

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #179: How to Handle an "Overweight" Friendship

Amy:

Cheri, I have such great memories of my early childhood friend. Her name was Josie and I always say Josie was the triple threat. She was cute, she was smart, and she was funny.

And really, until Josie and I became best friends, I would say I was sort of a lonely little girl. Like I, I had friends, I know, I sound kind of pitiful don't I, but I had friends, it wasn't that, and I wasn't unhappy, but I didn't have that close friend, you know? And Josie was really my close friend and she was that kind of friend that things weren't even real until I told her about them, you know?

The minute I told Josie about them then they were real. She spent enough time over at my house that my parents probably kinda forgot she wasn't their daughter and I was over at her house the same kinda way. How about you? Who was your childhood best friend?

Cheri:

Well, I'm gonna sound kinda pitiful too, 'cause I had a string of best friends who moved away. Well actually it was two. So it's not a full string. But in 3rd grade my best friend, Kimmy, she moved away to - oh, Oregon, or Washington or someplace far far away, and I remember being devastated by that; and then in 6th grade my best friend Marcie moved away.

And I was a BFF kind of girl, as you know, and very much the same way. Like, as long as I had my BFF, I was grounded, and all was right with the world, and I remember, um, afterwards - both times - I remember my teachers being extra kind to me in the weeks after. Because I was kinda like this lost soul, adrift, not knowing what to do, because I was so used to having that best friend.

Amy:

Oh, yeah. And that - that was not an experience that I had, but it's painful for me to even imagine it! Because - what were these parents thinking, taking your friend away?

Cheri:

Exactly. Exactly.

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 conversation with Kelly Needham, author *Friendish*.

Cheri:

So Kelly made a lot of points that were – pointed.

[Laughter]

Amy:

Yes!

Cheri:

Like, they poked! I kept feeling “Ouch.” and I kept wincing, and one of the things she said early on was that we need to dethrone our friends and then they can serve us in the way God meant them to. And that kind of landed especially pointedly for you. Go ahead and unpack that a little bit.

Amy:

It really did. There have been many times over the years I think that I've put too much weight on my friendships. And the way that I know I've put too much weight on them is kind of like what you were talking about as a child, that when those friendships weren't in place anymore, there was just this gaping hole with wind blowing through it.

[Laughter]

It was a canyon left, kind of, in my life. Much more than probably was really healthy. And there was one in particular that, you know, friendships have seasons, and as I've gotten older, I really have come to a place of greater peace with that, but this was probably close to 20 years ago. We had this move, and the friendship changed, and, I felt really lonely. And I felt really kind of abandoned. And, I could not get over it.

Cheri:

Mmm.

Amy:

I mean, I just couldn't get over it. I was really obsessively negative and kinda bitter about it. And finally I asked the Lord one day – 'cause I had gone through the several cycles of trying to forgive, and – and I was like “Lord, what – why can't I seem to get over this?” And He just said, “Because she was an idol in your life.” She was the kinda girl that kind of friend that, she was a woman that always had a closest friend but it was a rotating list? You know that kind of person?

And I had been the “it girl,” the “it friend” for quite a long time. And I had never been that in one of those kind of woman’s lives before. And I think I just – really loved it way too much.

And so, when that season ended, and it was really even before my move that it ended, it just really really hurt. But it did let me know whenever I have that level of hurt, I’m like “Mmm, something’s a little off here.”

Cheri:

You know what you’re reminding me of is attachment theory. And we do need healthy attachments, but this sounds like, and you know, definitely for me as well, I’m not just trying to diagnose you, I’ll diagnose both of us here –

Amy:

Go ahead, you’re right!

Cheri:

Some of us can have avoidant attachment, which is not my issues. I tend toward anxious attachment. Where it’s like I need to be attached, and if I don’t have my – it’s like, it’s like the security blanket! The friend is like a security blanket instead of a person.

And, you know, you take my security blanket away, and oh my goodness, what am I going to do? And, you know, what you’re just describing is God saying you needed a healthy, secure attachment to Him in order to be – in order to form healthy attachments with others.

