

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #169: When Where You End Up is BETTER Than Where you Were Going

Cheri: Hey, 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 talking to Shantell Brightman. Shantell is an online business owner helping authors, speakers, and multi-passionate creatives build and simplify their business with digital products. Shantell and her husband live in beautiful Dallas, Georgia. She's a proud mama of three, ages 23, 18, and 3. Shantell can be found buying all the cute planners, creating something crafty, reading a good book, or enjoying the slower pace south with a Mason jar full of iced tea. Shantell is proof that seed senders are women in every walk of life.

Amy: Well, Shantell, we are so excited to have you with us because really, you have been part of the Grit'n'Grace story from the very beginning. You are one of the first interns on our first intern team when chaos reigned, and you brought order to the chaos –

Cheri: Amen!

Amy: – and you've been doing it ever since! And so, your story is so woven in with ours. But tell our listeners a little bit about your story and how God has just been moving and shaking in your life and using your life to influence others.

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Shantell: You know, when I saw this question I almost said, “Oh no, I can’t answer that. I’m just going to put these questions aside, Lord, I can’t do this right now—” but let me tell you, when I went through this process, it was really impactful for me. And it was so good to see and recognize all the seed-senders of my life and how I’ve been able to sow seeds in other people’s lives. So thank you for this. This has just been a really true gift. So my story started back in 1978 when my dad picked up my mom hitchhiking –

[All laugh]

Shantell: – it’s a true story, but I’m sure you don’t want me to go back that far.

Cheri: Yeah, I was trying not to let my eyes widen too wide!

[All continue to laugh]

Shantell: Oh, goodness. Okay, I’m sorry. I digress. Okay, so over the last year, God has really placed me in a unique role in my business. And I really had the privilege of helping women who have a big idea, or lots of ideas, discover what’s possible for them and for their business. And so, oftentimes women who are trying to build or grow their speaking or writing ministry, or maybe they wanna go from working a 9 to 5 to working from home, they oftentimes get stuck, and they don’t know what they should do first, or they don’t know what to do next. And they either have too many ideas or they’re just struggling with all the feels that come with the fear of taking that step, and so that’s where I come in and use my gifts to make an impact. So I come alongside them with empathy and compassion and a step-by-step plan – if you know me, I have all the planners –

[All laugh]

Shantell: – I am a planner girl, and so I love to share a step-by-step plan with other women. I really get to show them a road map to go from where they are to where they want to end up. And so, this is really where I thrive, when I – it's when I feel my best, or have the most energy, it's when I get to use my gifts is when I get to help multi-passionate creatives like myself steward their gifts. And you know I was thinking more about this question, Amy and Cheri, and in hindsight I could see God has really given me many different kinds of seeds, He's always used my experiences, so good and bad, to make an impact. So for example, I lost my dad to suicide in 2012, but God used that tragedy to make me – well, He took me through a growing and a pruning process. And He weeded out people and activities and things that really weren't bearing fruit in my life. I didn't know it at the time, but the only way I could really take the seeds that He was planting in me, and to turn around and make an impact in other people's lives, was to actually make room for those seeds to flourish. And so, through that process of growing and pruning, I was able to make a difference. It started out as sharing my testimony with a community of 1,500 people – that grew into providing a prevention education and resources to thousands of K-12 and college students across the county, and then that grew even more into making a difference for other loss survivors all across the globe. And then that even grew even more into advocating for actual life-saving policies on Capitol Hill.

Cheri: Wow!

Amy: That's an amazing story.

Cheri: Two things I want to point out – or ask you about – so – well, first of all, are you still involved in the suicide prevention world at all right now?

Shantell: Right now I'm not. It's still something I'm passionate about, but it was something that was a season of time for me.

Cheri: Ok. So I love that. But what I know from my personal experience is your background with that was so helpful, is so helpful for those of us who have online communities, because sometimes we have people join those communities who are in a state of crisis, and sometimes it's a pretty big crisis... It has been so valuable to be able

to go “Shantell!” and Shantell knows what to do. So even if that’s not something that’s still a primary focus of yours –

Shantell: Right.

Cheri: – that experience has still kind of come in. The other thing – I see your office wall behind you.

Shantell: Uh huh.

Cheri: So tell our listeners your – your dream for your office wall.

