

Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST

Episode #242: How to Make 2022 a Fabulous Year for You

Cheri Gregory

Amy, I know that you say that you struggle with writing. So what fuels you and keeps you going as a writer?

Amy Carroll

There is only one thing that keeps me sitting at a desk with a blank screen and a blinking cursor.

Cheri Gregory

The cursor's on the computer, right?

(Both laugh)

Amy Carroll

Curser, cursor, yeah.

Cheri Gregory

Okay, what is it?

Amy Carroll

It's stories of life changed. That is what fuels me is that I could write something that makes a difference in somebody's life and draws them closer to Jesus. That's the only thing that keeps me going. It's the fuel. How about you? What's the fuel for you?

Cheri Gregory

Well, it's at least somewhat similar. For me – I'm going to call them 'you too' moments as in 'Oh, that happened to you too.' or 'You feel that way too.' I just think it is such a relief to discover we're not the only one, that someone else gets us. Somebody else understands us. And it just makes us feel like we belong and that we're in community.

Amy Carroll

Oh, yeah. I love that too. Maybe there are two things to keep. Well, today we're talking with two friends who have fueled us with their stories of life change after reading *Exhale*. Wendy Schulz is the owner of Adventures Together, a travel business that includes modern pilgrimages to France and Italy for women. She is one of my everyday life friends, my study partner, and a beloved travel companion. You can find out about Wendy and her trips at wendyandersonschulz.com.

Cheri Gregory

Leslie Newman is a mom, wife, writer, and life coach. After spending time being way too busy in life, she learned to slow down and treasure her relationships. As a life coach, Leslie specializes in helping women step out of people-pleasing

patterns and create better boundaries for a better life. You can get her free People Pleasers Guide to Saying No Without the Guilt at her website, leslieneuman-coaching.com.

Amy Carroll

Well, it's so fun to have both of you with us today. And Wendy, you're going to kind of talk about the individual experience. And then Leslie, you've led a group through which is so wonderful. So tell us, what's one key point or take away from part one, that lose who you're not? What was your big kind of epiphany?

Leslie Newman

For me, it was 'You're not defined by old labels.' So you know, I've actively been working on peeling off some of these unhelpful layers in my life in recent years. And they usually have labels stuck all over them. And so I've been through the *Exhale* book twice. And between reading the first time and the second time, I had a lot of inner changes. And I went into the second time through thinking that I had already identified all of my unhelpful labels, but I was wrong. And I found a new one. It was actually an old label that I hadn't recognized before. And it was sort of driving all of the other labels.

Amy Carroll

Are you willing to share, Leslie?

Leslie Newman

Yes, I can. It was it was unloved.

Amy Carroll

Wow.

Leslie Newman

And you can see how that would be driving a lot of other things in my life, other labels or other lies that I was telling myself. So that was a really powerful moment for me, losing that label, recognizing that I was still defining myself by an old label. That was a real takeaway.

Amy Carroll

That made me teary. I wanted to reach through the computer and like, hug you, when you shared that with us. Thank you.

Wendy

Yes, me too. I can resonate with that a lot. There was a phrase for me of pseudo-superpowers, in reference to losing these things, even our pseudo-superpowers. And for me, I realized I've been carrying around this manufactured label on myself, or phrase, that I am a high capacity person. And I would tell myself that over and over again. I can homeschool my kids, I work full time ministry, I can start a side gig, I can care for my parents, I can also be the class mom or whatever season it was. Pile this on, because I'm a high capacity person. And I think that – I know that came from works equal value, and my family of origin. And so I just wanted to have a lot of works to come up with some value.

And so losing that label of what if I'm not a high capacity person, what if I do very little a day. And you know, the remarkable thing of me laying that down was

realizing the people closest to me, my husband, my kids, my dearest friends, most importantly, the Lord, their love for me is stable. There's no movement in what I did, or got done that day. So that was biggest thing for me, like laying down that really fake superpower, which is not true.

Amy Carroll

Powerful.

Cheri Gregory

Okay, now I'm gonna be the one to tear up.

So what's one example of how you've been able to lose who you're not? Just curious with what that might look like for you?

