

Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST

Episode #245: How to Find Hope in Your Divorce Story

Cheri Gregory

When life as you know it – as you dreamed it – ends, it can lead to a deep sense of hopelessness.

Amy Carroll

That's what our guest Tracie Miles, author of *Living Unbroken: Reclaiming Your Life and Heart After Divorce* felt in the early days of her marriage ending.

Cheri Gregory

But she didn't stay there. God helped her to move forward, and she's sharing her story so that we can experience the healing that she has received.

Amy Carroll

We can live unbroken, even when the last thing we ever expected becomes part of our story.

Cheri Gregory

Well, this is Cheri Gregory –

Amy Carroll

– and I'm Amy Carroll –

Cheri Gregory

– and you're listening to Grit'N'Grace: The Podcast that equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy Carroll

Today we're talking with my friend Tracie Miles, author of *Living Unbroken: Reclaiming Your Life and Heart After Divorce*. Tracie Miles is an author of five best-selling books, and is the director of Compel Writers training at Proverbs 31 Ministries. Tracie is a contributing author to the popular Zondervan NIV Women's Devotional Bible and is a monthly contributing writer for The Proverbs 31 Ministries Encouragement for Today daily devotions, which reach over 1 million people per day around the globe. Tracie has three grown children and lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Cheri Gregory

You know, sometimes a good counselor can be a big help when it comes to changing our habits, our beliefs, and our mindsets.

Amy Carroll

Because Cheri and I have both had firsthand experience with the value of Christian counseling, we've been looking for a resource to share with you that will help you to find a counselor that can help with problems or emotional places that you've gotten stuck. Thank you, Faithful Counseling, for sponsoring this episode of Grit'N'Grace.

Cheri Gregory

Faithful Counseling is designed as a solution for people seeking traditional mental health counseling who would prefer hearing from the perspective of a Christian. If you're seeking a mental health professional who is a practicing Christian, Faithful Counseling may be a great option for you.

Amy Carroll

Faithful Counseling's unique platform holds several advantages over traditional face to face therapy as it allows you the ability to connect with your counselor at any time. Counseling is not limited to individually scheduled sessions but can extend to text based counseling whenever your counselor is marked available.

Cheri Gregory

The choice of communicating with your counselor in the manner that is most comfortable and convenient for you by phone video call or messaging,

Amy Carroll

drastically more affordable rates than the traditional face to face therapy, and the assurance that your counselor will be a good fit. You're always welcome to switch to a different counselor if need be.

Cheri Gregory

Every counselor on Faithful Counseling is licensed by their respective state board in the United States and has over 3000 hours of experience. You will be matched with a counselor in 24 hours or less when you reach out through the link.

Amy Carroll

Broad expertise in the Faithful Counseling network provides users with access to specialists that they may not be able to find locally. The counseling services are affordable and financial aid is available to those who qualify to find out more about Faithful Counseling, please visit faithfulcounseling.com/grit and [grace](http://faithfulcounseling.com/grace).

Tracie, we're so glad you're with us again.

Tracie Miles

Thank you. I'm so glad to be here.

Amy Carroll

Well, in your new book, *Living Unbroken: Reclaiming Your Life and Heart After Divorce*, you use your own story of divorce to help readers begin their journey to wholeness. And Tracie, you and I have been friends for a long time now. And so I've gotten, to some degree, to walk beside you in this. And so I know how painful and hard it's been. What made you decide to share your personal story with readers?

Tracie Miles

Well, it definitely didn't happen overnight. It took some time, that God is working on my heart and helping that heal. But one thing I realized when I was first going through the separation process and just struggling with the fact that this was my reality, being separated. And all the things that had happened was that I couldn't find any resources on divorce from a Christian faith-based, woman-based perspective. There's lots of things about finances and legal matters and single parenting and co-parenting and all the things that come along with separation and divorce. But I just needed that friendship, that girlfriend that knew what I was going through that could kind of hold my heart and my hands while I was walking that journey. Give me hope, help me know where to find peace. And I was not crazy. And all the things.

