

Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST

Episode #232: Developing an Easy Companionship with God

Amy Carroll

Cheri, if you had a literal easy button, what would you use it for?

Cheri Gregory

Like a button that if I pushed it it would –

Amy Carroll

– make something easier.

Cheri Gregory

Okay, you're gonna laugh at me. I don't know! Like, I suppose oughta be able to think of something. But here's the thing. And it took a friend to point this out to me, I pretty much feel like if something is too easy, it doesn't count. Like, the harder something is and the more it hurts, the more legitimate it is. So I'm gonna have to really think about this. How about you? What would you do with an easy button? Teach me, oh wise one.

Amy Carroll

Okay, that's hilarious. A long time ago, I bought into the good enough movement. And so an easy button sounds amazing. And I would use it to write my next book, because you know that I labor over book writing. So okay, friends, think about it. What would you use your easy button for?

Cheri Gregory

It's a great question. Okay, I figured out what I would use it for. I would use it to take parsley and make it finely chopped without having to use a knife. That's what I need for the tabouli I love to eat. But I hate to make it. I mean, but we call it a labor of love. Because I'm like, I just don't love anybody enough to do it. It's just so much work.

Amy Carroll

I see. At first I was like 'you are losing me with the parsley.' But now I get it. Okay, good.

Cheri Gregory

Yes, but I love the idea of an easy button. And I'm going to really have to rethink this whole idea of only things that feel super duper hard and possibly even hurting being legitimate because maybe it shouldn't be that way.

Amy Carroll

Well, Shellie gave us a remodel of our the way we think about our spiritual lives. And it was sort of like an easy button.

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 processing what we learned from Shellie Rushing Tomlinson, author of *Finding Deep and Wide: Stop Settling for the Life You Have and Live the One Jesus Died to Give You*.

Cheri Gregory

Alright, well, Amy, we're gonna have you start out with lose who you're not. What are you encouraging us to lose?

Amy Carroll

'You're not just a pretty plastic face.' So I was fascinated when I heard Shellie's deep Southern accent. I was like, I bet we have some things in common. And I asked her, you know, what is it about being Southern that makes this perfectionism such a big deal? And she said, "Our mom has told us do what you're asked to do, comply, and look pretty while you're doing." And it's funny, because I remember even as a child, we mentioned North Carolina from Kansas, actually from Colorado, but all my family's Midwestern, but I was three and we moved into a 'Yes ma'am' culture. So – and my parents really struggled with that, because nobody in the Midwest, children do not say "Yes, ma'am." and "Yes, sir." But in the south, in North Carolina, their children, especially when I was little, always were expected to say "Yes, ma'am." and "Yes, sir." So it was still very much a culture of 'Children are to be seen and not heard. You are to comply and do what the adults tell you to.'

I think it's a little less now because our world has just really changed. But my parents are a little bit horrified by that. And yet, I think that that whole compliance, that fitting in, that, you know, look-good culture is still very much in place. I just remember listening to a client of mine who had moved from the north end to the deep south, her children went to a Christian school, and she's like, "What is up with women in full makeup in carpool line, like, I just can't even! You know, but that whole exterior facade thing that we talked about is really, really a big deal down in the south. And I don't think it's the southern thing anymore. It probably never was just a southern thing. But I think that social media has just amped up that pretty plastic face thing. And you know, I think we're just, what Shellie was talking to us about doing is just really working to take off that mask. And that's part of what we have to do to walk with Jesus, but also to walk well with other people.

Cheri Gregory

I love that. So my not statement, lose who you're not, 'You're not on your own.' I could even embellish that to say you're not all by yourself, left all alone to figure it out. I loved her story of Mercy, the rescue dog, and her application in terms of how we can treat God like a halfway house. Now I do want to go on a bunny trail here and say that I totally agree with Shellie. She said all dogs go to heaven. And if they don't, don't tell me. I don't want to know.

Amy Carroll

Absolutely.

Cheri Gregory

When Annemarie was in fourth grade, she had a teacher who felt it was very important to tell the kids the truth about that pets didn't go to heaven. And this teacher didn't have to deal with the fallout of sobbing children coming home from school and spending the evening sobbing. So I'm with Shelley, if they don't, don't tell me, I don't want to know.

