

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #122: How to Refill When You Feel Drained

Amy

Cheri, tell me about a time when you came close to pulling off amazing, but then one thing went wrong.

Cheri

Um okay, there are so many times. And they are so sad and so tragic because to be so close to amazing. Ahh! Within reach!

Amy

And plan to so carefully for it.

Cheri

I know! But this was a celebration I was doing for somebody who, back when I was in direct sales, and she had achieved something big. And it was in our monthly meeting, and I went all, I used to go all out. We'd roll out a red carpet, and then we'd have the CD of You're Simply The Best. And she would come down the red carpet, and we'd all be cheering and waving. We'd have a crown for her, and all that kind of fun stuff. And glitter. I was big on glitter and glittery confetti. This particular day I had everything all set up, and we went to push the play button on the CD, and it didn't play. And so it was completely anti climatic. I mean we whooped and cheered, but after like 2 or 3 attempts. At some point you just have to stop trying and just move forward. But I just felt so badly, and I later realized what I had done. I had set the CD on table that was covered with glitter, and then I put it back in the CD player. Well, static electricity had made it so a bunch of glitter had stuck to the bottom of the CD, which is why it refused to play. And so, here I was working so hard to be amazing, but the very things I had done to be amazing had ruined part of the amazingness. Like, amazing sabotages amazing. That's just wrong!

Amy

Okay, well so, I don't know if this was subliminal after I read the word glitter in our notes. But I have a glitter story, too. I have to say that Nolan recently said, I hope I don't offend our listeners, but he said, "Mom, glitter is the herpes of the crafting world."

<Laughter>

Cheri

He did not!

Amy

So anyway, my story kind of proves this point....

Cheri

Okay, I'm just going to giggle for the rest of our time together. Just know that. If I'm laughing at something, it's not funny; I'm thinking of that.

Amy

It's such a Nolan remark, and I will think of it sporadically and giggle, too. So, anyway, crafting. I really like crafting, but I'm really kind of terrible at it. Especially when I was teaching school. I taught elementary school, so I would like to try to do crafts sometimes with my kids. Our art teacher at our school was genius, and the work that would come out of her classes with my kids was just so amazing. And the work that I would lead my kids through was always like, what happened? So I don't know why I thought I could pull this off, but I had just had Anson. I was staying home, but one of my best friends was still teaching. I missed the classroom, so I told her that at Christmas I would come in, and I would do this amazing craft with her kids. What was I thinking? I had never pulled this off before. And so, I came up with this craft that was making a little snow globe in baby jars, and you know, we would glue a little person on the lid. And then we would put water and glitter inside of the baby jar, and screw it closed, and it would make a little snow globe. And sure enough they cute as anything until they sat there for a few minutes in the cold water, and I didn't read about the kind of glue to use, and so, all the little characters popped off and were free floating around in the stupid snow globes.

Cheri

The outer space snow globes!

Amy

So the kids thought it was hilarious that they could bang the little, I don't know, angel around in there, whatever.

Cheri

Not quite "Pinterest Perfect."

Amy

So close to amazing.

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're processing what we learned from our interview with Stacey Thacker, author of *Fresh Out of Amazing*.

Cheri

I just love that title.

Amy

I do, too.

Cheri

When I first saw it, my first thought was what does that mean? Never mind, I know exactly what it means. It doesn't need an explanation. And she said it was her coming out of hiding book, so talk to us about a time that you felt fresh out of amazing and realized it was time for you to come out of hiding.

Amy

This is more general than a specific episode, but I had realized that perfectionism was my way of hiding. And I say perfectionists are either hiding out of shame, or they're keeping you at arms length so you won't actually know you're perfect. And I really thought that being amazing was what other people wanted. I was like well if I'm an amazing friend then everybody will want to be my friend, and so I tried to be the "perfect" in quotation marks, friend. Or if I'm an amazing wife then Barry won't ever think about turning around. You know that kind of thing and what I learned is....are you still thinking about herpes?

<Laughter>

Cheri

Maybe.

Amy

You're giggling! I can see you! I'm being serious here, Cheri!

