

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #126: How to Remember Who You Are in Your Work

Amy

Cheri, what's the most unusual or the favorite job you've ever had?

Cheri

I can tell you both, actually. The most unusual job I've ever had was giving mud baths at a spa in Calistoga when I was in college. Now I only worked on the female side but, yes, I did pack unclad women. I can't say the naked word. I packed unclad women in volcanic ...

Amy

But you didn't say naked.

Cheri

In volcanic mud, and it was very weird, and the tips were amazing. Minimum wage, it was not worth it, but I learned that if I was nice, those tips were good. Then when I was in high school ... I love the look on your face.

Amy

That was a very unusual job. That is a very California job. Can I say that?

Cheri

You can. When I was in high school for work experience education credits, I got shipped off to the elementary school library, and it was the elementary school library I had grown up going to, so it was heaven. I got to shelve books, and as they started weeding out to get rid of books, many of them were ones I had read as a child, so, of course, I took them. I asked permission, but then I took them home, most unusual and my favorite right there. How about you?

Amy

That's wonderful. Well, one of my jobs that probably fits into both categories: for six years I worked for a welcome service here in Holly Springs. Basically, for those of you that remember the old welcome wagon, I was the welcome wagon lady. I visited 30 new families in our community every month. Every month.

I went and I knocked on people's doors, and I stood there with a basket with these pretty flowers on it, full of basically advertising for the community, and so people would open the door, and I would just stand there with my pretty basket and a big smile and ask if I could come in.

In this day and age, when you think about that that is crazy, isn't it? And some people really thought I was crazy, but I told Barry, "I'm paid to be perky." That was my job, to be, like this, the cute engaging welcome wagon lady. I actually really did love it, and I met fascinating people from all over the world. It was a fun job.

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 Paula Brown Stafford and Lisa Grimes, coauthors of *Remember Who You Are*.

Cheri

So thank you so much for introducing me to them. That was such a fun interview. I love the title of their book, *Remember Who You Are*, and this whole idea of building a personal brand was actually new to me. What does it mean to you to build a personal brand?

Amy

Well, I loved this exercise. I actually did this exercise before we ever did the interview, because I'm friends with Lisa and Paula, and I was fascinated by it. It really forced me to dig deep. What I realized is, as a reforming people pleaser, is that people pleasers tend to be shape shifters; that we walk into every room, kinda take the temperature of the room, and figure out how to fit in.

What a personal brand says is, "Nope, nope, nope, nope. No more of that." You should be known for who you truly and authentically are. Doing this exercise, really, it was challenging, probably more challenging than it should be, which was a little surprising to me, but it made me nail down who I really am rather than thinking about who I think others want me to be.

Cheri

I totally resonate with that. I look back to my elementary and high school years, and I prided myself in being a different student in every class, because I figured out what the teacher wanted, and I was that person for that teacher to get my A. Now that I say it, it sounds so sick.

Amy

Playin' the game. Playin' the game.

Cheri

I was good at it. For me, I think I'm going to paraphrase Holley Gerth's definition that I actually heard at She Speaks many years ago. She said, basically a brand is a promise to be consistently me no matter where I go. I love the idea of it being a promise. For myself, I'm not quite there yet, and I know it.

I think this is one of the healthy things about our lives having fewer compartments because of social media. When I first put a post on Facebook, and a former student and the parent of a current student and my own brother and people who'd heard me speak, all could have a conversation at the same time. I'm like, "This is weird."

Like, all aspects of my life are blending, and I was uncomfortable with it. I had to face the fact that, "Aah. I kind of like being a different person in different situations." I'm still wrestling with the fact that it's easier for me to be myself with my closest friends or complete strangers. That acquaintance, that's the area where I'm still working.

Amy

That is a fascinating insight. I'm going to ponder that as I use social media, because there's a lot of truth in that. That's really good. So what do you see as your personal brand, Cheri? What would you formulate from what Lisa and Paula had to say?

Cheri

Well, I'd already been having to realize because of my years of working with Kathi Lipp and coauthoring with her and, of course, trying to be like her, there's no secret that I spent years trying to be her, and it's very hard for me to be like Kathi, because Kathi's funny and I'm not.