Amy Carroll

Yes. Absolutely.

Cheri Gregory

I loved her story of Mercy, who was distrustful of anything other than rescue. And, you know, she said, 'When Jesus got ahold of my heart, He said, I would love you more than you can ever imagine, if you will stay and quit trying to come and go at My throne and get your needs met while you live your life.' And that whole picture of coming and going, coming and going, coming and going, just getting the bare minimum, but then going off to do things that that really did resonate with me. But then the corollary of not being alone not being on your own is, you're not the boss of you.

Amy Carroll

That's the harder thing.

Cheri Gregory

I realize that's why I have such a hard time. And again, I'm going to quote Shellie, 'cause I just love her honesty. She said, 'As long as I walk this earth, I'm going to want to be the boss of me.' That this is how we wake up. It doesn't matter if I was at a place last night as I was going to sleep, and I was reading and praying and hearing from God and everything was wonderful. The next morning, I have to do the living dying all over again, I have to realize when I wake up that I want to live dying, so Jesus can come through me into this dark world. And it reminded me so much of – C.S. Lewis says something about every morning he woke up as an atheist, and you know, having to remember having to recommit to oh, yeah, I'm not the boss of me. You're not the boss of you.

And the whole story of Mercy, being distrustful of anything but rescue, and then wanting to go off and be her own boss reminded me of something that a theme that came up for me as we were writing the book *Exhale*. And it was four words: rescue, yes; refuge, no. And I realized that I had lived my life saying yes to God rescuing me, but no to actually taking refuge in Him. And so you're not on your own

has many, many meanings. And all of them having to do with finding rescue and refuge in Christ.

Take us into – we've done our statements of lose who you're not, take us into love who you are. What's your are statement?

Amy Carroll

'You are an easy companion with God.' As I typed this, Cheri, my fingers would barely work. I had a hard time typing. And because so much of my walk has been about striving, and checklists, and doing it right and trying harder, as if I am the one that's making the makeover happen. You know, I loved her bathroom story –

Cheri Gregory

So the harder and even if it hurts, it must be more spiritual.

Amy Carroll

– absolutely, absolutely. And so Shellie said it this way: 'I bought into that what I have done, instead of what Jesus has done, I had to rethink learning to approach my father, I call it with the big ticket.' This is awesome. 'Jesus is just like the big ticket every day, we walk into His presence with the big ticket and our hands waving it. I've got the big ticket, not gauging his welcome with me based on my performance, but that I stepped through the door with the big ticket,' like I had this picture in my mind, you know, of me with this big – it's yellow, too, I had this big yellow ticket in my hand, waving it. And Jesus is the big ticket. And it helps me to step into Jesus Himself. He helps me step into being God's easy companion. And I think Cheri, I think I'm just finally starting to learn this.

So last night, I was standing on my front porch, Barry and I had done yard work, it was looking really spectacular out there. But I just had this moment, I was just looking around my yard and my neighborhood and thinking about my neighbors in my neighborhood. And I had this enormous wash of just joy and love, and just like gratefulness for my life and the people and it and I had this moment I was like, God is here. So I wasn't sitting down with my journal and my pen and my Bible, in my special spot, having my quiet time, but I just had this encounter with God in the midst of the ordinary. And I think that is a concept, I hate to say, that is sort of new to me. Have I experienced God all along the way? Of course, but I'm having these – more and more often these experiences with God and every day moments, and it's kind of like the easy companionship that you have with a best friend.

So sometimes, you know, with a close friend you talk nonstop. And then sometimes there's just kind of this easy silence. And sometimes you do the huge belly laughs together. And that is really good medicine. And then sometimes you are sharing the deepest sobs together. And I'm finding that more and more of my relationship with God is like that, that it's less work. I'm getting there, I started to keep an eye out for this performance-ism, that raises his ugly head, but it doesn't affect me quite as much now. And it is one of those victorious cycles, I think, or virtuous cycles, either one, that you talk about, is that once you've had a few of those experiences like that, with God, these easy experiences of his presence in your everyday life, and in these everyday moments, it just makes you hungry for more of that. And they also reveal that that performance-ism is something plastic and inferior. And I don't want that anymore. So it's been kind of a beautiful journey.