Shantell: Well, my office wall is going to have this huge whiteboard [laughs] on this side here – oh, well, you can’t see me, but if you could see me, you could see this huge blank wall that I want to fill with a huge whiteboard that I could create a map and put sticky notes and plan things out for everyone, so. I’m really excited about that.

Amy: I wanted to dig into another little part of how you even started this. So you joined our intern team, I think, initially thinking you were going to expand the speaking and writing about suicide prevention, but then it took this left turn, as our lives often do, and it’s really the fulfillment of that saying that, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” because you had this little person in your life –

[All laugh]

Amy: – or have this little person in your life, that kind of – so tell us a little bit about that left turn that your life took.

Shantell: Yes. In that time of my life, there was a big left turn. One, the little one was a surprise in our life, she's a surprise blessing that we get to enjoy, and so for me, I initially applied for the internship, because I was feeling disconnected from God. I had gone through a lot of loss and change, and so I just really wanted to get back to connecting with God. I also wanted to grow in my speaking and writing, and write my someday book. And so, I had no idea that I could use my gifts in such a big way. I had no idea that I would be designing podcast graphics, and then that would be pivoting me away from where I thought I was going and into a whole new business area, a whole new focus. And so that was really a quite – a delightful surprise, because – at first it wasn't, though, I have to be honest. [Laughs]

Amy: That's – no, it's so helpful to hear all this, because I think we have made God's calling on our life something so mysterious, and so, like, out there, that we can't possibly attain it. And the picture that your life is, to me, is just taking the next little step of obedience, and the next one, even if the next step is to the left, right? That you didn't expect. And then getting to a place that you're like, "Wow, this is God's calling." but it didn't happen the way you thought it was gonna happen. It wasn't in this big, like, scroll from the sky.

Shantell: [Laughing] It's so true. It's so true. I didn't get a burning bush moment or anything written in stone for me. It was more of a – a journey of just small steps of obedience at a time, and taking action in uncertainty, like, "God, I don't know what this is going to mean for me..." to, you know, sell my house and move from California to Georgia... I don't know what this is going to mean for me to put myself out there and step away from what I know into reigniting something that had been in me for a long time that I thought I had buried a long time ago. So it was really quite – in hindsight, it was delightful, but through that process, through that actual pivot, it was, "God, I don't know where You're taking me. I have this plan, but You have this better plan, and I'm kind of stomping my feet a little bit." [Laughs]

Cheri: I love it. I love it. After you joined the internship, I kind of stuck my nose into your life in ways I've never done with anyone else's life before, because within the first few months you became absolutely indispensable, and I was terrified you were gonna go try to get a job someplace else, so I invited you to become my virtual assistant, and for better or for worse you said yes, and now I'm at the stage of stomping *my* feet because you're not my virtual assistant anymore –

[Amy and Shantell laugh]

Amy: Hey, she fired me too!

Cheri: It's just the worst! Oh my goodness!

[All laugh]

Cheri: But in my better moments, I am so proud of you. And I'm assuming some of that less delightful stuff probably has my name on it. We won't go down the super personal road, but for our listeners: what has that process of pivoting been like for you? Why the pivot? Why do we sometimes need to go, "Oh, ok, this is what God is calling me to. Oh wait, but now God is calling me to something else." and even though it is unknown and messy, why do you see that as so important for you and the women you work with?

Shantell: Well, I think that it's important to embrace any pivot that God wants you to take because it really opens the opportunities, and it nurtures the gifts that you have. I think we're born with a variety of gifts, and we, you know, receive seeds along the way, as Amy puts it in the book, we receive seeds along the way. And so, those change over time, and sometimes those seeds are meant for, you know, a specific reason, or for a season of time, and so, for us to feel fulfilled, to really live in our gifts, it's important to not be afraid to say no. And I think that was part of the undelightful part or the part where I was stomping my feet, because I did not want to say – to let go of my favorite women, you know, I didn't want to say, "I can no longer serve you in that way." Do you know how hard it is for a yes girl to say no?? [Laughs]

Amy: Well ok, so it's a testimony to how well you did it that we didn't get mad and go "Ew, Shantell, yuck!" We're like, "Oh, but how can we still spend time with Shantell??"

[All laugh]

Amy: We're dying to be with you today!

Shantell: Oh my gosh!

Cheri: Absolutely true.