Amy

Well, there's nobody like Kathi Lipp. Nobody.

Cheri

There's nobody like Kathi. When I finally realized as we were writing the book *Overwhelmed* together, that Kathi is Woo and I'm Woe. She's like, "Look how wonderful," and I'm like, "Stop it. Stop it. Stop it." Or Woe, w-o-e, like here's the problem. And she's, "Wow," like, "Look. Solutions, solutions," and I'm, "Ow." I'm like, "I'm going to hurt you, so you'll change."

Just realizing what her role was and what my role was, and I realized I'm actually okay with my role. She's good cop; I'm bad cop. Then let me play that role really, really, really well. It was helpful for me to see that.

Then you and I have both taken this fascination quiz, and I'll put the link in the show notes, how to fascinate, and it literally is about how others see you, and who they really believe you are. Not who they wish you were, but how they perceive you. I've basically dubbed my fascination style genius collaborator.

Now. It's a fraught term for me, because I wrestle with being intelligent, and yet, it's what people who work with me like to say about me, and I like to bring out the genius in other people. That's the important thing. Like when I'm working with ... whether it's a client or a friend or brainstorming, or whatever it might be, I'm the one going, "Oh, did you hear yourself say that? That was such a good idea."

Often people didn't hear what they said. Once I say it, they'll say, "Oh, that's brilliant", and I'm like, "Yeah, you just said it. I'm just quoting you." Collaborator is the identity God has brought back into my life over the last few years. That's just core for me to be a collaborator, but adding that word "genius", that spark of genius, is part of it. I don't necessarily mean that it has to be academic intelligence, but just something, that something rare and something creative is going to come out of it.

Then the other thing I just finally made the decision to do as part of my personal brand is, I have simplified my life by owning the color magenta. Like, it's mine. Like, it's what I dress in; it's the color of my suitcases and my purses and everything.

I used to, when I'd go speak, I would match my slides to match the theme of the event, but then I realized, "Oh. When people look at the things I've given them to take away, they'll remember the event, but they won't remember me." So now everything I pass out: my handouts, the little laminated Bible verse cards I pass out, everything is magenta so when they look at it, they will hopefully remember the event, but hopefully they'll also remember me. So, yeah, it's a look.

Amy

Magenta is working for you, girl. Can I just say, it's working for you?

Cheri

It makes shopping so easy.

Amy

You look beautiful in it. Well, I took that quiz. So the title that I got was Good Citizen, which means that I'm known for my integrity and reliability, and all I could think is, yawn.

<Laughter>

Huge yawn. But you reminded me and encouraged me that it's a good thing; that it's a good thing. It means that people trust me...

Cheri

Yes.

Amy

and that I'm trustworthy. I think those are words that are generally true with me, you know. We all have our good and our bad. So I just have to be careful with that personal brand. I need to

own it and not feel angst over it, like I always do. Then I also need to make sure I don't overcompensate with it, because sometimes that's where my overdeveloped sense of responsibility comes in, that I want to be the good citizen for you in every situation, so I just have to be a little bit careful of that.

Another part of my personal brand, and this is something I value, but it's something also that other people consistently say about me is that I bring joy into situations.

Cheri

You do.

Amy

You know, and I'm thankful for that, because I think I've cultivated ... I think it's a little bit of a natural part of my personality. I sort of have sunshine in my veins, but I also think I've cultivated it, and I've shared on the podcast before that our family motto is "choose joy". So I do on a regular basis remind myself ... I try not to remind others very much, that's annoying, but I do try to remind myself on a regular basis, choose joy, and I'm so glad that other people see that in my life.

Cheri

I love that, because it says that a personal brand isn't just automatic or happenstance. I mean, it sounds like this is something that's already natural to you, but you've also made a point to be intentional about cultivating it, so I love that. Very cool!

Alright, I thought it was so fascinating, this idea of a six-word story. What a challenge for us motor mouth gals to actually limit ourselves to six. What's yours?