Leslie Newman

I think for me, stepping out of people-pleasing patterns, and setting up healthy boundaries in my life. And changing those patterns is as hard as losing the labels that go with them. And if I'm in people-pleasing patterns, I'm not being my authentic self, because I'm making decisions based on what others expect or what I think that they expect. And when I do that, I'm not able to serve God well, because I'm too busy just picking up everything that comes my way instead of seeking out God's plan and learning about how He created me to serve Him. So you know, just stepping out of those unhelpful patterns. And you know, there's so much of that in the book, the *Exhale* book, and I just love diving into those things deeper.

Wendy

Yeah, I would say for me, there was this quote I loved that said “In every life, there are people who don't think we can change, or they don't want us to change because it benefits them for us to stay stuck.” And so for me, in trying to work this out, it is me just dealing with that tension of there has to be a lot of no’s to things that people benefited from saying yes, but they weren’t authentic things that I need to be or should be doing. So it's that practice of that.

Amy Carroll

Yeah, Cheri and I talked about how – oh, my gosh.

Cheri Gregory

I can’t resist. I pulled out my pom-poms.

(All laugh)

I'm so excited. Go ahead, Amy. Sorry.

Amy Carroll

No, I mean, Cheri and I talked about – when we discussed last time about how so many people seem to have thought from the title that the book was about rest. And what you're actually introducing us to is some really hard stuff.

Cheri Gregory

Yep.

Amy Carroll

There's some hard work that happens when we lose who we're not.

Wendy

But I think rest comes from that, like soul rest, you know, so rest.

Amy Carroll

Well said.

So Leslie, you led a group through this. So I love hearing that you've run it twice. And then you processed it with a group too. So tell us a story about a woman in your group who lost who she wasn't? What does that look like? What did it look like for them?

Leslie Newman

Well, I think with all of us, me included, in our group we were really focused on the first part of that book in losing the labels. The video that we watched at our first group gathering was really impacting because in that video, Cheri put on a robe, where she had taken a marker and written all the labels from her life. And that was so powerful for our group. And later, several of the women shared that they were thinking 'Well, what would have been on my robe? And what labels am I wearing?' And so I think many of us began to identify labels. And we began to think about 'What would life look like if we got out from under this?' And so when we identify that label, then we're able to start considering the impact of that label across our life. And I think that's what a lot of us were doing. And that love speaks louder than lies video, that was so impacting to see the lies crossed out and replaced by the truth from God's word.

Amy Carroll

Well, I'm so glad you brought up the videos, Leslie, 'cause I think a lot of people probably don't know that Cheri labored really hard over – and we had Nolan, my son, to help us spiff up a lot. And we have free videos on the exhalebook.com website for groups to use as they go through them. So we're thrilled you use them, Leslie!

Cheri Gregory

Absolutely.

Alright. So part two of *Exhale* is love who you are. So before we dive into the meat of this, did either of you feel any personal resistance to the concept of loving who you are?

Wendy

Definitely. Yeah, yes, yes, I think I have spent a lot of years being hyper focused on areas of improvement. And that can just really cultivate a critical spirit, which is interesting, because I don't have that for anyone else. And so the fact that I just carried that for myself is such a thing. But in reading this section of the book, the part that I remember several mornings – so I read the book through, then I got the study guide, I did a study guide myself, and literally back to back, read the book through again, doing the study guide. And so it was just like chewing and chewing on this content.

But the piece that just, like upset me – to use a kind word – was the part where you talked about appoint and disappoint people. I was very resistant to let go of this label of being everybody's superhero. Because the flip side of that coin is for me, then to just be authentic to myself was going to come along with a lot of disappointment for some people in my life, not my closest, not my nuclear family now, but for a lot of people. And I was resistant to be seen as someone who was disappointing. So that's probably my biggest area of resistance was like my internal life.

Cheri Gregory

Sure, sure.

Leslie Newman

I noticed something interesting about myself in this time through the book: as a leader, I've gotten a lot better at understanding how to have a Christ-like love for myself, and I know a lot more about who I am since the first time I read this book, and I am comfortable with loving myself in a Christ-like way, but what I noticed is that it's something I'm doing really well privately. But when I go out there and share that in public, it becomes very uncomfortable for me. And that's where the resistance came from me. And it was because of how unnatural it feels to share that in a more public way.