Cheri Gregory

I love absolutely everything you said. And there was a little throwaway line in there. It was three words, you said "It's less work." You just said that as you – and then you went into something else really good and profound, but I'm like, less work. That actually sounds so nice.

Amy Carroll

Yeah. Easy companionship with God. Wow, what a concept Shellie gave us. And so how about you, what's your love who you are?

Cheri Gregory

My love who you are statement is 'You are being tutored by God 24/7.' And so it going from treating God like a halfway house – and this is, Shelley described that as the times I'm coming to God, when I need provision, I need a healing, when I need something, then I'm only coming for a request. And I even, you know, she was saying that during the interview, I was thinking to myself, we know that's like, like, as a parent, when our kids walk in the room, we can tell by the way they walk, we can tell by the look on their face that they just want to ask for something. And you know, I'm not saying that's bad. It's just, but we can read it. We know when that's the only goal of the interaction, or a friend when they're trying to get something out of us. You know, those Facebook messages. 'Hi, so great to see you're doing so well. I'm wondering if you've ever heard of name that latest multi level marketing company that's being, you know, pushed on social media.' And I can also tell when I'm doing it to somebody else. It's this achy, grab and ghost kind of a habit that we have. Oh, that's a new term. I coined it myself.

Amy Carroll

I love it, quite appropriate.

Cheri Gregory

And then Shellie said, God is asking us to come further than that, to quit coming and going with our request and to live in his presence. And so what I'm really picturing here is moving from this halfway house God to the full time tutor God. And so again, here's what she essentially said. She said, He's going, I want to partner with you in this extreme home makeover, I'm not asking you to do it and I'll see you later and grade you, I want to tutor you daily. And she said, that's changed my life completely. And so it just got me thinking, what would it be like to live in His presence? And of course, we know that's true. Like Scripture says, In Him, we live and move and have our being, so we already live in his presence. So what would it be like to live aware that I'm living in His presence and that He is tutoring me 24/7?

You know, we talked after our interview with Andrew Farley, about having God being a best and favorite coach, you said best friend, and I'm kind of taking this approach of a coach who is just, you know, who's not demanding, who's not punitive, who's not distant, who's not stand offish and judging, but who's right there in the thick with us and helping me move forward and grow. Now, I've never been part of a home renovation. So I don't identify with that particular analogy. But the idea that God would be looking at me in the middle of a makeover with the same satisfaction as we look at a finished project – that blew my mind, that blew my mind.

Amy Carroll

Well, you know, I love a home makeover.

Cheri Gregory

Yes, I do. And I think you're nuts.

Amy Carroll

And currently, there is a one room challenge going on Better Homes and Gardens, I think does it like twice a year. And so I have one room challenge on my Instagram feed, and I'm watching their stories. And as you're talking, my brain is just spinning because every day people are posting the next little step in their story. And they're so excited about what happened and what they're sharing. The project isn't even finished yet. There's still four weeks left and most of them are only halfway through but they're so excited. So I'm just paralleling this with what you're saying. Can you imagine our God like each little thing that He accomplishes, and as He like puts it on Instagram Stories like 'Look where she is today! Isn't that amazing! She's so much better than she was yesterday.' I mean, I love all of that.

Cheri Gregory

Okay. Now I'm going to need to reach for Kleenex. I love that because as a teacher, as a coach, I know I feel that way about, you know, my students and the people I coach, but turning it around and thinking of God thinking that way of me that that is what I want to learn to live in. I want to learn to live in that reality.

Amy Carroll

Yes. And the one the other little extrapolation here as I was like, and the the one room challenge, it's not one day. It's six weeks and the work that God has to do and as is long,

Cheri Gregory

I love that so much. And I'm still not going to get into home renovation.