Amy

This was hard. This was really hard, but I ended up with the image of God deserves honor. Because I feel like that's what God is teaching me and doing in me right now is ... I've mentioned in the episodes what God is doing as far as ministry and shifting me to talk about some of these harder issues in our culture. And really, I thought when it all boils down, what I feel like God is showing me is that His image in other people deserves love and respect and honor, whether it's someone of a different color, a different nationality, a different gender. What all those things, His image in any other living human being, deserves honor. So that's mine.

I couldn't just limit it to six words. I had to explain all my words, anyway, what about yours, Cheri?

Cheri

Well, I'll admit that I spent quite a bit of time trying to come up with a really good six-word story that was really spiritual, 'cause I knew yours would be, and I wanted to compete with you.

Amy

Well, that's a good citizen.

Cheri

But I deleted it, and I broke the rules, and my current six-word story has seven words.

Amy

I am so incredibly proud of that, Cheri Gregory.

Cheri

And it is, you don't have to try so hard. See, I didn't even try hard enough to get it down to six words.

Amy

Bad rules are made to be broken. Maybe six words is a stupid rule, I don't know.

Cheri

That's right, and that really has been the theme of my life. I'm sure my six-word story will change and evolve over time, but that really is where I'm at right now. You don't have to try so hard.

Now, let's be careful. There are things that we need to try hard at. I'm talking to the recovering perfectionist and people pleaser. You don't have to try so hard to make people like you, or to get everything just right, or to dot every 'T' and cross every 'I'. You don't have to use perfectionism as a tool for everything.

It's a good tool for some things, and it's a terrible tool for others, so, yeah. I'll get my disclaimer in there, as well.

Amy

I love the point that they made that we spend a lot of time trying to shore up our weaknesses, and that's always time well spent. What are some of the weaknesses that you've tried to shore up?

Cheri

My number one weakness is being disorganized and messy. Not that long ago, I was losing time day in and day out. I wasn't getting work done, I couldn't figure out why. I finally looked around my office and, once again, it was a disaster area. I probably told you the story of how when I was a kid, my mother would walk by my room, and she would look, and she would sigh and say, "Just looking at your room, I feel messy."

<Laughter>

I'm not making this stuff up here. And once, only once, did I look at her and say, "Well, Mom, don't look." That did not go over well, bad, bad idea. But I'm not visual, and so I don't recognize when things are piling up until I finally take a look and go, "Oh. I'm not getting things done 'cause there's literally no space here. I can't breathe. I have the evidence of way too many things I've started is here, and nothing's moving forward, 'cause there's just too much." I spent half a day moving things out. I had binders that ... Okay, Amy, this is how bad it was. I had to dismantle a binder that had the show notes for episodes 19 through 27 in it.

Amy

Wow.

Cheri

We are recording episode 126 right now, okay? It was just that kind of thing, that there was just too many things that were in too many different stages. When I got rid of stuff, it took time. It wasn't exciting. It wasn't fun, but as I got rid of stuff and created space and margin and literally room to work, physically and mentally and emotionally and even spiritually, then, boom, I was able to be productive again.

What I've tended to do is, I've tended to not recognize that what I just needed to do was a good cleanup, and I tended to buy organizing systems, go to Staples and buy new things to make me more organized. There's just a few basic practices. I just need to go through the crud every week, every month, and every quarter, and I'll be alright. I'm never going to be neat and tidy. It's not me.

Amy

I hear ya.

Cheri

How about you?

Amy

Well, the areas that ... And it's funny that we've just argued about this on a previous episode, but the areas that I see as weaknesses in my life are vision and creativity. So before you argue with me, let me just say that, so for a lot of years, I said, "Well, I'm just not creative." I have stopped saying that, because we are made in the image of a Creator God, so we're all creative.

Now I say, "I am not highly creative", and I think you know what I mean. We work around some people that are just these ... well, one personality profile that I studied, they call them squiggly lines, people who are these highly creative, just millions of ideas and artistic and all that. I'm not that person. And I'm not really a visionary, but I have learned how to tap into some of those things.

One of the ways, like for my creativity, I realized I was over-editing my creativity, so I was shutting down my creativity. Now when I'm working like on a writing project or anything else, I try to turn off the internal editor so the creativity can come out, and then I'll edit after the fact.

