

***Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules***

Episode #114: Bringing Grace Solutions to the Problems of Race, Part 2

**Amy**

Cheri, last week Lucretia talked about the differences between debate, discussion, and dialogue. What was an “Ah-HA!” moment for you during those definitions?

**Cheri**

You know, she put into words why I have never liked debate in my home. If people are going to go for each other’s throats, let them do it some place where everybody has signed up for a debate and everyone agrees to use debate rules. I do NOT want a debate during a meal at my table.

**Amy**

Well, and discussion, that made me think of all my years in classrooms where the talk just went round and round and round but never really went anywhere. I was so thankful to have a definition of dialog where we get to walk into community together. I am so glad that Lucretia agreed to a part 2!

**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 love who you’re not, love who you are, and live your ONE life well!

**Amy**

We're talking to Lucretia Berry again today. Lucretia’s an anti-racist consultant and educator, the author and facilitator for *What LIES Between Us Journal & Guide*, and loves to create offerings and content to help folks, especially parents and teachers to overcome race with grace.

**Cheri**

Lucretia received her Ph.D. in Education (Curriculum & Instruction) from Iowa State University. Nathan and Lucretia have three little girls who are the inspiration for their work through [Brownicity.com](http://Brownicity.com).

**Amy**

Well, Lucretia, we are just so excited to have you here and pleased that you would join us for a second week. We've just got so many things that we need to pick your brain about.

**Lucretia**

Okay.

**Cheri**

It's my turn this time. I'm going to come at this from the people-pleasing angle. One of the hardest things for people pleasers is to respond to others, especially family members, when racist talk starts coming into the conversation. I'm remembering years ago when we bought our first house and family members were with us to celebrate, one of them wanted to know the last names of our neighbors. And my children were toddlers at the time and they were in the room. It suddenly occurred to me that there were certain last names that were okay and other last names that were not okay in this family member's mind. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to make a big fuss, but I knew I couldn't answer the question in front of my children. I knew the question shouldn't be asked in the first place, and I just felt so floored as to what to do. That's such a minor, minor example. How would you advise us to respond when things come up in conversation with people we're close to and we freeze, like I did?

**Lucretia**

Yeah, that is a tough one. Actually, I myself am learning more about how that phenomenon in white culture versus growing up as a person of color and being very comfortable with conversations about race. And so, it's easier for me because I have the muscles, and I have language to address those things. Like, "Oh, no problem. Of course, I'm going to say something," or I can give a look of disapproval. I've had family members say things. This is, as I'm married to a white man, and we have multiethnic children. Yeah, I'll just speak up and say something. I always come from the angle of education. That's always the route. Come from grace, education. What I have learned doing this work and being in spaces where my white friends are new to the conversation, right? They're novices. They don't quite have the muscles. I would say you should not do nothing, because you're going to feel terrible about that later. Just to think about it from the perspective of realize what you're modeling for your children. You don't have to pick a fight with that particular relative or someone, but always do something, even if it's giving a disapproving eye or remark or say something that would cause the family member or the close friend to give pause to what they've said, to show that it's not okay. Maybe you continue the conversation later because it's not time for a fight. I say that because your children are paying attention, even as toddlers. In that moment, if they're really small ... of course, children are picking up on social cues and the energy in the air and that kind of thing. They're learning, "Well, that was something that maybe made my mom or dad feel negative. They chose to be quiet about it." Then what we're teaching our children is, "Okay. No conflict, no confrontation," even if it is hurting us. That's why it's a great idea of course to learn, stay in education mode. Yes, speak up. It doesn't have to be combative. You can say, "I used to think" or "I used to feel" or "I used to believe, but now I think, believe, feel," or, "This is how I've grown on this journey," or, "This is how I want our children to receive ..."

It also then puts it on to you. It's not a shaming. Even if you can't do that, you should always have a follow-up conversation with your kids in the car or when you're by yourselves. We can only disrupt it if we disrupt it. We can only change it if we disrupt the status quo of being complacent in presence of that type of wrong thinking and bigotry.

**Amy**

Disrupt the status quo. That's going to be one of my takeaways today.

**Lucretia**

Yeah. That's such a Jesus thing to do, right?

**Cheri**

Yeah.