And so you know, as a leader of a group, I'm going to be encouraging others to think about these concepts of loving ourselves. And you know, bringing all these things out from the *Exhale* book that you all have written about in there, and about loving ourselves in a Christ-like way, but there's so many of us that are

coming from backgrounds where there's been an idea that loving ourselves is selfish, right? And we're also coming from our own misunderstanding of what the Bible really says about loving ourselves. And so those ideas are hard to overcome, because they're really ingrained in us. And so, you know, you'll see some of my patterns here, but I had this fear of getting pushed back in some way for even saying anything about how a Christian woman is to love herself.

Amy Carroll

What you're talking about, Leslie, is church culture. We're not talking about oh, those other outside people. We're talking about church culture thinks it's selfish to love ourselves. And you and I, Leslie, have connected over being reforming perfectionists for a long time. And so that's hard for we reforming perfectionists.

So did you get any pushback from the women in your group about that concept of loving themselves? And how did you handle it?

Leslie Newman

I didn't get pushback to me personally at all in any way. But I know within myself, and I'm guessing within some of the others, there's the spiritual pushback that we get, because we've got an enemy that does not want us to love ourselves like Christ, in a Christ-like way, he doesn't want us to love ourselves like Christ, like God loves us. And so it's that in loving ourselves, we're more fully able to go carry out the things that God has created us to do. Satan doesn't want us to do that. And so there's that spiritual pushback. That was the concern for me and how Satan can quietly twist the truth and keep the laws rolling in our

minds. But that's the one of the great things about the *Exhale* book is it's teaching us how to let go of those laws, how to how to identify that, and move past it so that we can be freed up to love ourselves fully, so that we can do the work that God created us to do.

Cheri Gregory

It's exciting as an author to be talking with people who get it. This whole vision that we had, however, many years ago, it all came together, and it's like, aha, okay, people for whom it actually made sense.

Okay, I'll calm down a little bit here. Wendy, you already mentioned that one meaningful concept from Part Two, love who you are, was that whole disappointing people. Any other meaningful aha moments for either of you from from Part Two?

Leslie Newman

Chapter 14, I think that's in part two, was this discussion about loving your humanity. And that really hit home for me, because it's been such a hard part of my life, because I've had these perfectionism and people-pleasing patterns all my life. And so reading about the relief that comes when we stop impressing people and start expressing ourselves, that really meant a lot to me.

But what was really impactful with that was when Cheri, I think you were writing about when we stop impressing others and start expressing ourselves, we develop humility. And that kind of humility is demonstrated through authenticity. So that connection between stopping these old patterns, beginning to express

ourselves, developing humility, and being authentic, all of those connections, were especially meaningful. And truly, when we do let go of all that old stuff, it truly is such a relief.

Wendy

Absolutely. I've been going through this process of really releasing some big labels and pieces of my life in order to build the next season of my life. And those did include some hard disappointments. Like I mentioned before, we have left our church to learn to be at a more emotionally safe church. I closed down a successful business that disappointed people I worked with, I've left full-time church-based ministry, and in releasing some of those things that were contributing to my superhero complex, I've become very quiet, and spent a lot of time really more with myself, and just a quieter life. And the big aha I have from that is I really like myself. I'm good company. Like, I am good company. I'm funny. I make myself laugh a lot. Amy and I were just traveling together, she'll tell you, I will –

Amy Carroll

You are good company, Wendy, it is true!

Wendy

Like, I mean, I will think of something four days ago and start crying laughing all over again. Like I laugh easily. And I'm smart, and I'm proud of the person I am. And so that is a glorious aha moment. And I so deeply believe, as a mom, I look at my teen daughters, I look at my daughters, and I hope they ever believe and see how glorious I see them. And so so much more does our Heavenly Father

Look at us as daughters and know that we are His glorious creation. It gives him no honor. For us not to delight in ourselves. And so it's been a really beautiful thing just to see, like, I really like myself.

Cheri Gregory

So I just want to cheer. I mean, that is a huge accomplishment for so many of us.