And so after God had really taken me far enough, and I had to write two books along the process before I got to this one, but He had just really done a work in my heart and my mind and I wanted to share my story in the hopes that it would help other women know that they're not alone and how they're feeling and what they're going through.

Amy Carroll

Well, when we knew about your book, we knew we had to have you on Grit'N'Grace not only because we love you personally, but also we haven't had an episode about divorce and statistically we know that half of our listeners are probably divorced themselves, but 100% of us know and love people who are walking through divorce. So thank you for – I know you've handled the topic so well, and thank you for doing it for us today.

Cheri Gregory

So in your book, you talk about the journey not being easy, but that it gets easier. Can you talk more about what you mean by that, and why that is?

Tracie Miles

When you're just in the throes of – you feel like a freight train has just come in and wrecked your entire life. And all you do is sit around and you're looking at the debris,

and there's so much damage. And I always thought about that analogy, because that's what it felt like. And that doesn't seem easy. And when you're in the midst of that, and you're dealing with all the consequences, every situation, but also maybe your children and your family and your own heart and your friends and the situation, there's no way to really think, 'Okay, this is going to be great one day, it's going to be fine, I got this,' that is not our attitude whatsoever.

You instead – you think 'I will never survive this, I will never get past this pain, I will never be happy again.' And it took a while for me to realize that I didn't have to live with that perspective. And God, you know, a lot of people might leave our lives, but God does not. And He is the hope that we can hang on to that things will get better. And really my life, same verse, as many people will say the same thing has really been Jeremiah 20:11, which says God always has a plan, always has a purpose, good things for you.

But when God doesn't seem to be bringing you good things, or when life doesn't seem good, it's hard to remember 'Oh, yeah, He's got some good things in store.' But He does, and it does get easier. And it takes time. And you know, people to come along beside you and just leaning into God and staying true to your faith and all of those things that you never – you don't have to always want that to be your story, you can still forever for the rest of your life think 'I wish this hadn't happened.' But God allowed it for some reason. And He has good plans for us. And just remembering that one day, you will feel happy. And I can even remember a day that I was driving down the road one time. And it was a beautiful sunny day, and I was singing a song, and I had my sunroof open in my car. And I just felt this sense of joy. And it almost took me by surprise, because I thought to myself, 'This is not something I thought I would ever feel again.' And it was just so natural and so free.

And so I hope that just knowing that if there's a woman that's listening, that is thinking right now, 'I'm never going to get over this, I'm never going to get past it,' that you will and God will be right there with you that whole time.

Cheri Gregory

That's so helpful. That's so hopeful without being dismissive. Thank you.

Amy Carroll

Well, and I mean, you kind of alluded to this, but there's grief, of course, that comes along with divorce. And I remember a friend of mine saying to me 'It would have been easier if he had died.' And that sounds like an awful thing to say. But you acknowledge that there are stages of grief to divorce, just like there are great stages of grief when someone dies. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Tracie Miles

I have said those exact same words, I hate to confess. But I did say that in the beginning, because it would be easier – it would almost be easier if that person was no longer existing and you're actually mourning their death. But what I realized over a period of the first year, I guess, is that – and especially when I started really researching for the last two books, which is *Living Unbroken, Unsinkable Faith*, and the other one was *Love Life Again*, but is that divorce is like mourning the death of someone, it's just someone who is still living, they are still here, they're still walking the planet, they just intentionally chose to no longer be in your life. And so it feels like the death of someone but you're mourning the death of your relationship, the death of dreams that you had, maybe future plans, the death of your intact family that you had at one time, the father of your children, just the comfort and security, all of those things. Those are losses that you experience.