Alright, let's talk about live your one life well. So I have a few questions that we can be asking ourselves. The first one: In what ways do I treat God like a halfway house? In what ways do I say to Him 'Rescue, yes, refuge, no.'? Number two, what am I trying to grab and ghost from God? Number three, how do I feel about God? tutoring me 24/7. And number four, what would change if I believe that God is truly satisfied with me even in the midst of the makeover?

Amy Carroll

Beautiful.

Okay, so, um, I just couldn't make myself – Action Amy was actionless. Because I was like, well, the whole thing that Shellie's trying to do is to tell us not to do so much. So my one little assignment is – it's not really an assignment. It's just be with Jesus. Shelley was trying to teach us to quit the striving, you know, quit all of the crazy that we enter into and just be with Jesus. So take some time today to just be with Jesus.

Cheri Gregory

I love that. So the scripture that she shared with us, John 7:37-39. It says 'On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink, whoever believes in me as scripture has said rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive up to that time, the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified.'

Amy Carroll

What an incredible scripture. So you know, the grit in that is anyone who is thirsty, come to me and drink Jesus over and over again, as I look at his the stories of him in the Gospel, he called people to him. There were occasions that He went to people, but very, very often, He called people to Him, and He is calling us to Him to the refuge, you know, but we have to, we have to go to the refuge. And so the grit is actually going to Jesus, we have to take an intentional step towards him. He is the living water, He makes us thirsty no more, but we have to go to Him for it.

Cheri Gregory

And you know, I think the grace is, and again, I love how honest Shellie was with us, that she wakes up every morning wanting to be her own boss. And that deep and wide life of the rivers of living water that will be flowing within us, that God has grace for us. When we're more like Mercy, the rescue dog who comes in for just that little bit, and then run away, that God is always there. He's always waiting. The deep and wide life is available to us. It's not something that disappears, there's no expiration date. It's not a you didn't take advantage and your coupon expired, so it's too late. He's there. He's waiting. And as we are being wooed, and I loved your description, and love your description of how certain things are getting easier that that sense of easy companionship of God is coming more naturally to you. The time that it takes us to unlearn the old ways. And to learn these new ways. The ability to take that time is God's grace in action right there.

Amy Carroll

I love that. And you know, I think about our last season and it was on spiritual disciplines. And so all of that grace does not negate the spiritual disciplines either. But it enriches the spiritual disciplines if we keep if we keep the spiritual disciplines as a checklist. We never step into that easy companionship with God.

So Cheri, I just can't help but think that *Finding Deep and Wide* would be a great book to read with a group of friends. Not only is it fun, because Shellie is – did we not have a blast with her? Oh, my goodness, we have a new friend for sure. Yeah. And I just think, you know, we did it amongst friends and how great her book would be to do amongst friends.

Cheri Gregory

Yes, you know, she's got thoughtful questions included in the book for group discussion and private reflection. And then I'm also thinking, just listening to you I'm going to take along Daniel and I are going to do a bit of a road trip this summer. I think it'd be a great read-aloud when he's driving for me to read to him. Her sense of humor matches his and her storytelling is just amazing.

Amy Carroll

Okay, so we want to hear the follow up on that Cheri, how Daniel likes *Finding Deep and Wide*.

Cheri Gregory

I will report!

Well friends, we sure hope you've enjoyed listening to episode number 232 of Grit'N'Grace: The Podcast as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll

And we want to say a big thank you to Shellie Rushing Tomlinson, author of *Finding Deep and Wide: Stop Settling for the Life You Have and Live the One Jesus Died to Give You*, and her publisher Salem Books for making this episode possible.

Cheri Gregory

Check out our web page at gritandgracethepodcast.com/episode232. There you'll find this week's transcript, a link to order *Finding Deep and Wide: Stop Settling for the Life You Have and Live the One Jesus Died to Give You* to give you, and a link to Shellie's website which has some great resources related to the book.

Amy Carroll

Next week we'll be talking with Jennifer Dukes Lee, author of *Growing Slow: Lessons on Uncovering Your Heart From an Accidental Farm Girl*.

Cheri Gregory

For today, grow your grit,

Amy Carroll

embrace God's grace,

Cheri Gregory

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

Amy Carroll

we'll be cheering you on! So –

Both

take it!