the book *Praying Upside Down*. So, her thing is, but I love that prayer calendar, because it's something that I wouldn't have thought of to pray for every day. But it's so simple. It's one thing, every day. And it has super heroes on it. I mean, what's not to be happy about that? So, but kind of simple, you know I mean I'm not digging into books written in the 1700s to learn about prayer. Yet. I mean maybe I will, and I'm not opposed to that.

The other tool that I got, a friend of mine sent like a pre-prayer thing to fill out. So, it's just the simplest things like, God, today I thank you for, and I want to lift up and just these little simple like lead-ins and so before I pray, before I start my quiet time every day I'm just filling it out, and it's the simplest thing, but it's helping me to set my mind on Christ as I go into my prayer time. So, these are just two of these little simple tools that I thought I should be diving a lot deeper, and I probably will. But right now, it kind of goes along with what Donna was teaching as I'm going back to the basics.

Cheri

Well, and I have to tell our listeners that every time you say the word simple, you smile.

Amy

I love that.

Cheri

You just sound like you're having fun.

Amy

Well, the thing that I've done in the past is there had to be a rule for everything. There had to be a right way and a wrong way to do everything and surely prayer is the same way. You know, and so this is just like God, it's just like this little release. No, just talk to me. Just talk to me. It's really been sweet.

Cheri

Sounds freeing.

Amy

Yeah, it's been great. And you? The update?

Cheri

Oh, my word. You know, I'm going to have to be just a little vague here. I'm just going to say that this whole idea that God knows me better than I do. That He's the one who's actually in charge and that He's is the Author and Finisher of my faith. And that He's not going to start me and just leave me alone. Let's just say that when I back away it's kind of amazing what he chooses to do.

Amy

Yeah, I'm watching this in real time. And I'm pretty amazed and scared for you, also.

Cheri

That's why I'm not taking in details right now. But I mean there is something profoundly moving about seeing things happen that I tried for probably 25 years to force happen. And they are happening in ways that I couldn't have imagined. And it's very clear it's not me. So..,

Amy

Okay, so I have to give you a little ribbing here, because as you kind of have said, I've heard you say different iterations of that several times that you're just standing back in amazement. I don't know if you remember the first time, I think it was the first time we ever talked. That before we did the coaching together...

Cheri

Oh no. I'm scared.

Amy

You said, you said, I think you were probably 45 or so at that point. And you said, I'm 45 years old and what I think God is calling me to is not happening, and I have to step into, you know, making sure that that happens.

Cheri

I did not say that, did I?

Amy

Or something like that. And I don't know what made me think of about that the other day. And I mean, listen, I really respected it. 'Cause I'm like she's stepping into this. She's getting the training. She's getting... But now that we know each other, it makes me laugh.

Cheri

Oh, that makes me so - and I believe you. I'm sure I said something like that five years ago. Oh, that's the best thing.

Amy

So, at the moment you least expected it. However, let's go back to that for a moment though, because you did step into, you knew God had this calling and you didn't know quite what it was going to look like, but you were like I'm determined to be ready for it. I mean that really was what you were saying. Even though...

Cheri

Oh, thank you for making me sound so much better than I did.

Amy

There might have been a little control there, too.

Cheri

Oh no, Amy, I'm sure that what I was doing was I was just going to turn up the heat and speed things up so they happened on my timetable. And then they didn't and didn't and didn't and yeah.

Amy

But now that they are, now that God has opened the door, you are ready. You've done the preparation for it. So that's the plus; the upside to all this that God even uses are bad motives.

Cheri

Absolutely. Absolutely. So talk to us about the scripture that you have for these episodes with Donna.

Amy

So, I chose Matthew 18:3, because we've been talking about going back to the basics where Jesus said, "Truly I tell you unless you change and become like little children you'll never enter the kingdom of Heaven."

Cheri

I love that scripture.

Amy

We're all called to go back to the basics.

Cheri

To go back to Kindergarten?

Amy

Yes. Yes. We're called to go back to kindergarten because that's where our foundation is. So building on the basics these things that we learned at the beginning. But leveling up. Going deeper and learning more. That's our foundation. That has to be what we build so that we can grow.

Cheri

Okay, so what's the bad rule and then what's the truth that replaces it.

Amy

Well, and when I wrote this, I laughed, because I have believed this bad rule. "Growth is moving away from the basics of faith." I kind of took that scripture that talks about how when you're a baby and you need milk and then you go onto real food. I took that to an extreme that wasn't true anymore. That I thought, well, if I'm really growing, then those basics of faith I don't, I don't really mess with those anymore.

Cheri

Been there. Done that. Bought the t-shirt.

Amy

Exactly. Exactly.

Cheri.

Alright, and what's the truth? What the fact we can focus on instead?

Amy

"Growth requires clinging to the basics of faith."

We have to build on a firm foundation, and I think the foundation needs work every once in a while. So, we have to go back to those things.

Cheri

Absolutely. Alright, so what's the grit in all of this for you?

Amy

The grit is not getting to big for my britches as we say in the South. It takes humility to say, I need to go back to Kindergarten and relearn God's love for me. You know, and that's been hard 'cause I'm a bible teacher, too. I'm a speaker and a writer and I'm like for heaven's sake God, give me something that makes me look spiritual in the eyes of others. This ain't it.

<Laughter>

And God says, you're getting too big for your britches, girl.

Cheri

Oh, my goodness. I love it. I love it. Well, and I think for me, the grace is I'm going to go back to that Donald Miller quote and this is the whole idea that grace only sticks to our imperfections. And, I just, after listening to Donna, and God obviously wants this lesson, 'cause it's coming from all sides. I just want to marinate in God's grace, and I feel myself doing a little better more often at not running from my imperfections but being more willing to be present, and hand them over, pray-cess them, not try to cover them up, but to say, yes, I'll receive grace.

And life is better that way. It is so exhausting to hide and cover up and blame others. I'm not going to say receiving grace is easy. I still fight it. But I'm starting to see that it is not worth the fight. And, I'm starting to realize this is really what God wants for us. This is what He is longing, like, me receiving grace makes Him happy and that's just so, so strange. 'Cause I still think, well if I didn't need it wouldn't He be happier. No, He loves to pour out His grace on us. And receiving it is the best thing we can do.

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode102.

Amy

There you'll find our transcript, this week's digging deeper download, the Bible verse art and a chance to win a giveaway of Donna's book, *Seek*.

Cheri

If you aren't already connected to us on Facebook, go ahead and do a search of Grit n Grace girls. We have a Facebook page and a private Facebook group where we talk about each week's episode.

Amy

Make sure to tune in next week when we'll be talking to Debbie Wilson author of *Little Women, Big God*.

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 & Cheri

Break it.