And so you go through those same grief stages that you would as if someone had actually passed away, but unfortunately, this situation doesn't get casseroles delivered to them to kind of help you deal with that, or sympathy cards or those types of things. In fact, it could be completely the opposite, like avoidance and exclusion, which makes it even harder.

Amy Carroll

That's profound. I have never thought at that about it that way. Okay. Can I ask you a question? If a friend would have sent you a sympathy card, how would you receive that? Because now I'm like, should I send a sympathy card? That totally makes sense!

Tracie Miles

Well, I don't know if that you want to send a someone passed away type sympathy card

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Amy Carroll

Right, right.

Tracie Miles

but really, you just want to know that – you just appreciate knowing that someone's not – that people are thinking about you. That they're not forgetting you. That you're not just pushed aside because you're no longer a couple. Because it's a struggle to really figure out who am I now, if I'm not a wife, which I always have been and I was for 25 years, who am I now? Where do I belong? Not with a singles group, because I'm not really single. I'm too too old for the singles group at church. And you know, you don't really belong in the couple's group. And it is a really difficult situation to navigate.

So just having those friends still in your life that say, 'I'm just thinking about you and just want you to know I'm praying about you or I know you're going through a hard time God's got this. You're gonna be okay.' Just anything, maybe a text, not even a card. But take them out to dinner, to coffee.

But unfortunately, what I experienced was I had a – not many, because I have a lot of wonderful, wonderful girlfriends. But there were a few that said, 'I can't be friends with you if you're not married.' And that is like a dagger to the heart. It's not my fault. It's not my desire, and I'm still the same person. And that's a period of life where you need your

friends more than ever. So just little things to let someone know you're thinking about them. And you understand that it's a difficult time is really meaningful in someone's life.

Cheri Gregory

So those feelings of grief and loss and sadness, those sound huge. And then you also talk about anger, which is its own ball of wax, especially since many Christians feel like we shouldn't get angry. And then many Christian women, especially feel that way. So talk about the importance of this emotion when you are working through divorce.

Tracie Miles

Well, anger is so natural and so normal. But especially as believers, you know, we're taught to understand that anger is not – I hate to use the word wrong, but the Bible says don't go to bed with an angry heart, don't let the sun go down on your anger. And it's hard to do that. Because when someone has betrayed you, or rejected you, or just kind of uprooted your life, or done things that have really hurt you, it's completely natural to feel anger. And it's not healthy, really, to suppress that anger when your life's been shattered. And it feels like there's nothing to hold on to.

So that anger has just got to, we've got to understand that. So the stages of grief that I talked about in the book are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, which are also relative to someone that has passed away. But once you get over the initial shock, and denial of this is actually my life, this happened, this person is no longer with me and my family is not the same, and all the things that come along with that, then you're going to get mad. And that's what I realized is I'm mad. And I had every right to be mad. I was mad at my husband, I was mad at my life, I was mad at myself, I was mad at the situation.

And I even found myself being mad at God, because I had prayed for years for him to protect our marriage, to solve the issues at hand, to just make changes. And you know, we'd spent 20-something years going to church together. And I just didn't understand why God would let that happen. But if we realize that that anger is stealing our joy – it's

not stealing the other person's joy, they may be living their life perfectly fine. But we're the ones that are held hostage to being sad and upset and unforgiving. And what I learned was that even though someone may not – or we feel, I shouldn't say they don't deserve forgiveness, because everyone does; but if we feel they don't deserve forgiveness, and even if they don't ask for forgiveness, being able to ask God everyday 'Just help me to let go of this anger and to forgive this person' frees us up to start loving our lives again, and to start having that peace and that joy in our hearts that in the like in the midst of it. Like I said earlier, you feel it's never going to be possible again.

Amy Carroll

Well, in the middle of your divorce – I remember this so well. You were writing a book. I didn't know how you could even do it, Tracie, and the book is *Unsinkable Faith*. But you finished it. It went to the bookshelf. So what was it like to have to write a book in the middle of all you were going through, and what did writing that book teach you?