Cheri

Excellent.

Amy

I'm learning some of these things, but here's the thing, is that my strength is implementing things. So I always say to visionaries, "If you have a vision, I can make it happen." I think it's what Paula and Lisa were talking about was I need to focus on my implementer skills and pair with visionaries. That's when things happen, like this podcast, my friend, like this podcast.

Cheri

Absolutely. Absolutely. I like that idea. I very much like that idea. Well, another idea that came up in terms of knowing our strengths, and I thought this just follows right along with Susie saying that sometimes what God is calling us to do is something that annoys us. Well, the question here was, what do you seem to notice that needs to be fixed? What have you been noticing that you just have this urge to fix, that might indicate a strength?

Amy

Well, I just have such a passion for justice, and I really have since I was a little girl. This morning I got stoked up again. I'm doing Lynn Cowell's study. She had a whole section on justice. I could just feel my heart beating faster and my ... everything in me was just was standing up and paying attention and cheering, you know.

Then I think about how that ties into my strength finders, which is my number one is belief, and my number two is connectedness. That's a whole formula for being passionate about justice. So, how about you? How does your strength finders reveal in you?

Cheri

I was thinking to myself, okay, what do I tend to want to step in and fix? Ours are somewhat related, but when I see somebody trying to force fit somebody else into a box they don't fit in, I just come unglued. I just want to stop the whole thing and say, "No. What if they don't belong there? What if it's the wrong box? What if we shouldn't have boxes anyways?"

More than anything it's like, "Have you bothered to listen to them? Do you know anything about this topic at all? Or are you just using this person and trying to put them here, because it's the most expedient thing to do so that you can move forward?"

I realized that for me, that comes from my input and my ideation strengths, on the strength finder. Those are my number one and my number three. I admit, I can take it to an extreme and collect too many ideas, and collect too much information, but because I love information and ideas, I tend to be one who can see things from many perspectives. So the idea that there's only

one way to do things, the idea that somebody has to do things this way. Well, maybe they don't. Maybe they have a better way, and if we could just listen to them, we could learn from them, and maybe we'd all be better off.

I know that the world can't always slow down enough for that, and it hurts me when we can't. I'm constantly trying to fix that kind of a situation. So I'm the one who raises questions like, "Why are we still doing this the way we've always done it?" Maybe it's a bad way to do it. Maybe it's not working for a bunch of people, and we could rethink it. So, yeah, it makes me annoying.

Amy

This is why I need you in my life, Cheri Gregory, all of that. For our listeners, if this idea of having a personal brand really appeals to you, go out and buy StrengthsFinders 2.0. This is what Cheri and I are talking about with strengthsfinders. To me, it has been one of the really most useful tools in my life for figuring out my strengths, which tie into our personal brand.

Cheri

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Amy

As we talked about our own strengths, what are the strengths you would like to call out on other women? Give us a list of nouns.

Cheri

I think it's real important that they be nouns, because as women, we can tend to say things like, "Oh, you're wonderful. You're just fabulous. You're so mar- ... " I'll take praise in any form, let's just be clear, but when we use a noun, it's an identity word.

I'm starting actually a list, because I'd like to have them on hand so that I can start getting in the habit of saying like to somebody that I see doing something creative, "You're an artist". Not just, "You're so creative", which is the adjective form, but "You're an artist". That's the noun, that's the identity form. Or, "You're a leader", or, you know, one of the things I value, because I don't do it well enough myself is, "You're such a good listener". Noticer. I have several people in my life that I tell them, "I need you in my life because you're a noticer." They notice things I don't, and then they tell me about them. Then I'm like, "Oh! That's so important." Of course, collaborator. I love my collaborators. How about you?

Amy

Well, I made a little list, too, and the one that I probably that I admire so much in other people, 'cause I don't have a big streak of this, is nurturer. Then in studying Deborah this morning, obviously some of these other ones came out, but prophetess, women who see the truth and tell it. Life bringer. I think that can be in both physical and spiritual forms in women's lives. Balancer. When women come into a situation with lots of men, I think that's what we do, and also, visionary.