Cheri

Straight face. Straight face. What you realized. I'm right here with you, Amy Carroll.

Amy

But what I realized is that it wasn't being amazing, I needed to come out of hiding, because it was my vulnerability and my flaws that really linked me to other people. And these days what I pray is that my internal maturity would exceed my external image, because my external image was about trying to create amazing.

Cheri

Mmm. That is so good. I'm going to say that again. You said I've learned to pray that my internal maturity will exceed my external image. That's.... that'll preach, Amy. That'll preach.

Amy

It works on me hard.

Cheri

Oh my goodness. Well, I had a come out of hiding experience just the other day. I had a hard conversation with my daughter, Anne Marie, and it was hard because she needed to talk to me about some very real consequences that she's experiencing because of some of my parenting choices. Now, I want to be clear she was respectful, she wasn't blaming, she wasn't shaming, but she was tired of pretending and she was tired of the silence, and of us hiding behind the idea that we were just amazing and that everything was okay. And so here's the thing that I'm discovering now that I'm a few days out from it, and now that the topic is out in the open and we've started talking about it and its going to be an ongoing conversation. I don't have to worry about being found out. I don't have to worry about keeping up appearances. And I woke up the morning after our conversation, and I'll admit, I was tired. I was kind of drained. It had been a like I said a hard conversation, but I had this incredible sense of peace and gratitude. And didn't expect that. What I'm used to is the, "Oh dear, oh my, we can't talk about. What happens if?" Then she'll, then... all the anxiety and angst of not talking, and I realized that actually, in this case, at least, hiding was actually harder than facing the truth and that was a really good realization for me.

Amy

That's so powerful. And it really ties into the idea that Stacey talked to us about having God breath life into our dry bones. So its sounds like even in coming out of this place of hiding that it breathed new life in you. Have you ever had that experience before?

Cheri

It's interesting, because about 15 years ago I was ready to completely quit teaching. I had a horrible time with classroom management. I took everything the kids did and said personally, and so I would come home just again drained because of what was happening in the classroom. And I found a particular person whose name is Fred Jones and tools for teachers, and I literally went to his seminar twice in a row. It's a three-day seminar, and I went one year and then I went again and it was so clearly God at work. And it really revolutionized everything for me. Like, I discovered names for what I was doing. I mean he called teachers who could not set rules and maintain order in the classroom. He called us weenie teachers. And that we basically weenie-d out.

Amy

Wow!

Cheri

Oh no, he really called it like it was. What he did is that he studied teachers who mean business, and he literally had taken it down to the body language. Like, whether I was facing the class with my toes pointed towards them and my shoulders pointed towards them, versus facing the whiteboard and turning only part way around. Like that kind of thing made a huge difference in signaling my intent. And so part of what took 3 days in the seminar was we were practicing. And we practiced keeping a straight face. And we practiced keeping our adrenaline levels down and breathing, and I talked to my brother about it later and he said, "Oh, you learned anger management techniques," and I was like uh, but I wasn't angry. But evidently all of these self-soothing calling techniques are very similar, and what it did was it helped me break old bad habits. And I was able to start enjoying teaching again. And you know me. I can handle failure a little bit better when I understand why I failed. And so, being able to go back into the classroom, rearrange my classroom. I got rid of my teacher's desk. All it ever did was hold my piles of junk anyway. I learned management by walking around. And here's the thing, once I knew what I was doing wrong and why it was wrong, and started applying the new stuff, it all worked. I mean like it worked like true magic. It really did. I mean I've been a teacher since pretty much birth almost. And so, all of the years dreading the classroom and feeling like I was an utter failure, to have that transformed and turned around in a really short space of time that was absolutely God breathing new life into dry bones. How about you?

Amy

Well, I love your example because...and mine's a little bit different, so it's kind of cool for our audience, I hope, to hear two different things. Mine was more like God entered into a space where I really wasn't doing anything but praying. It was more of a passive, help me Jesus kind of thing, whereas you knew you needed help and you did something intentional as you walked into that intentional space, God did his thing. And so I love that because it shows that it can happen both ways. But something he's asking us to take hold and do something intentional like you did. My best example was this podcast, really. Because I was just in a season of dry bones, and I was starved for connection, which we've gotten through this podcast, even though we're coast to coast. It's so cool. And it just breathed fresh life and creativity. My worst nightmare, as an extravert, is sitting in a silent room with a blank screen in front of me trying to create. And what I didn't know, and what God allowed, the way he worked, was that he connected me with you. And he breathed fresh life and fresh creativity in, because I'm a verbal processor, duh. So.