And you know one of the things I came to realize – and I also, I winced when Kelly used the word “jealousy,” because I have long been aware of just this deep seed of jealousy that I struggle with because – my BFF, I wanted them to be exclusive. It wasn’t ok for them to spend time with me or even what I felt like was enough time with me, I actively did not want them and tried to stop them from spending time with others.

Like, it was really very, very unhealthy. Because – in my head – they might then find something they like better and then leave me. So then of course now we aren’t talking about attachment we’re talking about abandonment issues. Oh, ok.

And it – it really does come back down to what we’re kinda talking about this season, which is expectations. Why is it that on this show, for reforming perfectionists and people-pleasers, everything comes down to expectations?

[Laughter]

Amy:

It really – expectations and control. I mean, do we like talk about these topics all the time?

[Cheri laughs]

Amy:

But it's really true. And it's funny that – you know, 'cause we think about jealousy in romantic relationships, but not in friendships, so we don't use that word as much, but I think it's very real in women's relationships.

And, um, I even have to be careful with social media. I mean, I try to be careful not to post a lot of pictures of activities, that I'm doing with friends, I mean, didn't anybody's momma tell them that you shouldn't tell people you didn't invite to your party that you had a party?

Cheri:

Exactly. Exactly.

Amy:

You know, but that's what social media is all the time!

Cheri:

It's terrible.

Amy:

I'm like – I'm feeling kinda awful. I don't post a lot of that stuff. I don't take a lot of pictures of it, I don't post it, because I don't wanna hurt my friends' feelings. I don't want people to feel left out.

On the other hand, it is a crazy expectation that sometimes we have, that people wouldn't spend time with other friends?

Cheri:

Are you calling me crazy?

Amy:

No, I'm saying I've done it too!

[Cheri laughs]

I'm calling us both crazy!

[Laughter]

Cheri:

No, but you make such a good point about the jealousy thing, because the truth is, I was rarely jealous of a guy who liked somebody else. I was just done with him. I lost interest. But a female

friend who seemed to be, you know, preferring the company of somebody else, oh my goodness.

Ok, well. Back to things Kelly said that – ahem – needed us...

Kelly said, “As soon as a friend is meeting needs in us that only God should, then it becomes idolatry.”

And you commented right afterwards that was so helpful because it exposes our selfishness.

One thing that I think we’ve both found really helpful, as we’ve both been navigating our friendships for the last few years, is something we heard from Mary Snyder in our interview with her.

She talked about developing a friend network. And I think that blew both of our minds. The idea that no one person was gonna be this one complete BFF – in my case, with exclusive access – but to develop different friendships that we had just a certain slice of life with. Tell a little bit about some of the women who are in your friend network, no names, but just what are some of the roles that they play?

Amy:

And of course, as I worked on this, I thought “None of these women are just one of these things.” They’re all kind of a mish-mash, but, usually, they have one particular strength.

I have one friend that is, I would say, is my tender-hearted friend, that immediately when I tell her something that’s hurt me, she tears up. And there’s something about our hearts being joined that way that is so powerful.

I have another friend that is the confidant, that if something terrible is happening, or, even like I called to complain about something the other day – I know we’re supposed to be grumble-free, but I just needed to get it off my chest and I called her – but she’s the person I could call at 2 a.m., too.

And then there’s another friend that is many things to me but I would say she’s an inspiring force in my life, and a work partner – ahem!

[Laughter]

Cheri:

I was – is it ok to say that I was hoping that one was me?

Amy:

It is! It is you! And I mean, like I said, that's why it was hard but I - 'cause I thought, "Well, Cheri's so many of the other things, too!" but I would say like you're just, you just inspire me to keep doing things for God, which is a great thing.

And then there's another friend that is, I would say she is the giver. Now, I will tell you that this is a relationship that I've actually wrestled with a lot lately, because I'm kinda used to being the giver in the relationship, and so - or, at least a little bit of that - and so this friend, um, she is so generous and, but I have a hard time receiving sometimes, and so I'm, I'm really working on that, and trying to flip it and see it for the precious thing it really is.