Tracie Miles

It was very difficult, like you just said, in the very beginning, I had just gotten a book contract with David C. Cook for two additional books just a few months prior to my husband moving out and getting separated. So of course, I'm emailing my publisher, 'This is not going to happen, I need to cancel this contract, I can't do it.' And I spent so many tears worrying and fretting over this, and my publisher was so gracious and so sweet as was my editor. And they just walked me through the process. I wrote a little bit differently than I had in the past. And I had to do a bunch of chapters over because God was really just shaping and molding this message.

But the message is actually about – well, the subtitle – you said unthinkable faith, but it's transforming your thoughts that changes the way that you think, you feel, and you live, because our thoughts dictate our feelings and our feelings dictate our behavior. So I really had to learn to live out this journey of learning to transform how I was thinking and stop being so negative and pessimistic. Doom and gloom, life is over, it could never be good again. And really just learning to shift – I had to have a paradigm shift in my own

thinking. And that's what really helped me. I think I was writing the book for a lot of people, but I think God had me write it for me because I had to learn the power of optimism and the power of positive thinking. And Scripture tells us that we need to make our thoughts captive to God. He tells us that we can transform our minds and our thoughts. And it's so true. It's just so true. And I've experienced that for myself.

So I think God taught me that message as I was walking it out. But he had to teach me that before I could write well.

Amy Carroll

That's powerful Tracy, because for that book – for anybody who wants to know, 'Has this girl ever had anything hard?' I mean, you wrote it in the midst of hard. So powerful stuff.

Cheri Gregory

So speaking of the power of positive thinking, you end the each chapter with happiness prompts and healing steps. So tell us more about why you ended each chapter this way. And could you give us an example of what those might be like?

Tracie Miles

Yeah, well, I've read a lot of books in my life. I am a writer, obviously. But I also like to read, and I've read so many books that just inspired me, and I just thought, I'm going to remember this forever. And this is gonna change my life. And then I start doing life and you forget everything that you've read. So I just felt it was really important, especially when you're struggling, to just get up in the morning, when you can't, you don't think you can get one foot on the floor and even take a shower that day, you find yourself in depression and just sadness that you feel like you can't dig out of.

And I experienced that for many months. And I know a lot of women do. So what I wanted to do with these is not just give inspiring words or encouragement, or 'Hey, I've been there,' during the chapters, but at the end of the chapter, say, 'Get off the couch,

and go do this,' maybe it's coffee with a friend, maybe it's go outside and find five things that bring you joy. And there's so many examples. And every that I could say that at the end of every chapter, but it's really just giving a call to action, don't just read it, but read it and get up and let it change your life. And that was my goal is to give someone a way to implement what they've read into their everyday life in a practical way. Because doing is what's going to create change inside and out, not just reading words on pages.

Amy Carroll

I mean, I love that because sometimes we just need somebody to boss us around. And sounds like you did that in a great way.

Tracie Miles

I do it in a very, very kind of gentle way

Cheri Gregory

Well, and I know that when I'm feeling overwhelmed, I can't come up with my own action steps and having somebody pre-prepare them so I'm like, 'Okay, that one little thing is the next thing for me to do.' I really appreciate when I read books like that.

Amy Carroll

So I love how transparent you are that you were progressing in this recovery from divorce, and then you ran into a time when you say you weren't right. So can you talk about those times in the journey? And how do you overcome those?

Tracie Miles

Well, your whole life is turned upside down. So there's no way that you as a woman are also not going to experience some changes. And that is completely normal and natural and necessary. But what I did find is number one, I felt crazy a lot of times. So there's one chapter in *Living Unbroken* that says, 'girl, you aren't crazy.' Because I just felt like I am literally losing my mind. I would forget everything. I had a hard time getting up some

days, I'd be driving down the interstate and forget to get off on my exit to like 20 minutes later. And I thought I'm literally not okay, there's something not right.