**Lucretia**

Such a Jesus thing to do. Disrupt the status quo.

**Cheri**

Yeah. Part of me is like, "Yes!" Part of me is like, "No!"

**Lucretia**

I know. Yeah, I am coming to understand that more. And so, in our group, it's good to have a group, like, have a group. In our Brownicity group, we call it white and rejected. When our white friends experience rejection from family members, because they are speaking up and their family members don't like what they're saying or they're losing friends, we celebrate them. And we just jokingly say, "We're going to have this badge called white and rejected." When you do brave things like that, you have to have a way of celebrating it and getting some good out of it. Immediate gratification. There's going to be long-term change, but it's good to at least be loved and appreciated and seen for that.

**Amy**

I love that you created that. That term is a badge of honor. I'm going to remember that.

**Lucretia**

You have to have community, especially in doing this work. It's hard. It's hard work. It's deep roots to be pulled up.

**Cheri**

Sure. How can understanding the history of racism in America change our own thinking and also our response to people of other ethnicities?

**Lucretia**

I think it is so important that we learn the history because without understanding that there were actual ... things were calculated: laws and policies. Things were intentionally put in place

to create a social hierarchy using skin tones and ethnic backgrounds. If you don't know that, then you tend to think that our nation is really merit-based or anything. You think it's merit-based. You look around and you say, "The people who have the most, obviously, they work the hardest. Then the people who have the least," well, you make some judgment about their morality. I don't know. They're lazy or they're criminals or things like that. Then we look at individuals, and we either reward individuals for having things, having privilege. Then we criminalize individuals who have maybe suffered at the hand of the history and the policies and the practices and the behaviors. We can't even realistically heal, because we are not addressing the very things that have wounded us in the first place. Again, we're focusing on individuals and people and not on systems. Then we look at people through lenses that are false. Like, "Well, they are terrible, which is why they're suffering. They're wonderful, which is why they're doing so well." We can't heal and come together until we actually understand the sickness and the disease that is race and racism, which is the root of so many other -isms in our society.

### **Amy**

The thing that I love about *What Lies Between Us*, your curriculum, is that it is built on truth. I would say truth in two areas. One that Cheri just asked about, which is the history. Just for example, I watched the documentary several weeks ago, the second one. I was like, "Wow. I sat in history class. I listened to all those events, but nobody helped me make the connections between the events, that by the end I was like, "Oh my heavens. I see this in a whole new way." It's the truth of history, which is always subjective, the way it's presented to us. Right?

### **Lucretia**

Of course.

### **Amy**

There are these connections made. Then there's the truth of scripture that you also use in the curriculum. How does understanding scripture as well as the history, or maybe even more importantly than the history, change our thinking about race?

### **Lucretia**

I know. Sometimes I hear this in church circles. Like, "Well, the Bible says that God created race." Then it's like, "No, God did not create races." It's a manmade hierarchy. The Bible talks about nations or ethnicities, which can be very subjective, the institution of slavery that was created. In the United States, the institution of slavery is different from even the slavery talked about in the Bible. That's a different kind of station. I find myself having to address that a lot. Sometimes we read the Bible through our current, modern lens. Then we project the construct of race onto things that are happening in the Bible. It's like, "Okay. No. Let's take the Bible, sit it where it was written and created. Race is way more modern." I use Romans 12 and 2 as the guiding scripture and the guiding wisdom to how we should view what is happening today. You want to use the wisdom and the scripture to view what is happening today versus looking at what is happening today to try to interpret the scripture. I use Romans 12 and 2. "Do not allow this world to mold you in its own image. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind. As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills and whatever God

finds good, pleasing, and complete." I love that because it just speaks to several things. We've let this manmade construct mold us into its image, and so we are segregated by these hierarchies. It is not the image of God. We know that we are all God's image bearers, and God is not divided into these hierarchies of white people are at the top and brown people are in the middle and black people at the bottom. That is not God, but we are so shaped by this idea. It informs even how we read the Bible. It informs how we love people, who we choose to care for, whose lives we choose to value. Then I like this part, where it says, "When we allow ourselves to be renewed, our minds to be renewed, because we aren't just products of the information that we did or did not learn growing up, right?" Our brains are ... we are neuroplastic. It can be changed. It can be transformed. As humans, we can think about the way we think. Right? We can change the way we think. We can learn new things. We can open ourselves up. It says, "As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills and whatever God finds pleasing, good, and complete." You will be able to think the way God thinks. You will be able to see people the way God sees people. You will be able to treat people, everyone, the way God treats everyone and loves. By us learning how we've been duped, and we've been oppressed by the way we think about people and putting people in these categories is really keeping us from walking into the fullness of experiencing how God loves everyone and how we are all as one humanity, we are an expression of God's image. That's the end of my rant.