And then I have another friend that I really thought she is challenging me spiritually like so much, like raising the bar for me every time we have a conversation. How about you? Do you have some of these?

Cheri:

Oh, well, I love all of that. And you know, I'm just gonna go ahead and say I think it's a little sign of progress that I don't want to be all of those for you. I'm thrilled with the one I am, and I no longer feel the need to be any of the - you know, it must have been the process of *Exhale*, losing who I'm not, being ok with who I am, live my one friendship role well.

[Amy laughs]

Cheri:

There we go, I've retitled it now.

Amy:

Love it.

Cheri:

So the ones that just came out for me is I'm thinking of somebody that's kind of the visionary, who's just so good at big picture, and just really dreaming big, and that's so fun to be a part of.

And then somebody else who's much more the deep-thinker, you know that expression "Half a mile wide and a mile deep." And so with that person it's just these deep deep dives on just really specific topics.

Then there's the fun bringer, and uh, I hope it's ok that you're - you're the one I thought of with the fun bringer, you know, I mean -

Amy:

That makes me so happy! Nobody else would say that!

[Amy laughs]

Cheri:

Oh, I'm so glad! I'm so glad. 'Cause, I mean, our listeners know our only litmus test for continuing the Grit'N'Grace podcast, and if you're a new listener, Amy's about to tell you what it is, we have only one litmus test.

Amy:

"Are we still having fun?"

Cheri:

There we go. And you keep showing up with the fun. Now, you do a lot else. But that's - that's huge. You and I play.

And then on the flip side I'm thinking of somebody else who's a naysayer, like, I know they will always bring the red pen. Like, that is what they lead with, and that is the entirety of our relationship. And I used -

Amy:

Is that ok?

Cheri:

I used to want to oust them, and then I realized that I keep calling on them when I need that level of honesty in my life. And I'm like, it's not fair to only call them when I want it. If that's a role that God has placed them in my life, then stop - stop opening your mouth like that, 'cause I don't want this to be -

Amy:

I'm like wow, that's powerful.

Cheri:

And I'll guarantee you that probably five years ago, I could not have tolerated - I would not have called somebody like that in my life a friend.

Now, I will say, I don't have a lot of fun with them.

[Laughter]

Cheri:

But I need what they have to offer, and I'd like to think that I offer something in return.

Amy:

Can I just confess that I'm like totally trying to figure out who all these people are?

[Laughter]

I bet I could put a name on some of them! That's hilarious.

[Laughter]

Cheri:

Oh my goodness. Alright, well something else I loved that Kelly shared, and I actually started to kind of tear up as she did 'cause I just never thought about it this way, you know, we talk about "Oh, Jesus is my friend," and Emily Freeman has this lovely phrase, "Take it to your friend Jesus."

And I just love how she normalizes that, but what Kelly said specifically is that - she painted a picture of learning facts about Jesus, and that worried me at first because I'm like, "Well, I'm full of head knowledge about Jesus, that's not a problem," but then she said just like she did when she was getting to know her husband.

And I was like oh, wow, that adds a whole new dynamic in putting all those pieces together, the facts to become a personality, and then it's the joy that comes from knowing His character.

And so, I just loved that parallel. Because when we're motivated to connect with somebody, whether it's a romantic interest or if it's a friend, then knowledge isn't just a bunch of dry, boring facts. We're not memorizing things just to get a gold star on a chart, at that point we are intentionally seeking intimacy by learning more about the other person.

And I have been spending time in Colossians, and I had already, before we had the interview with Kelly. I had noticed that in Colossians 1, it's verse 9b-10, the word knowledge shows up twice.

It says, "We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

And what jumped out at me is that we're gonna be filled with knowledge of God's will but then growing in knowledge of God. So I like that "filled" and "growing." We're both. We're being filled and we're growing in knowledge.

And then Colossians 3:10b says, "Put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

Amy:

Oooh. So good!

