

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #148: Trading Good Intentions for the Thing We Need Most

Multi Voiceover:

- **Failure is my biggest fear.**
- **Okay. I love my family but I also find them really overwhelming.**
- **I just don't want to let anyone down.**
- **I know I don't have to earn God's love, but it feels like I have to earn everyone else's.**
- **Trying to be perfect. Well, it's killing my marriage.**

Cheri

Do you ever hear these kinds of voices in your own head?

Amy

I sure do! And usually at 2:37 in the morning.

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

If this is your first time listening in, this is a podcast for women who love Jesus and long for the abundant life He's promised.

Cheri

But some days, maybe even most days, you feel kinda like a puppet with perfectionism and people pleasing pulling your strings.

Amy

If nothing you do ever seems good enough.

Cheri

If you try too hard to do too much for too many for too long with too little.

Amy

If you exhaust yourself spending time to keep everyone else happy and your own needs go unmet.

Cheri

If you struggle with the C-word, control.

Amy

We get it. And you're in the right place, girlfriend.

Cheri

Grit 'n' Grace brings you weekly encouragement from wise, witty women ...

Amy

Because we have the best guests!

Cheri

We do! Women who come alongside you and equip you to replace the exhaustion of self-made goodness with the rest of God's grace.

Episode #148: Trading Good Intentions for the Thing We Need Most

Amy

Every week we kick culture's bad rules to the curb so that we can follow Jesus' good plans for us.

Cheri:

When we're not hanging out here with y'all, Amy and I have our own separate ministries. Where can our listeners find you, Amy?

Amy

AmyCarroll.org and NextStepCoachingServices.com.

And where can they find you, Cheri?

Cheri

CheriGregory.com, SensitiveandStrong.com, and also WriteBesideYou.com.

Amy

Today we're processing what we learned from our interview with Deidra Riggs, author of *One: Unity in a Divided World*.

Cheri, we have got such an amazing topic today following up on our interview with Deidra Riggs. Any of you who might be listening today that didn't listen to the previous episode with Deidra make sure to go back and listen to hit. I mean there's some hard hitting things in there. Hard hitting. Before we get to hard hitting, let's just do light and fluffy for just a minute.

Cheri

Please! Absolutely.

Amy

Love in the church is the topic today and "One," which is the title of Deidra's book. Let's start with the positive, with love in the church. When have you recently seen love done well in the church?

Cheri

Well, am I allowed to brag on my husband for a little bit, here?

Amy

Please do. Tell us about Daniel.

Cheri

A few months ago, he did a, I'm going to call it a one-man show. He did it for Vespers for our students. It was a church program that they were required to attend. We work and live at a Christian boarding school. He decided to do a Friday evening performance in which he shared ten original songs that he had written completely himself. Interspersed between the music was him telling his own personal story. It was a very intimate performance, and he's a very private person. He's a true introvert. He's an Enneagram one. He's more of a perfectionist than I think I ever have been. I mean, I cannot tell you the hours he put into this, Amy, I just can't. He had his instruments all lined up, and he had a stool for him to sit on, and he had a stool with his old Smokey the Bear teddy bear 'cause one of the songs involves Smokey the Bear.

He really brought it, in theater I think we call it bringing the fourth wall down. He was literally talking to the audience the whole time. That alone was really beautiful to see this offering of his gifts. I was so proud of him because he tends to be someone who tends to be, like, "Oh, no," doesn't want the spotlight. He didn't want to step into the spotlight, but he wanted to share. He wanted to share his story and share what God has done in his life with the students. Toward the end of the concert, well, it was the very last song, and it's one that really he sang it to a track, and it was a track he had created of his own instrumentation and voice, so that he could then really belt out some of the high notes and some of the musical transitions. Well, the track stopped dead halfway through.

Amy

Oh.

Cheri

He did not miss a beat. Now, you could tell his eyebrows went up. He kept going a cappella. Then, what happened is the students started clapping along with it. Just helping him keep rhythm and joining in, so it just became this congregational thing instead of just him performing, it was now this, "We're here with you." There were people who never even knew that something went wrong. They were, like, "Oh, wasn't that the way it was supposed to be?"

Amy

Oh, wow!

Cheri

Yeah, they felt so good about it. It was just really cool to see him offer in love and for the students and the other people who attended to receive in love. That was something I recently saw where love was done really well by the church and in the church. How about you?