Cheri

Yay for social learning and collaboration.

Amy

Yes, indeed.

Cheri

And for God using anyway. I love how she said, if God can breathe life into these dry bones, he can do anything. And so, then the encouragement for all of us who feel fresh out of amazing whether we know why or we don't know why, whether we find a training program that helps us or we just don't even know what the first next step might be, but God is a God who can do this

for all of us. She also said that we can be busy without being burdened, and for girls like you and me, that means we don't have to lie awake at 2:37 a.m. with the weight of the world on our chest, so...

Amy

What?

Cheri

I know. Crazy. So what does it mean for you to be busy without being burdened? What does that look or feel like or how does that happen?

Amy

This is such a pertinent question for I think anyone who is listening, all of us, because we just live in a culture where busy is virtuous or something. But we're all so busy, but I can look back and think there's a line between seasons when I've been busy and not burdened and seasons when I have been busy and very burdened and laying awake at 2:37. So what's the difference? It's just the source. Where's the source of my strength, my ideas, my peace, and when I'm trying to just white knuckle it and control it and do it myself that's when the burden comes. But when I'm surrendered, and I'm looking to God to be the source and fulfill my needs then busy can be done without being so burdened.

Cheri

I like that. You know for me it's about my focus, which is similar to what you said. It's am I enjoying the relationship with others or am I obsessed with results. As soon as I move from relationships to results, that's where I get myself in trouble, and that's where I start waking up at 2:37 a.m. And you know, because sometimes my relationships become my projects, I can go very quickly from enjoying my relationships to obsessing about the results of getting in the relationships rather than just listening and loving and being present for people, so the questions that I have to be constantly asking is am I being faithful to the output that God is calling me to or am I fixating on the one right outcome? Is it my output, which is obedience and faithfulness to what I can actually do, or is it outcome driven? And it seems like when we're focusing on outcomes and results, when that's the hyperfocus then that's when we go from being busy, which a lot of us don't mind a certain level of busy, but burdened, that's when things become unbearable.

Amy

So Stacey told an amazing story, fascinating story, about her daughter's dance class, and how she went from no mirrors to mirrors in her dance class and how it changed her daughter's perspective, because it changed her focus. So, Cheri, how have you found that we can remove the mirrors from our lives?

Cheri

That was such a good analogy, that when she was focused on her instructor, her mentor, then it was a good focus and she was getting better, but as soon as she focused on her fellow

classmates, that was really the comparison dragged her down. Well, the other day I noticed in a Facebook group I belong to a fellow writer was talking about a blog post she had written that had gone viral. And can I just say that the only thing that has ever gone viral in my life is I've gotten pneumonia. Like, I've gone from bacterial to viral pneumonia, okay? That is it.

<Laughter>

Nothing I write ever goes viral, and so I started to click on her post and I was like maybe I can figure out the secret to going viral, and then I stopped. I caught myself before I did that because I was like this is the worst motivation to read a blog post, my goodness. I'm trying to find the secret sauce, you know and I could just feel... I turned green with envy so I know I was moving quickly into a bad place. But I stopped and I realized, hang on a second, I don't get my inspiration or my marching orders from other writers....God is the one who has called me to write about what I write about. I mean I know when I'm writing if it's what I'm supposed to be writing about or not. And we've talked about the fact that I consider writing to be a form of prayer, and so I'm not gonna gain my inspiration from this other writer. And I used to really wrestle. I was always so frustrated that instead of being positive, it seems like God calls me to write about things that seem negative. But then I realized a few years ago it's not whether it's positive or negative, it's whether they are transformative. So I've gained a little bit of ground there, and so I decided before I went to read this gals' blog post, I decided to pray-cess. What stance am I gonna take? Am I going to imitate her and try to be her, because I could tell that's where my brain was going? I'll analyze her post and then I'll write one just like it, and then I'll go viral. Or will I make her my mentor and try to learn from her? And once I was kind of in that space, my heart in the right place, I was able to read the article. I believe with a much more open mind and heart and see for sure why it went viral. Honestly, it turns out I was able to learn some things but probably the biggest thing I learned was, no, I'm not going to write anything like that ever, and if I never go viral that's okay. But it was important for me to have that change of heart before I clicked and read so that I went in with the right motivation.