**Amy**

Oh my gosh. That was so beautiful. Beautiful rant.

**Lucretia**

The end.

**Amy**

No, I don't think it was a rant. I think that was a preach.

**Cheri**

There we go. All right. Our listenership is those of us who are recovering from perfectionism and people pleasing and those of us who are highly sensitive people. One of the traits of being an HSP is that we can become overwhelmed by a lot of input. There's a lot of different voices talking about race in the country right now. It can feel really overwhelming and it can cause some of us to shut down. I'm just wondering if you have some tips for us. What can we do? How can we avoid feeling confused and overwhelmed by this conversation?

**Lucretia**

Okay, first thing. Don't listen to politicians.

**Amy**

Amen.

**Lucretia**

Now listen. That's part of the reason why I pulled together this curriculum, and I actually teach

the class the way that I teach it is because I want people to approach this as students and learn ... You don't even have to know the exact numbers and the history. Exact history of what policy was put in place when specifically ... If you just understand the fundamentals of, "This is an ideology." There's so many terrible ideologies out there that we have been taught to identify. Okay, this is one of them. We have not been taught to identify this as a terrible ideology. Because of it, you're manipulated. Right? Politicians use it to divide us and other people. Not just politicians, but people use it to divide us. You have to ask, "Okay. What is their goal?" If their goal is not unity, if their goal is not healing, if their goal is not love and pulling everyone up and a better humanity, then don't listen. That's one of the reasons why again, I chose the resources that I chose as a teacher, because I want people to be able to recognize a good resource from propaganda. Stay away from propaganda. Even the people in the documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, they are anthropologists and biologists and law equity justice. Blah, blah, blah. Their only agenda is to expose this ideology that has harmed us. That's their only agenda. That's my only agenda. I lay that out at the beginning of my class. I vote all over the political perspective. I'm not one or the other. Actually, I'm one of those people who think that the left and the right are two wings on the same bird. I might get persecuted for that, but I just lay that out there. I'm just trying to show you this is how we are being manipulated. Not just politically and with power, but just even in our own personal lives. You can't even discover your lifelong friend because they're over a racial line and over there somewhere, or you can't discover your business market because they're on a different side of a racial line or something like that. I would say in order to not be overwhelmed, just stay away from all propaganda, even if the propaganda has a little truth. Stay away from it. Stay in the education lane: education, education.

### **Cheri**

We'll put a link in the show notes to all of your resources and also to the documentary that we've been referring to.

### **Amy**

Hopefully, all our listeners today have come to the place that I've come to, which is I do want to be free from those ideologies. I do want to live solidly in God's truth. Part of that is I want to create safe spaces for the people that I love to have race as an honest, open communication amongst us. How do we create those safe spaces?

### **Lucretia**

Well, first of all, again, you have to be intentional about it. I think people want to just have a very causal conversation. Sometimes people will walk up to me and want to express their thoughts and beliefs. I'm walking my kids to the car, or this is a conversation walking from the door of the church to my car with my family. I would create a safe space whether you invite people over to your home or you have a table conversation. You have to be intentional about that. Again, as a whole, our country, our citizens, our nation, our society, we just aren't at a place where everyone is educated enough to just have casual conversations. I think in the first episode, I talked about being in kindergarten and elementary school and college. It's hard. If a person comes and asks a kindergarten question to a person that is trying to have a college level