Amy

Beautiful. To experience with someone in your own family.

Cheri

Yeah.

Amy

I don't know that does something to your heart, doesn't it?

Cheri

Yeah. Yeah.

Amy

I have a women's life group at my church, some people call it Sunday school. We're life group people. It's a small group. We have recently received just an amazing gift and her name is Safuri. Safuri is a woman who grew up in Nigeria as a Muslim. She has just brought this new life to our class. One of Safuri's gifts is prayer. A couple of weeks ago, I had had a bad week, and I was having one of those hard Sundays. Usually, I enjoy being with our class, but it was just I had so much of my own stuff that I was dealing with that I couldn't really enter into everybody else's stuff. It was making me feel really overwhelmed.

At the end of class, Safuri was standing by the door, and she asked me a question that just opened me up a little bit and I began to share some things with her. Before I knew it, she had grabbed my hand and anybody that was standing close and started praying over me. Let me just tell you, she prays the heavens down. Not only does she do it in person, but this morning I opened up my email and there was this long prayer that Safuri had typed out full of scripture and the prayer requests from our class that we send out every week via email.

I just can't tell you how when I walked out of that room that day, or when I opened my email in the mornings and I read one of Safuri's prayers, and I've started reading them out loud as if I'm praying them, which is amazing because I don't pray like that, and I wish I could. How loved I felt that Sunday and how loved I feel when I read Safuri's prayers out loud. As we talk about some of the struggles of love in the church today, I just wanted to build that as a foundation because I think, sometimes, we get overwhelmed watching the news or being part of a church. If you're on that insider track, sometimes you know too much. The humanity starts really

boiling to the surface. We can get really jaded and shut down, and focused on the negative, but the truth is there are lots of loving people around us if we look for them.

Cheri

I'm just thinking to myself, this is a nice short list of two things if I'm struggling to love, one, pray, two, share my gifts. Not a bad short list to go to.

Amy

That is so good. Alright, that was our next question. In what ways do you struggle to love? You want to share and then apply?

Cheri

Oh, I don't know about the application. The sharing is the easy part. You want me to actually apply it? Well, I struggle to love, the one that came to mind immediately was I am such a grudge holder. If somebody does me wrong, I want them to admit it. I want them to admit it in words. I want to hear, "I was wrong," and then I want them to apologize, and I want to hear it in words, like, "I was wrong. I am sorry." That is huge. I know that there's some people who are, like, "Words are cheap. It's actions that count." I'm, like, "No, words are very valuable to me. Words are like diamonds. I want to hear all the words, and I want their actions to change."

Amy

Yeah, in writing with your signature on it would be even better.

Cheri

Excellent.

Amy

Yes.

Cheri

I hadn't thought of that.

Amy

Hey, I have to remember this in case you ever get mad at me.

So how could you bring prayer and sharing your gifts into that struggle, Cheri?

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I'm not going to let you off the hook.

Cheri

Thank you so very much, oh great. Well, obviously, the prayer one I can think of much more easily. Yeah, when I find myself holding grudges and wanting to demand that the other person do things the way I think it should be done then I need to pray. First of all, to let God be God and not me. Oops! Oh yeah, that thing again.

Amy

That mercy seat and justice seat thing.

Cheri

Then pray to have a listening heart that hears actions because so many of the people in my life who do make me crazier than they mean to, their love language is acts of service. I often overlook the acts of service because I want the words so badly. Listening with my eyes, not just my ears.

Amy

That's interesting because I had interaction with a friend, who had kind of hurt my feelings a little while back, it wasn't a big thing, but we were having a conversation the other day and she said something, and she left this little pregnant pause and raised her eyebrows. Later, because I always process later, I thought, "That was an apology." It was as close as I'm going to get.

<Laughter>

You know what I'm saying? In this situation, I didn't need an apology, but I thought that little thing that she did, because I was, like, "What was that?" I was, like, "Oh, that was an apology." Sometimes, yeah, that's all we get. For me, the biggest struggle is that because of my perfectionism and the whole Enneagram one thing, bummer, the first time I took the Enneagram, they called it the reformer. I was like that's so awesome. I love being the reformer. Then I saw another definition, it said the perfectionist, and I was, like, "Oh." Anyway-

Cheri

You bought in and then you got the second label and you're, like, "I want my money back."