Amy

That's so good. Well, it's funny because I mean of course I'm a victim of comparison also, but I have the opposite reaction usually is that I don't usually try to imitate. My default is defeat. And I tend to look and compare and shut down, so I can never be her. I will never go viral whatever that looks like in our lives, right. So I'll shut down. I'm not gonna try at all. I'm gonna withdraw. And so, I love your perspective, so instead of imitating or withdrawing, the third option that's the healthy option is learning. So that we do look at other people not with like jealousy or envy, but that allows us to go, "Oh, but with admiration, and that's a good thing." So that's a way to flip comparison is like, "Okay, I'm not gonna be jealous or envious. I'm not gonna imitate or withdraw, I'm just gonna learn. I'm gonna admire."

Cheri

And it puts the focus less on the final product, again less on the outcome and more what could I learn about her process. What could I learn that I could incorporate, not for an instant result, but for a best practice? Yeah, I totally agree with that.

Amy

So Stacey talked to us about having friends that are truth-tellers, which I think that's just a value of my life. But also chocolate servers! I loved that.

Cheri

Yay, chocolate!

Amy

I had to add that. So tell us about a time, Cheri, that you had a friend who was a truth teller.

Cheri

Well, it was not too long ago, and it was Kathi Lipp, and we had just done a radio interview taping. I had bombed. I had done a really poor job, and I asked her specifically, so this was part of the boundary. I had said can we please talk about it. And I had said, I want to learn from it. And it was an interview about the book we wrote together, *Overwhelmed*. And so she said, a question about the book isn't about the book and then she said, I think what you were trying to answer was but what they really wanted from you was. So she realized that I was trying to give a very specific answer that was like from page 37 of the book. And she was like, well, they just really wanted you to talk about this general topic and have a good conversation. What she didn't say to me was, Cheri you were so busy backsliding into perfectionism that you failed to listen to them at all. She just found a really nice way of saying, you know, when they ask you a question about the book; they don't want a book report. They just kind of want a good conversation about the general topic. And so, it was really helpful for me to hear it that way, because, of course, I was starting to really slide into the feeling of abject, complete failure, 'cause the problem with doing better as a recovering perfectionist is when we do way worse than we've been doing. It feels, like, oh my goodness I broke. I've gone all the way back again. It felt like chutes and ladders, Amy. That's what it felt like. It felt like, "Oh, I've made all of this slow, steady progress, praise God. And then boom, I went back to the very beginning, which is a terrible feeling. So the way she said this to me I was able to hear her and go, wow, I need to work on extemporaneous speaking. And so, what I decided to do as a result is I'm gonna be going to Toastmasters. That was the one little skill that I realized is that I do become deer in the headlights under pressure, and there's something that I can do to work on that. You know, here's the thing. When I told her Kathi can we do a little discussion of my performance yesterday? She did not say why? Or, oh, you did fine. She said sure. Which meant that there was recognition that there was something to talk about.