Cheri:

I just connected all those things together. Filled and growing and then renewed, and all of this having to do with the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Amy:

Well, I just love that. This is sort of related – I follow a woman named Amy Hale on Instagram, and Amy the other day was asked a question and I just saw her answer to it. They asked whether you spend time with God in the morning or another time of the day.

And Amy had a fascinating answer that I'm processing of how it might affect my own time with God and growing in friendship and intimacy with God. And she said that in the morning she spends time praying and worshipping, and like, reading a devotion; but that she separates that from her deep Bible study time because she doesn't want to fool herself that she's building a relationship when she's just gaining facts.

And I thought, "Huh. That is really fascinating."

And here's what's beautiful about our time with Jesus is that just like we have a friendship network that He individualizes for each of us. Do you know what I mean? As far as what that time looks like.

So, I don't think there's one right way to spend time with Jesus, but I just thought in my own life I can fall prey to substituting Bible study for a relationship with God. They are related, and they're joined, but they're not exactly the same. And I thought about, it would be like if I, when I met Barry, to get to know him, I had asked him for a book about him. So instead of spending time with him, I just read this book about him to get to know him.

And so, I just thought that interesting – I think I might play around with that, like, doing the two at separate times instead of together and see what happens.

Cheri:

I absolutely love that.

What's the scripture that you've paired with these episodes with Kelly?

Amy:

Well, it's John 13:34. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

Cheri:

And what's the bad rule that we're breaking with these episodes?

Amy:

I need friendships to fill me.

Cheri:

Oof! Oof.

Amy:

And you know, I mean, certainly friendships are important, but to make them essential is just – it's the wrong direction.

Cheri:

Mmm. Mmm mmm mmm.

So, help us out here. What's the truth? What's the fact that we're going to focus on instead?

Amy:

Great friendships are grounded in love and mutual giving.

So that was the big thing that I thought Kelly said that really hit hard, is if we're looking to get more from our relationships than we've put into our relationships, we're on really shaky ground.

Cheri:

Mmm. So true. So true.

So what do you see as the grit in all this?

Amy:

Well, for me, my mother is just – she's such an example to me of someone who notices things so that she does give in relationships. I'm not a natural noticer, but I cannot use that as an excuse.

So, one of the things I've been working on that's taking grit, is like, lifting my head up from the work in front of me – I love my work, I love what we do here on the podcast, I love the writing, I love all of it; but I can get so immersed in it that I am clueless to my husband's needs, my kids' needs, my friends' needs.

And I need some grit to lift my head up from my work and really take time to notice things and to give to people who are in need.

And the grace for you, Cheri?

Cheri:

Well, I was thinking to myself – because, again, so much of what Kelly said was ouch followed by ouch followed by ouch, so she's talked about needing to dethrone my friends, or needing to repent of picky love, but, I thought, you know, when I need to do those things, Jesus is ready and waiting.

Not with the stick that you talk about, to punish me for messing up my priorities yet again, but He is always waiting for us with what we need most, which is an intimate connection with Him. And that is grace.

Amy:

Absolutely.

Cheri:

We hope you've enjoyed episode 179 of Grit'n'Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Amy:

Make sure to stop by our website, gritngracegirls.com/epiosde179.

There you'll find our transcript, this week's Digging Deeper devotional, and a link to Kelly's book and other great resources.

Cheri:

We'll be continuing this conversation over in our Facebook group. If you aren't yet a member, just search Facebook for Grit 'n' Grace Girls and you'll find us.

Amy:

Next week we'll be talking with Tracy Steel, author of *A Redesigned Life: Uncovering God's Purpose When Life Doesn't Go As Planned*.

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!

Outtakes

Cheri:

So Kelly brought up a lot of points that were pointed!

Amy:

Wait!

Cheri:

Go ahead.

Amy:

Did you want to do the opener? Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Episode #179: How to Handle an "Overweight" Friendship

Cheri:

I forgot about that, didn't I?

Amy:

That's okay.

Cheri:

La la la la.

Ok, here we go. That will be edited out.

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.