

Episode #287

From 'Not Enough' to Beloved: How to Reframe Your Beliefs about *Enoughness*

Do you get caught up in the cycle of feeling 'not enough'? If so, you're not alone! In this episode, Amy Carroll returns as my guest co-host, and we get real about the questions of 'enough-ness' that so many of us wrestle with, especially as Highly Sensitive Christian Women.

In this deeply personal conversation, Amy opens her heart around the worry "Am I enough?" while I share my life-long struggles with wondering "Am I doing enough?"

Throughout this episode, you'll discover practical ways to identify and shift the beliefs that keep you stuck in overthinking, overworking, and self-doubt. You can embrace your identity as God's beloved – and you can learn to discern when enough is truly enough.

[Intro music]

Welcome to *Grit 'n' Grace: The Podcast for Highly Sensitive Christian Women!*

I'm your host, Cheri Gregory.

Are you tired of the overthinking, overwhelm, and exhaustion that come with being a Highly Sensitive Person?

Are you ready to stop worrying that there's something wrong with you, and start understanding and nurturing yourself as an HSP?

Together, we'll build resilience, practice self-compassion, set healthy boundaries, unlock your creativity, and learn to embrace – not fight – your God-given sensitivity.

Let's dig in!

Hey friend –

I am SO thrilled that you're joining Amy and me today for a powerful conversation around "enough-ness."

It's sooooo common for those of us who are Highly Sensitive Persons to feel like because we are 'too much' in some aspects of our lives, it means that we are never enough in the areas that matter most to us.

So before I bring Amy on, I do want to let you know that this episode is sponsored by the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe.

Imagine for just a moment what it could be like for you to have a safe small community you can 'run' to whenever you want... 24/7... where you're not the only HSP... in fact, the community is only for HSPs!

So instead of comparing yourself unfavorably with all the non-HSPs in your life, you're getting to know other amazing HSP Christian women, and getting a feel for the range of what's normal for Highly Sensitive Persons!

Think of it as a 'wellness center' for your HSP heart where you can come get whatever you need, when you need it – whether it's by watching instructional videos, getting involved with live discussions, participating in group coaching, getting 1-to-1 coaching (which is included as a perk of membership)... whatever you need, whenever you need it.

For details about the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe, check out CheriGregory.com/cafe or click the link in the show notes.

And now, without further ado ...

Cheri Gregory

Welcome back, Amy Carroll. So glad to see you.

Amy Carroll

It's a delight to be here. I got over my guilt from last time. I'm just happy now.

Cheri Gregory

Good, excellent. That's the way it should be. I have to tell you, I love not being a source of guilt for you. That's very freeing for me.

Amy Carroll

I know that. Anyway, that's an Amy Carroll thing.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah, well, but when does that ever stop me from picking up others' emotions? You know, still learning, still learning, not to be quite so much of an emotional sponge.

Alright, this whole episode is coming together because of two things, and one of them was something you said in a previous episode. So I'm going to let you kind of read from the transcript on that.

Amy Carroll

Okay, so this is it from the transcript: 'I was talking with a friend earlier today, and we were talking about the whole idea of you are enough.' And so I didn't even want to dive into all the aspects of that, because I have mixed feelings about it. And so what I went to was, 'You are the beloved.' And you know, Cheri, gosh, this is, this is a transformational thing for me.

Cheri Gregory

I love it. And then the other part of this conversation goes back a few weeks ago, to the podcast all about learning to avoid burnout by knowing when we've done enough. So on the one hand, is this idea 'Am I enough?' and knowing when we've done enough.

So I asked you if you'd be willing to go there with me on this whole 'enough' topic. And so today is the day.

What I find in so much of the work I do is this whole concept of 'I never feel like I've done enough.' I have one client I'm working with right now specifically, and she's collecting stories of women who drive themselves almost to the brink of death, like they drive themselves to illness. And then there's almost a pride. It's almost like they are card carrying members of the I drove myself to terrible illness club, they have these near death experiences, and it's almost as if death would be preferable to the possibility of being perceived as selfish or lazy. Like that feels like the extreme that some of this 'I never feel like I've done enough.' goes to.