And then one thing I also include in *Living Unbroken* is stories from a lot of other women, not just me. So this is not a book about Tracie's story. There's so many other women that contributed to this book, that just are the type people that women can relate to. And they also share mistakes that they made, I've made plenty of my own, decisions you make that you wish you could go back and say, 'I wish I hadn't done that,' or 'I wish I hadn't gone in that direction.' And we own ourselves because so much has happened and you're just shattered. So, so much. And I just wanted women to understand that it's okay to make mistakes, it's okay to not feel right, or to do things that might be out of the ordinary.

And one of the things that I held on to was found in Lamentations 23, where God never fails, His love never fails. And we get to start fresh every single day. And so I really had to hang on to that promise, because we will mess up. And it's important for everyone to know that we're gonna mess up. And it's a hard time, but mercies are new every day. And we'll get through them.

Cheri Gregory

So in the end of the book, you say the end of your marriage is not the end of you. Yet so many women in that circumstance feel like it is. So how can they overcome this feeling of hopelessness?

Tracie Miles

Well, that statement, the end of your marriage is not the end of you actually came directly from God. And I share this story in the book, I'll share it very, very quickly. But I had gone to a doctor's checkup and I was filling out the paperwork and had to – as I got to marital status, 'Are you single, married, widowed,' whatever, I was nothing. I was none. I could not check any of the boxes. And I just found myself in this identity crisis and that's where this statement came from, from the Lord, was I was driving home – I

had an emotional meltdown in the doctor's office because I wasn't single, divorced, or widowed, or any of the boxes where I could fit and I was just crying on the way home, and I heard Him say 'The end of your marriage is not the end of you.' And it was just so loud in my heart because I was just struggling with who am I, like I said earlier, and the only way to overcome that is to continually lean back on who God says you are, and who you are in Christ.

And just ask him to remind you every day, and also that positive thinking, going back to that, I would look myself in the mirror, and I could say so many things that were not positive. And I had to start changing the way that I talked to myself, changing my prayers, changing my thought life, and allowing God to really shape me into who he wanted me to be, and realize that I'm still good, I still have life, I get to get up every day and breathe the sunshine and hear the birds and – I mean, breathe the air, rather, I don't breathe sunshine, and there's still a lot of life to live. And we forget that when our hearts are really, really broken.

So just back to your question, Cheri, about overcoming the feeling of hopelessness. It's – you hate to say the cliché of just lean on your faith. But that's really pouring into that and allowing God to fill you with a peace that surpasses understanding, which I did experience and never really knew until this process, that was a real thing that you could actually feel and experience. And it's amazing when you do experience it in real time.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah, this is a great statement, the end of your marriage is not the end of you. And I'm thinking it could also be expanded. The end of a friendship is not the end of you, the end of your job is not the end of you.

So we ask our – each episode, we like to ask our listeners for some questions. And for this one, we did broaden the question just a little bit more. And we asked what questions should we ask our interview guest, which is you, about the loss of a key

relationship? And so we've got a couple of questions that they submitted that we were hoping that you could address.

Amy, you've got the first one.

Amy Carroll

Okay, how do you avoid the trap of comparing your reality to what others have, sometimes idealized, and the resentment and anger toward God, others etc, that can create?

Tracie Miles

Well, I can certainly relate to that. And even today, it's been almost six years now since my separation happened, which in some ways, it seems like yesterday. In other ways, it seems like it's it's been a long time. But even today, I can find myself looking at social media, and they're celebrating their 30 year anniversary, and they're so happy, or someone gets married, or they go on this big family vacation. And you can't help but just feel a little twinge of pain and wishing that it still wasn't your story. So whether it's been one year, five years, 20 years, I think that's something that we all still struggle with.