Shantell: The feeling is mutual. But I think it's the only way that God will be able to use you for a greater purpose is that if you are willing to let go of the things that you're holding on to. And I just love the garden metaphor that you use in the book, because you're right – everybody can really relate to that. And so, that's what I envision. That's what I picture, is me holding on to these vines that are actually growing thorns and hurting my hands, but those are my vines, you know? But if I let go, then I know that there's something even bigger ahead. So not just for me, but I'm able to make a bigger impact in other people's lives.

Amy: This is so instructive and convicting.

[Laughter]

I'm thinking of some thorny vines that I might need to let go of to be a better seed-sender, to be more fruitful in my life ... and we really have seen you do that, that you went from being a virtual assistant to really narrowing what you do, which is online products and processes, and in that narrowing it's just become more and more powerful, the way God is using you. And so, it is so instructive, probably for our listeners, too, like these gifts have different seasons, and sometimes a new season means saying, "No," so you can move into the greater thing.

Shantell: Mmm-hmm.

Cheri: Mmm.

Shantell: You know, and one thing I hear all the time, especially for those who have – who are multi-passionate, or who have many gifts that they feel God is calling them to all at the same time, and I just want to encourage anyone who is struggling with the thought that having a multi-passionate heart makes them less focused, or flighty, or less valuable... I just wanna encourage them that *that* is their gift. That is what makes them unique. It's just a matter – as with any gift that God has given us, we have to learn how to use them in the right way. God has given me a multi-passionate heart, and He's used a number of people to equip me to learn how to navigate through that. He used my dad to teach me to love no matter what, so when I carry that out in all the things that I do personally and professionally. He's used my oldest sister to teach me how to stand up for others and create change, and again, this overflows in both personal relationships, my personal work and professionally. As I work with authors and speakers, I'm helping them to create change with their, you know, their God-given message, and He's used countless neighborhood moms growing up, and teachers, and coworkers, and mentors, really to call out my uniqueness, my quirks, my skills, you know, my personality, my story, and just helped me realize that it is all for a bigger purpose, and that gives me – that encourages me and equips me to go out and do. It gives me more confidence in knowing that God has got me on His path and that I don't have to worry so much about, "Where does this lead?"

Amy: Shantell. Amazing.

Cheri: So Shantell, we're going to wrap this up with the question we've been asking everybody. Tell us one "seize the yay", a joy-filled God moment you've had in the last month.

Shantell: Oh, I love that. "Seize the yay" – I love that. Well, what comes to mind is this month, God has really been pressing on my heart how to be present no matter where I am or what I'm doing, to receive joy in that moment. So I don't know if you know this, but I love to work. I work at home. I am a mom of a college student and a little one, she's three, she's going to be four, but I don't always want to be mom. [Laughs] I don't always want to be doing the things that need to be done in the house... I would much rather play at work.

[All laugh]

Amy: I think you're singing all our songs!

[All laugh]

Shantell: And so, He's really just been teaching me to be really intentional about being present in that moment. So when I'm here with you, just to be fully focused on you. When I'm at the kitchen table with my little one playing Play-Doh, even though it brings up all these sensory issues for me –

[All laugh]

Shantell: – I wanna be present in that and just really find the joy in that moment and take time to just receive that from God and receive that that too is a gift that is – I'm receiving seeds, doing it, and I'm also able to send seeds when I'm in the moment and being present. And really, that's my prayer for all the women who are listening right now is that they may be able to just be present in the moment, and to know that they are loved for who they are, for what they're doing, even when they have to do hard things, or when they're feeling resistance, or they just don't feel like it. That too is sowing a seed in them so that they can use their gifts for such a great purpose.

Cheri: We hope you've enjoyed episode 169 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Amy: Head on over to gritandgracegirls.com/episode169. There you'll find our transcript, the digging deeper download, and a link to Shantell's website.

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Cheri: Did you know that we've created a leader's guide for small groups studying our book, *Exhale*? Combining scripture, thought-provoking questions, and time to inhale the lesson of *Exhale*, the leader guide will empower you and your friends to walk through a process that releases you from the things that have created unbearable pressure.

The leader guide contains tools for small group leaders that include all the content the participants receive in the group study guide, study and meeting schedules that will help you plan your study dates and times, icebreaker activities, discussion questions, and innovative prayer ideas for each group meeting and links to free teaching videos from Amy Carroll and Cheri Gregory.

Amy: Next week, we'll be wrapping up our exhale combos and catching up on what God's been doing in our lives and in our hearts.

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 'n' Cheri: BREAK IT!