Amy Carroll

And that's – it's a huge act of worship, as you said, Wendy, and I've gotten to watch Wendy be unleashed. And yeah, it's really amazing. She's always been smart and talented and had so much to offer to the world. But there's so much – you see the joy shining out of her now it's amazing. Yeah.

So what's one way you've put love who you are into practice – or Leslie, maybe you want to tell us how you saw someone in your group do that?

Leslie Newman

Well, I think for me, myself, it's – I don't watch how I'm speaking to myself. Because I can look back and remember things that I was telling myself in the past, and I'm astounded by it, when I listen to my own inner language, I would never speak to somebody else the way that I used to speak to myself. And so loving who I am involves believing what God believes about me, and defining myself in Christ, and not defining myself in all of these approval-seeking behaviors and people-pleasing that keeps me stuck in the lies that I've told myself, and it doesn't lead me to the authentic life that God wants me to live.

So you know, a sense of watching how we speak to ourselves, watching, paying attention to how we're labeling ourselves, paying attention to our inner dialogue, I think all of us were doing that in our group. And then learning how to love ourselves, gives us confidence, and it brings us back to our individuality. Because we all know that God has created each of us in such a unique way, in an individual way, because he has individual things He wants us to do. And so coming back to that individuality, and discerning how to take care of ourselves, and express ourselves freely, and protect ourselves by putting healthy boundaries in our lives, then that just frees us to be who God created us to be. And so those are the kind of things that I was seeing in myself and in others as we were moving through the book.

Wendy

That's beautiful. I think for me, a big thing I put in action is taking care of my health. That has become a very big priority for me in the last year. So I know the Holy Spirit is within me. So if this is the temple I get to walk around in, putting it last, poisoning it with foods that I know are not life-giving, I very much – when my kids were younger, and in middle school – was part of that whole like 'Mommy needs a glass of wine' culture that is so prevalent today. And it's not like – mommy wine culture is not a cute quote that should be on our mugs and we should be celebrating and 'ha ha ha' as women because it's like an epidemic of our kids growing up thinking 'My mom's got to pour a seltzer or pour a hard seltzer or pour a cocktail to take me to the park or the swimming pool' or whatever. And so really just prioritizing my health. Getting control about how I think about things like alcohol, things like various unhealthy foods, and how I think

about exercise, because I am worth taking the time, even if that means our family eats 30 minutes later or somebody else makes dinner in my household, that is worth it.

Amy Carroll

We've decided – you gotta get your steps in to be able to walk around France and Italy.

Wendy

Literal steps. Yeah.

Cheri Gregory

Mmm, that's so good. Both of those, so good. You know, it's such a tension when we start talking about health. There's that tension between okay, we don't wanna make anybody feel guilty or ashamed because that's not good for us. So I just love that this is part of loving who you are, you found a an authentic way to have that dialogue with yourself and make changes that work for you.

So last but far from least is action Amy's favorite section of the book. Part Three: Live Your One Life Well. So what's one concept or point from that section that you especially resonated with?

Leslie Newman

Live free to meet the need with your name on it. Love that. It just keeps me taking steps forward and makes me feel energized, the living free, that comes from letting go of all that old stuff, but also then being able to meet the need with

your name on it. That even keeps me going even when God takes me out of my comfort zone.

Wendy

I love that there was this quote, Cheri, that's around your basil plant. What if this is true of all of our dreams? What if no one dream is meant to be the ultimate, but what if each dream is supposed to seed the next? And I read that at such a powerful time in my life. For me, the dream since I was very, very little was to be a mama. And we went through five years of infertility treatments and finally I got to be a mama. And I have two daughters now. And as I was reading this, I think the first time my daughter was probably the end of her junior year, and I had this imposing year of her senior year, and now she's moved out for college over me, of like, what's now? Because this did feel like the ultimate dream for so long. And so that quote is very powerful to me of allowing the next dream to be seeded. Because God has good and more dreams to come.

Amy Carroll

Powerful.

So what does live your one life well look for you look like for you right now?