But it kind of goes back to that positive thinking, I think, to just remember that, okay, this is where God has you in life. And we can either make the best of it and enjoy it and be happy, or we can be miserable, and resentful, and angry that other people got – their prayers seem to be answered, but ours were not. So it's really just our thinking our faith and understanding that life may not be the way that we had dreamed it would be. But it can still be great. And trusting that God has plans for us.

Cheri Gregory

So good. Okay, so Tracie, we're going to wrap up with just a two-pronged question here. If you could say one thing to encourage a listener today who's going through a divorce, what would you tell them? And then what final words do you have for those of us with a friend going through a divorce?

Tracie Miles

I would tell them that they are going to make it. You don't think that you are. I know I've said that earlier, but you literally don't think you can survive some days or get through some problems and everything seems so overwhelming, but one day, it will be okay. And we just have to allow God to take us by the hand every single day. And trust Him. One of the big things I talked about in the book is the fear, fear of everything under the sun, and it just consumes your heart.

So just turning those fears over. Trusting God with every day in every circumstance and just remembering and reminding yourself that one day is going to be okay, and you're going to make it.

And regarding the question about what final words do you have for someone that has a friend going through divorce – I mentioned earlier just to be there for them. The worst thing you can do is to avoid talking to them or being with them because you feel awkward, you don't know what to talk about. You're not sure what side to take, which is a very, very common issue. So just remembering that not to take sides, just let the person know that you're there for them, you care about them, maybe buy them a copy of *Living Unbroken*. We have so many people I know – so many people that have bought *Living Unbroken* for their friends or family members who are going through divorce because number one, they can read it and get an inside glimpse of what it's really like to go through divorce. It's hard to understand if you haven't walked those shoes, but number two, it's also a great resource to give them to help them get through this situation.

Amy Carroll

So Tracie, it's really exciting to hear that David C. Cook has really gotten behind your book, they want to put it into more hands and especially into groups of people who are healing from divorce. How's that all going?

Tracie Miles

It's going great. And I've been working on a project that I am so excited about, it's kind of a dream come true. So *Living Unbroken* was obviously an act of service to the Lord, but I wanted to take it a step farther so that the reading of it – like I said in the very beginning is great, but you have to learn how to practically apply it to your life. So I have created it Participant Guide, and a Leader's Guide, and a seven week video curriculum that we'll be rolling out in the February/March timeframe of 2022. And we're going to hopefully get that into churches all across the nation. So women can go to support groups of women that get what they're going through. That are walking in their shoes. That understand them. And it's also unique in that it's only women, whereas other divorce care programs or divorce support groups are both men and women. That can feel awkward and uncomfortable. So this is going to be groups just for women. So I'm really excited about that rolling out the spring.

Amy Carroll

That's fantastic. Where will people be able to find that when it's available?

Tracie Miles

They'll be able to find it on Amazon or any of the book retailers. Also more information on the ABC book site. And of course, I'll have everything on my website. It's traciemiles.com.

Cheri Gregory

Well, friends, we sure hope you've enjoyed listening to Episode 245 of Grit'N'Grace: The Podcast as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll

We're so grateful that you join us each and every week,

Cheri Gregory

and we're so grateful to Faithful Counseling for their sponsorship of this week's episode. To find out more about Faithful Counseling and get matched with a counselor that fits your needs, visit faithfulcounseling.com/gritngrace.

Amy Carroll

Check out our webpage at gritngracethepodcast.com/episode245. There you'll find this week's transcript, a link to order Tracie's book *Living Unbroken: Reclaiming Your Life and Heart After Divorce* and a link to Tracie's website, which has some great resources related to her book.

Cheri Gregory

Join us next week when we'll be talking with Heather Creekmore, author of *The Burden of Better: How a Comparison-Free Life Leads to Joy, Peace, and Rest*.

Amy Carroll

For today, grow your grit,

Cheri Gregory

embrace God's grace,

Amy Carroll

and as God reveals the next step to live your one life well,

Cheri Gregory

we'll be cheering you on! So –

Both

take it!