What do you see happening with the 'I never feel like I am enough' side of things?

Amy Carroll

Well, you asked me to give an example that was either personal or someone else, and this is very, very personal for me, because as – we in our last conversation, I talked about being at the end of season that I was crushed, and I fell into a pit so deep during that season that it wasn't just that I'm not enough, but I actually got to, 'I am terrible.' Oh, it was real dark, really, really dark. And I've been thinking about, 'How did I get there?' And so we can unpack that a little bit too, when, when you're ready.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah, well, falling into the pit of 'I'm terrible' sounds way worse than believing that you're not enough. Like, that is multiple degrees worse. So, yeah, let's start unpacking it.

How do you feel like you got to such a, such a place that I know many of our friends who are listening are nodding right along and understanding. 'I'm not enough.' I'm not enough can slide into that pit of 'I'm just plain terrible.'

Amy Carroll

Absolutely. Well, I think number one, it was my natural, natural wiring. One piece of it, that with this perfectionism, that is constantly in progress, right? One of our friends said "You wrote a book called *Breaking Up With Perfect*." And I said, "Yeah, it's not called *Done! Broke Up With Perfect!*" It has an 'ing' on it. And so I have this natural wiring that I've always struggled with not enough, and it's like that inner personal thing, rather than just – I mean, it's sometimes it manifests in the doing, but sometimes, a lot of times, is the inner feeling of it.

And then I combined that with a toxic mix of believing others' perspectives and probably even magnifying them. So I'm going to share, but just know that it was probably magnified because of my personality. I stayed in a place where I was disqualified and not enough because of my gender for a long, long time, and I stayed in a space where there was an inner circle that there was a select few that were always chosen. And so it left me feeling like I was never enough, even though I worked tremendously hard to prove that I was and then that crushing

season came, because I became the villain in someone else's story, and I believed it.

Cheri Gregory

Oh, and that would be obviously the worst for somebody with your wiring, the worst, because you don't want to be the hero, right? But you definitely don't want to be like the villain is like, like, that's the worst possible form of failure there is.

Amy Carroll

100%. And so that combination, that perfect storm of my wiring and these spaces and that relational situation, just sent me into one of the deepest pits I've ever been in.

Cheri Gregory

Oh, my word. Oh, oh, oh. Whew.

Amy Carroll

But I'm not there!

Cheri Gregory

And I am so thrilled. And we'll talk about how you got out in just a moment.

Let me kind of do the – it's not really the flip side.

Years and years ago, I subscribed to a magazine. I think it was *Cricket* magazine, to be honest, and it had a little comic in it of a girl standing at a spelling bee. There was a big banner that said Spelling Bee, and in her speech bubble, it said, 'b-a-n-a-n-a-n-a-n-a-n-a' and the whole thing was filled up with 'n-a's. And you could tell she kept on going. And it had a little poem with it, and it went like this: "In the spelling bee, she was right there at the top; but when it came to banana, she didn't know when to stop." And I remember it because I giggled to no end, because it was so silly.

Right now, I look back at that and I'm like, "This is me. This is like, this is just a snapshot of me." I thought for the longest time that I'm the person who keeps on going and going and going and working and working and trying and trying, because I'm a perfectionist. It's the other way around. I never actually learned

how to recognize when to stop. So because I kept going and going and going, people think I'm a perfectionist; but I really, in most cases, don't care about perfection. I just need permission to stop.

Amy Carroll

Wow.

Cheri Gregory

And I look back to my school years, and I look back to my early work years. Nobody ever said, "Cheri, you know you can stop, right?" I just kept going. I just kept going and going and trying.

And of course, people around me thought I was being a show-off, trying to make everybody look bad, trying to be so much better than anybody else. I didn't know how to stop. I didn't know when enough was enough, and honestly, I needed at that point, I needed external permission, I needed guidelines that would say 'this is the range of enough.'