Cheri

Absolutely. It would be fun to start, maybe we can link in the show notes just an open Google Doc that we can just start a list of these nouns, because I think many of us, I'm going to include all of our listeners, would use these if we had the vocabulary to use.

Amy

I love that idea.

Cheri

Let's do that. All right. Well, last but not least, I love the letters to the younger self throughout the book *Remember Who You Are*. I was wondering what would you include if you wrote a letter to your younger self?

Amy

I would tell myself to relax. Relax. I would tell my younger self, "Your only job is just to follow Jesus. That's it. That's it. And let Him be big in you." I would tell myself that "You're more than your roles."

When I was younger I really let my roles swallow me up and define me, rather than being multilayered and just a woman created by God following Jesus. It's really that simple, and I made it really, really complicated.

Cheri

I love that. I love that. What I would say ... that sounds like it's squarely in the perfectionism realm, and mine is squarely in the people-pleasing realm. I would tell my younger self, "It's not your fault." Like when the key people in my life aren't happy, it's not my fault. Even when they're miserable, it's still not my fault. I can love them, I can support them, but I would tell myself, "Don't take on things that aren't yours to take on", because I did that for way too many years.

Amy

So good. Well, one of the reasons that I loved our interview with Paula and Lisa so much is that I heard a stunning statistic recently. It's that 70% of American women are in the workplace. That was much higher than I actually even realized. So Paula and Lisa are speaking specifically to women in the workplace.

I think a lot of what they shared with us, anyone, whether you work in your home or outside of your home or both, that anyone can apply it, but I want to just do a shout-out today to our listeners that are in the workplace, because you're in the majority, and sometimes I know you're treated like you're in the minority.

So our scripture today is tied into that. It's Proverbs 31:17. It says, "She sets about her work vigorously. Her arms are strong for her tasks." I love that scripture. Just shows the strength of women.

Cheri

I love that. So what's the bad rule that we're breaking with these two episodes?

Amy

The bad rule is really based on what Lisa and Paula were trying to address, which is, women will always be torn between work and home. I think we can think about that differently and say women can prioritize both work and home. I think the Proverbs 31 woman, if you read that, she was a working woman. Hello.

Cheri

Absolutely, she was, she was. So what would you say is the grit in all of this?

Amy

I think the hardest part is thinking about seasons and wrestling through all of that, and figuring out what you need to prioritize in that season. That's gonna look differently for every person, which is also part of the grit, because we perfectionists want it to look the same. We want a formula, and it's not a formula for a woman's life, work, and home.

I liked ... This is a quote from Oprah, and don't send me emails, I love the quote. She said, "Women can have it all. They just can't have it all at the same time." Well, there's grace in that, but there's also grit in wrestling through and figuring out what is this season? What does work and home look like in this season?

Cheri

That's so good. Well, and the grace I see in what we've talked about, especially today, is I look back over the years, and it's really tempting to fall into regret that I didn't figure out who I was earlier, because it had a serious impact. It impacted my students, it impacted my own children, it's impacted my marriage. Waking up at 50 and figuring out who I am, there's a few decades there that feel wasted.

I think for many of us, the grace is recognizing that we've done the best we could with what we had; when we know better, we do better. And that God is not judging us. He is here for us. He loves us now. He's thrilled with the discoveries that we're making about who we are. He created us the way we are for a reason, and so as we're learning and growing and getting excited, I like to picture Him getting excited, too, that "Yes, finally she's catching on! She knows who she is. She knows who I created her to be."

I just feel a lot of freedom in that grace, that we don't have to beat ourselves up for not figuring it out all sooner, better. What we're learning now, we move forward with in God's grace.

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode126.

Amy

There, you'll find this week's transcript, our digging deeper download, the Bible verse art, and directions about how to enter a giveaway for *Remember Who You Are*.

Cheri

The Grit 'n' Grace ministry is expanding thanks to our generous growth partners. You can learn more at www.patreon.com/gritngracegirls. We would love to have you join our team.

Amy

Make sure to join us next week when we'll be starting an exciting new series.

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!