Amy

Well, and that's a good friend and the chocolate in your relationship with Kathi is just love. Deep love, I mean she loves you so much. Well and you know you talk about Kathi a lot in these situations, and I talk about Mona a lot in these situations, my mentor from my women's ministry days. And I remember one day, I was sitting in Mona's office and a lot of things had been going wrong with this event that I was helping to plan, and so I was talking about one thing after another, and I was like this is just spiritual warfare. This is the devil, like he is in here

messing with stuff and blah blah blah. And she just quietly looked at me, and she said, “beloved,” do you know that how she always started, so the chocolate of love. She said, “Beloved, the Lord is our banner.” And I said, “What?” And she goes, you’ve been highlighting the work of Satan a lot, and the Lord is our banner. And it was very gentle, very kindly said, sharp rebuke. There were several times in our relationships there were things like that, that I had a decision to make whether to receive that and the truth of that or to let the ouch of that make me build a wall. And because she loved me, because there was that chocolate of love, I was able to receive it and go, yes, what I want flying over me is not, “Oh, Satan is at work and he’s winning,” but “God is over all of this. Yeah, there are some things going wrong, but God is our banner, the Lord is our banner.” But the thing that I love about truth-telling relationships is that I could count on Mona, and there are others in my life too, to tell not only the truth in the hard situations, but in the good situations. So when Mona was giving me encouragement it didn’t feel like, yeah, she didn’t mean that, that’s just fluff. I knew it was real and sincere and true, because she had been faithfully truthful with me in the hard situations, too. And I bet you would say the same thing about Kathi.

Cheri

And about you. My candid friend, absolutely. And that is a beautiful point. If we have people that we know are accurate when they’re having to tell us a hard truth, then we can also trust that they’re accurate when they’re encouraging and building us up. That is a great, great point. So tell us the scripture that you’re pairing with these two episodes.

Amy

Psalm 146:2 which is “I will praise the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” What I started realizing as I processed what Stacey said to us and processed what I wanted to share today is that trying to be amazing ourselves is a praise problem. Because trying to generate our own amazing is trying to generate praise for ourselves. And so, when we’re fresh out of amazing it’s a time to look and say, well, so where is the praise going?”

Cheri

That is so good. So what’s the bad rule for these episodes?

Amy

I’m responsible to earn praise. And then the truth that comes out of scripture is God is amazing, always and worthy of praise.

Cheri

I love that. So for me the grit here is when things aren’t going my way it is so tempting for me to throw up my hands and quit when I don’t feel amazing. When what’s happening around me isn’t amazing then why bother. Why bother. And here’s the thing: it’s not the self-care kind of way where I schedule a few things or delegate a few things to create some margin. I think sometimes we do need to quit some things for the purpose of health. What I’m talking about here is when I get in a snit, because things just aren’t amazing enough and I really am. I hadn’t thought about it that way, but I’m trying to build up my own praise and it’s not happening. It’s

just easy for me to throw it all out the window, like I don't even shower or floss. So for me the grit part here is moderation. Finding that willingness to persevere, be resilient, and keep moving forward even though my ideals aren't coming to fruition, because it's not about me being ideal or amazing. What's the grace piece for you?

Amy

Well, that ties exactly into my grace piece, which is instead of being hard on myself when I'm fresh out of amazing and trying to generate some more, I just need to rest in the amazing one. And you know, that's, these things when I say 'em, I'm like, oh, so glib and so trite. But, no, I mean, I've been in the last week just having this realization that I've been spending a lot of time scrolling social media and watching other amazing people and feeling less and less amazing every moment I spend on social media, and it's just a wrong focus. I'm putting my praise in the wrong place, even on other people. It makes us feel less amazing, right? But if we just rest in the amazing one, there's so much grace in that.

Cheri

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode122.

Amy

There you'll find this week's transcript, our digging deeper download, the bible verse art, and directions for how to enter a giveaway for *Fresh Out of Amazing*.

Cheri

Grit-n-Grace is expanding, thanks to the generosity of our Grit-n-Grace Growth Partners. You can learn more at www.patreon.com/gritngracegirls. We would love to have you join our team.

Amy

Next week we'll be talking to Susy Flory, author of *So Long, Status Quo*.

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 and Cheri

Break it!

Outtakes

Amy

Absolutely. Well, Stacey told this fascinating story about her daughter in dance class, and when they went from no mirrors to mirrors and where the focus went. So tell us, Cheri, how have you found that you can remove the mirrors from your life?

Cheri

I have no idea.

Amy

That's funny. I asked you the question, because neither did I.

Cheri

Alright, so let's see. Hm. How about, oh wait, no. I actually have an answer to this. I just had the page the wrong way. Okay, so repeat the question.