Amy

Exactly. I really wrestle between love and truth. Even as I wrote it down, I had to put in parentheses, "laughing at myself," as if they're separate. They're not separate, but, man, there is a tension between them. I think this is one of the big things that's hard for me. One of the lessons that I'm learning in this tension between love and truth is that it's the way I'm listening. I've talked about that a little bit on the podcast, that I got to be 51 years old and I was, like, "Well, I got a half a century down the road, over a half a century down the road, and I don't know how to listen." I'm a terrible listener. I pretend to listen, and I'm really thinking about what I'm going to say next. Also, the other thing that I did, I would listen because truth does mean a lot to me. I am a scripture, Bible study girl. It is core to who I am because I believe it's core to who God is.

My heart is in the right place in that, but a lot of times I was listening for error in what you had to say 'cause, see, I needed to set you straight just to make sure the truth thing was right there, you know? I was listening, and I thought that to not speak in return was to agree. I equated listening and agreeing. What I'm learning is listening is not agreeing, necessarily, but listening is loving. That's just one of the things, as I wrestle with love and truth, is putting it into practice in the way that I listen to people. Jesus told us to be known, his people, to be known for our love and oneness. What are the big challenges for the church in that?

Cheri

I'll tell you one thing I see is horizontal hostility. I learned about it in Adam Grant's book, "Originals," and basically the concept is that, in any group, those who see themselves as more conservative are often harsher towards those who are more liberal because they're not keeping the truth pure. For a non-church example, vegans can sometimes come across harsher towards vegetarians than they would towards omnivores. I just see that there's a lot of areas in the church, and in the churches I visit, where it seems like those who feel like they have the answer, the truth, the right way to do things have more grace and mercy for those who are completely on the outside, but they are just pummeling those who are on the inside that don't have those same convictions.

If you're on the receiving end of that kind of pummeling, we could use music, for example. Those who don't like a beat, or a certain amount of volume, or a certain kind of speed in their music and insist that it has to be very quiet and reverent, that's the only right way to do things. If you aren't aware, it's called horizontal hostility. If you're not aware it's happening, it can be really baffling. At least, for me, because I tend to be very conservative in my behaviors, but a little bit, I'd like to say, open in my thinking and so I know what my beliefs are, so when people do attack and say, "No, you aren't following what you should, you aren't doing what you ought to be," it made me question until I ran across this and went, "Oh, I see."

Amy

That is fascinating. Horizontal hostility.

I've never processed things that way, but I see it very much not only in others, but maybe in myself, where it really speaks into the struggle that I have with truth versus love, as if they're separate. I need to keep saying that, not for you guys that are listening, but for myself. "As if they're separate." I think I have this thing that I'm, like, "Yeah, but you should know better."

Cheri

Yes, that's a great example.

Amy

That, "You should know better," is a lack of grace and it's also the thing that I'm just seeing in my own life is how often that I have elevated my own opinions or preferences to the level of truth with a capital T.

Cheri

Exactly.

Amy

There's only one place that we get truth with the capital T, and it is scripture, it is not out of Amy's mouth. Shocking, I know.

<Laughter>

Cheri

What? You sure?

Amy

I know you were relying on it, but just so you don't anymore.

Cheri

Alright, well, it sounds like, once again, we are struggling and talking about the good old perfectionist way of black and white thinking, our nemesis. How do you see black and white thinking getting in the way of love?

Amy

Oh, my goodness. This ties really straight into what I've been talking about, the truth and love thing. I think for people who love scripture, we have dearly held interpretations of scripture

very often, and I remember saying to somebody I love one time, "You understand that there are godly people of both sides of this issue, right?" He just looked at me and winked and said, "Yeah, but only one of them is right." Well, you either laugh or you cry, and I decided to laugh. The thing is that there are black and whites in scripture. There are some things that are so, so clear but, man, do we do Jesus plus all the time. It's Jesus plus whatever my issue is that I love, or my preference that I dearly hold. We elevate these preferences and these opinions to the same level as we hold scripture and it's just so dangerous. Talk about destroying love. I mean, that will destroy love in a relationship and create mistrust and misunderstanding faster than anything else.

Cheri

Recently, I was at the Writing at the Red House with Kathi Lipp and a bunch of other writers there. It was so interesting, in different conversations, different women were talking about a fear that she had that was really holding her back in ministry. What I saw, as I was listening to each of them separately, and then I brought them together and then we actually, as a group, started sharing.