conversation, that's not going to go well. It's better to actually create controlled, guided, supported times. Actually set aside time to learn together and then you can have conversations. You build trust over time. Again, that's why my curriculum is laid out the way that it is even when people call us into their churches. These are people that I don't have relationships with. I'm like, "Okay. We're going to meet for this many weeks, and then we're going to build up to having conversations, but first, we will spend the first few weeks just taking in the knowledge that we didn't know." Then once we have a base ... we have common language and terms, and we have some understanding of the history of race. Then we can begin to have some discussion or dialogue that helps us process and move forward. You can do it around food. I had one church, they said, "Can we have praise and worship and sing worship songs?" Yes. Whatever makes it feel good and nice and not daunting and hard, because it is going to be daunting and hard and dreadful as you begin to learn what you didn't know. We can foster a safe environment and an intentional environment by just creating that in the first place and not thinking, "Well, this is just going to be organic conversation. We're going to do this in passing." One of the requests that I don't like to get, but I take them sometimes because it's a start, is when people just want to do ... "Can you come and do this one time conversation at our church?" Well sure, but we're not going to get very far, because you need to build relationships. You need to know where I'm coming from. I need to teach you the vocabulary, so you even know what you're asking, so I'll even know what you're asking. You need to understand systemic racism is different from individual racism, interpersonal racism, and things like that.

### **Cheri**

Speaking of vocabulary, I saw your TED Talk, which was amazing. And as I was watching it, I literally sat and I was taking notes of phrases you were using. I'm like, "I have no idea what they mean." I was like, "Okay. I'm going to ask her during our interview." Then I realized, "No, I'm going to do my own homework. I'm not going to ask a kindergarten question when we're having a college discussion, because I can do my own homework on this." It was somewhat daunting to realize, "Wow, I know so little." I pride myself in knowing so much. What I want you to talk to us about here is why is language so important? Why is having our vocabulary in common so vital?

### **Lucretia**

If you're not speaking the same language, you're not even going to move forward, let alone come to some conclusion. For example, a lot of times when people of color are talking about racism, they're talking about systemic racism, not interpersonal or individual. It's a broader, much bigger concept than just how someone feels about, "Well, I love everybody," or, "I'm not racist." We still have racism, systemic racism. One of the things that people need to understand or learn is the definition of systemic racism and racism and interpersonal racism. They need to know that. When I first started talking with my friends, I learned that people didn't know the difference between ethnicity, culture, nationality, and race: four different things. A lot of times, people ... Oh, and then heritage. I'll throw that in there, too. Then people pull those all together and try to have a conversation. Again, you can't understand each other and have common dialogue if you don't have a common understanding of language. Again, pop culture or popular culture has done that. We have pop culture understanding, our definition of what race is. Then

when someone tries to say, "This is what race or racism is," I go, "Oh, you changed the definition." Like, "No, it's always been that way." You just haven't taken a class.

**Cheri**

How do you feel about social media as a place to be having conversations like this?

**Lucretia**

I find it really difficult, even being a person who has a background and understands and is educated in this area, how to communicate such a complicated and nuanced topic in just bite-sized tidbits, suitable comment. It's difficult. I feel like if I could say one thing, I remember a couple years ago when Starbucks did the whole #Let'sTalkAboutRace. I wanted to say, "No, don't do that." #Let'sTakeAClass. We need some common understanding because so much gets lost in the social media world and the translation.

**Amy**

Social media does not feel like a safe place. Just saying. What closing words of encouragement would you like to leave with our listeners, Lucretia?

**Lucretia**

Even if you're fearful of this conversation ... I would first say don't stop with the colorblind approach. Don't embrace that. Just throw that to the side because it has just left us void of language and power and of framework. Take a step forward, even if you're scared. I understand. I was afraid, too. Do it anyway, because it's an amazing, empowering journey that will set you free, set your children free, or your parents free. It's just freedom. The whole journey is about freedom and liberation. Embrace it and take a class.

**Cheri**

Head on over to [gritngracegirls.com/episode114](http://gritngracegirls.com/episode114).

**Amy**

There you'll find this week's transcript, the digging deeper download, bible verse art, and directions about how to enter this week's giveaway for *What Lies Between Us*.

**Cheri**

Come join our Facebook page and group where we'll be continuing this discussion of *What Lies Between Us*. Just go to Facebook and search for Grit 'N' Grace girls.

**Amy**

Make sure to join Cheri and I next week when we'll be processing together what we learned from Lucretia.

**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!