Leslie Newman

Well, for me, in a nutshell, what I've realized that living my one life well looks like being myself. And you know, if I do that, then I'm able to have the impact in the exact ways that God created me to have impact in the world around me. But each one of us has only – we have things that only we can do, nobody else can

do things in the same way that we can. And so we all have a part that we're carrying. But we can't do that if we're not ourselves, if we're not our authentic selves.

And I just think that being able to love ourselves with a Christ-like love. Recognizing that part in the verse where it says "Love your neighbor as yourself," I think it's Mark 12:31, I think you know that the loving yourself and loving your neighbor is equal. You don't put yourself on the back burner. In order to love your neighbor, you take care of yourself so that you can love your neighbor with energy, and stamina and you take care of yourself, you love yourself so that you can go out and do that. And I think when we do that, when we are being ourselves, I think it just brings so much great joy to our Creator. Because that's, that's who he created us to be as ourself.

Wendy

Okay. I love that. For me, it's being brave to create and do what I believe the Lord has called me to do right now, which – I sent Amy a text in 2019 that said "Wouldn't it be great if we brought women to France, or to Italy, and we talked about Jesus and we sat at long tables and olive groves and made new friends and then sent them home to be amazing in their hometown?" And so I'm doing that and Amy's along for the ride, which is the most fun, ever. But so many people have asked me, "Well, who's whose business is this?" And I'm like "Mine." But what they mean is like, "Who gave you permission to do this?" Because they haven't heard of someone who did that before. Like it's not a mission trip. And I get that question a lot, like, who gave me permission to do this. And the

truth of matter is I know the Lord has called me to this. I'm just gonna do this. And there's great joy in it.

Amy

I'm super happy to be along for the ride.

Wendy

I didn't really say that correctly. You're way more than along for the ride.

Cheri Gregory

Okay, and so the indignation is rising up within me because the the the hidden message in that question is 'How dare you?'

Amy Carroll

Or 'Surely you didn't think of this?' right?

Wendy

Amy knows this funny story. So my daughter's boyfriend came over this summer. And he'd been eating in a restaurant with his grandmother and his mom and sister and you know how restaurants sometimes just end up right on top of the next table. And these two ladies sat down. I don't know who they were, but they knew me and started speaking about me using my full name and speaking about my new business and wanting to take women to France. And so the boyfriend and his mother were very uncomfortable because they were speaking very derogatorily that I'm 'supposedly' a Christian.

(Amy and Cheri laugh angrily)

It is hard. I think that's a burden. And it is hard when you when your life is imprisoned to social norms, toxic church culture, whatever it is. And it embitters you to see a free woman who is walking in the love of the Lord and her own joy. It is embittering and it's a prison. So yeah.

Amy Carroll

Tell it Wendy. Yeah, everybody doesn't rejoice in this being yourself, do they, Leslie? I mean, what Wendy is expressing, that it can put you at a little bit at odds with other people at times. So there's good news. And there's hard news. But hey, when you're walking with Jesus, and the fullness of who He made you to be there is nothing like it. And you will, once you've experienced it, you won't give it up for anybody. So, yeah.

Cheri Gregory

So Leslie, any changes that you noticed in your ladies from the beginning of the *Exhale* study to the end of the study?

Leslie Newman

Well, I think that I noticed a lot of us paying more attention. I think that's a real important key. This, examining your life and the inner reflection is not for the faint of heart. But I noticed all of us developing this sense of support, and a little bit of stamina in being able to do those things, and knowing that we're not

alone. In the beginning of the study, we recognized and shared some of the negative thoughts and negative language they were speaking inside. And we did not recognize that all of us had this similar inner language. So that was really powerful for us, and just noticing that the people around us are also, you know, also having these same things. And so now, what can we do about this, it's a very personal and private thing. But it's also something that we can support each other in when we meet in a group and go through these things together.

So there was that, and then just the courage to begin removing some of these old labels and not stay stuck in our old suffering, and not continue to tell ourselves, the lies that keep us held back. So there's a courage to redefine who we are based on what God thinks of us instead of how we've labeled ourselves, or how somebody else might have labeled us sometime in the past.

Amy Carroll

Well, we thank you so much for both of you being here. And we wanted to take a few minutes just to talk about some of the extra resources that we developed around *Exhale*.