It was so interesting because each woman's fear was something that she could never actually possibly do or be. She's terrified of this thing that's not even an option. One of them was afraid of being a diva. We all burst out laughing. I mean, we all wanted to be supportive, but we're like, "You are the least diva person." When she came and found out we couldn't stay at the place we were supposed to stay, she was, like, "Well, I can sleep on the floor." I'm, like, "A diva doesn't say I can sleep on the floor." There is no danger of her being a diva. She's actually been a missionary to India. You need to meet her.

Amy

Oh, yeah.

Cheri

It was just one by one, unqualified, not smart enough, one by one these were all things, and so what I'm seeing here is the extreme what if scenarios of black and white thinking. What if I accidentally become this horrible, terrifying thing? That would be horrible. What I was seeing was they were holding back. They were holding back from loving others, from ministering to others in the way that God had called them to, and I was just thinking to myself, you know, the enemy must be cracking up that he can get us scared, so scared that we're paralyzed of being something we aren't even capable of being. This one woman, her name is Jen, of Jen possibly being a diva. These what if scenarios that black and white thinking brings up. I've become more and more aware of them, and I'm really starting to look out for them and seeing where are those playing a role in just keeping us small, keeping us paralyzed, and keeping us from loving others the way God has created us to.

Amy

Beautifully said. Deidra had this one sentence that just keeps annoyingly ringing around in my head.

Cheri

Do we have to go there? Could we just edit it out completely, pretend she didn't say it?

Amy

Yeah, let's do it, because it's messing with me. The question is so simple, and she kept bringing it back around. This is the crux. This is the deal. The question is, "Am I going to be a loving person or not?" How did you process that? How can we use this quote to make decisions about our actions or reactions in daily living?

Cheri

I tried denial, but it didn't work. She's been in my head. It just keeps coming back. The thing that I realized as we were having our interview is I have been so proud of being a well-intentioned person, and the thing about being well intentioned is it gave me so much leeway and wiggle room. Now, when I have to ask am I going to be a loving person or not in the midst of a difficult situation, then the next question is, "What would a loving person do right now?" That answer is often a hard answer. We've talked about how we prefer to run and hide, and maybe show back up later when things aren't so hard. Maybe if there's a mess, we clean it up slowly.

Instead, what a loving person would do is always something I can't do it. It required something of me that I don't actually have. Then I have to confess to God that I can't do it that I can't be loving and I need his help in the moment. That question, "Am I going to be a loving person or not," basically is a constant reminder of my absolute, utter dependence on God. Otherwise, I'm just going to make a huge mess out of everything. How about you?

Amy

Well, okay, I'm just still processing what you said, and I'm flattened by it because I have noticed when you said you held being a well-intentioned person in high esteem, I've noticed recently I've been saying a lot, "My heart was in the right place."

Cheri

I receive that, Amy. I receive that. I think that's a wonderful concept.

Amy

But it's really not enough, is it?

Cheri

No. It isn't.

Amy

I mean, because a truly loving person, the heart being in the right place gets transferred into a loving action. Love is really always an action, isn't it? Okay, painful story time on myself. I did something painful and hard yesterday that was long overdue. About a year and a half ago, or two years, I was in a room where there was some teaching going on and it became hurtful. I really didn't realize it until after I left, and this is how I always do. I listen and I absorb, but I don't really process until after I walk out of the situation. When I walked out the situation, I had this horrifying, to the point that I thought I was going to throw up, it was this [inhale] realization of, "I just made some connections I hadn't made when I was in the room."

That teaching hurt this person in the room, and I didn't know what to do, Cheri, so I did nothing. See, my heart was in the right place, but I did nothing.

Cheri

Yeah.

God is teaching me, partially through Deidra's book, and I went through her book very slowly, but man, it got me good. Partially through that, partially through some classes I'm taking, just I'm in this learning process. God is working on my heart. Yesterday, there's a devotion I'm doing for a series that I'm doing and it's really around repentance. God brought that situation, it's come up different times throughout the years, like, "Oh, I should have done something. I should have done something." Last week, God said, "Do something." I got the phone number of this woman I know not at all, and I called her yesterday and apologized. I wasn't the one that was doing the teaching, but I should have done something before. I said, "I'm so sorry." I made all kinds of excuses in my brain.