Wendy, you went through the study guide on your own and you expressed to me how that brought you to a deeper place. Was there anything especially that you loved about the study guide?

Wendy

I think what the study guide does is when you read the book, you're kind of pacing it at your own pace. If you're a fast reader, and it's such a good read, it's

easy to go through it quickly. But the study guide slowed me down. And that gave me time and I was out on walks or during the day to be really processing and pondering the questions that I had journaled about that morning. And it just let it simmer with me more. And so last Christmas, actually, I gave the book and the study guide with mugs, chocolate and cozy socks to multiple women in my family. Because I think the gift of discovering yourself is one of the greatest gifts we can give people. I've given as a birthday present. And I think for me, this was actually the first study guide ever went through not in a group and so it was kind of freeing to be like, oh, I actually can study things without somebody who will tell me if I wrote the right or wrong answer in the little book. You know what I mean? And so yeah, I really encourage the study guide you know, it's wonderful if you have a few friends will do it with you. And if you don't, *you* are good friend to do it with you.

Amy Carroll

So good.

Cheri Gregory

And Leslie, you've just recently wrapped up the group study. Any comments about the Leaders Guide? You've already mentioned that they found the videos valuable; the study guide; any comments about those?

Leslie Newman

Well, I've led a few groups and using this Leader's Guide was so easy. Because it just it does the work for you. There's a schedule for each group gathering that you can follow, there's icebreaker suggestions and it's set up so that the work

or the meat of what you prepare for, you don't have to do that much preparation ahead of time, because it's based on the discussions that come up as you meet, and so you just can pull questions from the book or ask people for their insights. And it's just very, very easy to prepare.

And I love the way the Leader's Guide was set up because it did make getting ready, so easy. And it makes everything just flow naturally. Through those conversations that you'll have when you meet together, and the videos were just so easy to access, we had some people that were following us from home, because we were meeting in person for the first time for our women's group since Covid, and so some people were wanting to follow at home, and it was very easy to do it because those videos are online and easy to access. And the videos also do a lot of the work for you. And they're so impacting. So I just would encourage anybody that's thinking about reading a group, leading a group to also make sure you know about those videos.

Amy Carroll

Well, thank you so much. So both of you give us some closing words, for women who want to lose who they're not, love who they are, and live their one life well.

Wendy

I would just say, I deeply believe that your heavenly Father thinks you are worthy.

Amy Carroll

That made me tear up, Wendy. I love that.

Leslie Newman

And I just think that the loving ourselves is often the piece that we leave out of a picture of how to fully live for Christ. And so I think it brings the Lord joy when we work on paying attention and learning how to love ourselves as He loves us.

Cheri Gregory

You know, Amy, I really appreciated Wendy pointing out that not everyone will celebrate when we live our one life well. It made me sad, but it's important to know that that it can happen. But even if not everybody celebrates we still do it.

Amy Carroll

And I loved when Leslie talked about how they had this 'Oh, I'm not the only one' moments in her group when they talked about labels and the lies that they have believed about themselves.

Cheri Gregory

Absolutely. Those 'you too' moments are really what the small group experience – one of the key things the small group experience is about. And we want all of our friends to get to go deeper, so we develop great tools to do so. You can find both the study guide and the leader guide along with other tools – many of them free – at exhalebook.com.

Amy Carroll

Start now! Plan for 2022 for you, a fresh start in January right now. Go pick up a copy of *Exhale*, and if you're ready to go deep, get the study guide or form a group, too.

Cheri Gregory

Well friends, we sure hope you've enjoyed listening to Episode 242 of Grit'N'Grace: The Podcast as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll

Check out our webpage at [gritngracethepodcast.com/episode 242](http://gritngracethepodcast.com/episode%20242).

Cheri Gregory

There you'll find this week's transcript, links to order our book *Exhale: Lose Who You're Not, Love Who You Are, Live Your One Life Well* as well as the study guide and the Leader Guide plus a link to our website which has some great resources related to *Exhale*.

Amy Carroll

Join us next week when we'll be talking with Jill Baughan host of Find Joy No Matter What podcast.

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!