Cheri

Of course.

Amy

Thinking, "Oh, well, the person that was teaching, she didn't mean it that way." She didn't. "The woman that heard it, maybe she didn't make the same connection I did so it would make it worse for me to call her." There were all these reasons I didn't choose to be a loving person,

because I should have picked up the phone, I should have done that the next day. A year and a half later ... but, you know, you can only do what you can do. The woman received my apology with grace. It was a hard conversation, but it was a good conversation. I think what Deidra really challenged us with is it's a constant choice, and we have to pause and make the choice. Being well intentioned, as you said so beautifully, is not good enough. It's just not.

Cheri, you want to share the scripture this week?

Cheri

It's 1 John 4:8. "Whoever does not love, does not know God because God is love."

Amy

I don't think there's a passage any clearer than that.

Cheri

I'm agreeing with you. What's the bad rule that we're breaking in these two episodes?

Amy

Love is too hard to figure out and live. You know, really, I have lived in that place. I felt ridiculous writing that down because, again, it's one of those things that church girls never say out loud, but truly walking in love is difficult and it's difficult to figure out how to even do it. Although, I think I've developed some other things like kindness and things over the years, I'm not sure that I've really hit the love thing. It's just starting to happen in my life, again, kind of sad after half a century. The truth for focus is it's worth it to seek to be loving. Do you hear any grit in that?

Cheri

I do. I absolutely do. I love the action of seeking, of realizing this isn't something that comes automatically. What comes automatically for me is judgment, for heaven's sake. Part of the grit is to put the brakes on judgment and to be willing to go on that journey to say, "I want to be a loving person. I want to learn how to do it." I'm going to do the work rather than those comfortable things like black and white thinking, horizontal hostility, running and hiding, all these other things that are so much in the perfectionism, or fawning, people pleasing, making nice, going for nice. That's not love either, but to seek out what does being a loving person in this situation look like and what I really want more than anything else in any aspect of my life, is for my first instinct in these hard places to immediately be prayer and say, "God, show me how. Make this possible. Do this in me because I can't do it alone." It still takes grit for me to remember, "Oh, yeah, I can't do it by myself."

Amy

That's good. There's grace in that, too. This last Sunday, our pastor preached about the last supper. He was talking about Jesus and Judas and how Jesus had Judas sitting right there at the table with him. Didn't name him by name. Didn't call him out. Yet, for the first time, what I heard in Jesus' words when he said, "It's one of the 12. You're sitting right here with me. You're dipping the bread in the same bowl," was really a call for him to turn back. Jesus didn't point a finger at him; strike him with lightning. That's the way I would have done it. We would have taken care of Judas right there. Jesus did not do that.

He was always about restoration, always about a second chance, always about calling people back to the heart of God. In that moment, I had had a hard, I had a bunch of hard interactions, actually, another hard interaction with a friend this week and I was hurt by it. I wanted to slide back into that judgment seat again. Then I was, like, "No, the mercy seat." Jesus chose it with Judas. My betrayal in this situation, it wasn't nearly, nowhere close to what Jesus was about to suffer. Yet, he loved in that situation.

Cheri

We hope you've enjoyed Episode 148 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Amy

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode148. There you'll find our digging deeper download, the show notes, and our transcript.

Cheri

Have you checked out our Etsy store? You'll find lovely laminated Bible verse cards plus scripture-themed necklaces and key rings that make wonderful Mother's Day gifts. Just head to GritNGraceGirls.com/etsy. All orders help pay for the hard costs of producing this podcast.

Amy

Join us next week when we'll be talking to Wendy Pope, author of *Yes, No, and Maybe*.

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!

Outtakes

Cheri

Goodness, so when it comes to... (clanging)

<Laughter>

The elephants, oh, Rafiki's on a hunt again. Okay, I'm going to post pictures of the towels on the kitchen floor. I'm just going to post...

Amy

All that yelling is him fighting with the towels.

Cheri

He's not even fighting. That's the sound he makes when he's on the hunt. Go ahead and laugh. He does it at midnight, he does it at two in the morning, he does it at 2:37 in the morning. He does it around four, because we feed him at six. Oh, yeah, it's-

Amy

That's bad.

Cheri

Ficki, stop it. You are not our special guest today.