And so what I've recognized for myself is that knowing how and when to stop, that's discerning 'enough' and preventing burnout. Like, if we don't know what the 'enough' is, we're just going to keep going till we crash. That became my definition. If you look at my high school journals, like they all begin with the word 'Whew! I survived period...' like, whatever the latest thing was that was my definition of success. Like, how sad is that?

And so the flip side, not knowing how and when to stop, that is going to have that sense of 'I've never done enough' and then constantly cycling through burnout. And I have spent my life trailing black, crispy crumbs behind me. If you think of the Peanuts comic, Pigpen has always got a billow of dust behind him. For me, it's ash instead of dust, because of all that burnout.

And so when I talked to Dorcas Cheng-Tozun, I had this huge epiphany: 'What if we've been brainwashed to burnout?' The conditioning we've received as women in the church. And then, like you say, we, we put things together, we draw straight lines between things that may not be connected, we might amplify it. And I realized, as I was getting ready to share the one scripture that had had a huge impact on me, I realized that I've actually, in my mind, I've kind of patchworked a

bunch of scriptures together as if they were all one verse. And so I'm just going to share them real briefly here:

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. For the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning, nor knowledge nor wisdom.” So I really capitalized on that ‘whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,’ kind of skipping that there was context. And also this wasn't Jesus speaking. This is from Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Then of course, Proverbs: “Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor.” Well, of course, lazy is the four letter word I was trying to avoid.

Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” So stopping and giving up seemed identical in my mind. So of course, keep going. Keep going. Keep going.

Romans 12:11 reinforces that. “Do not let your zeal subside. Keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord.” Which then, that whole idea of serving the Lord connected.

Colossians 3:23, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord.” I didn't remember until I looked this up, Amy, that the next line says, “Not for human masters.” This one wasn't directed for me. It was directed to people who were enslaved.

And then “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31.

And I just had this a mash up in my head that just kind of swirled all of the worst parts of this. And that basically said, ‘I don't know how to stop or when to stop, so I better keep going, so that I don't lose my spiritual fervor. And whatever my hand finds to do’ – Amy, you know me, my hands found a lot to do, and I had to do them with all my might. Otherwise I would disappoint Jesus and bad things would happen and I'd become a terrible person. The end.

None of that is anybody's fault. It's just kind of this slop of – I'm just going to say sloppy exegesis of Scripture, just to have these fragments of actual Bible verses

that are God's word floating around in my head, but never really interrogating or questioning them. And most importantly, I wasn't listening to the voice of my Good Shepherd. I had all of this kind of fear-based snippets of Scripture, but I wasn't basing my choices on actually sitting at the feet of Jesus and saying, 'What would you have me do? And do I ever get to take a break, or do I have to keep on going like the Energizer Bunny, even though I don't come with batteries?' Right?

Amy Carroll

Oh gosh. I mean, it made me tired hearing you list the list, and like I felt it. I felt it in my chest, like, like an elephant sitting there. But, yeah. But you say that it was your own poor exegesis or whatever, but really, I mean, we've talked about this with the perfectionism thing; it is self-reinforcing in the systems that we're part of. So we might have this natural wiring that gets a little outta whack, but then the people around us benefit from it, and often love it.

Cheri Gregory

Boom, boom. Say that again.

Amy Carroll

The people around us benefit from all of that work that you're doing, and it looks virtuous. And so for the two of us, who really, really want people to like us and think we're good people. We look like really good people.

Cheri Gregory

Yep.

Amy Carroll

And so some of it's external, some of it's internal, and the play of the two together is real toxic.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah, yeah. I'm trying to think, if I have ever had somebody in a position of leadership say, "Cheri, I've been tracking everything you're doing, I think you're doing too much. I think you need a break." And I'm just laughing at the thought of anybody actually doing that.

Amy Carroll

Do you know, I'm in a church that, it happens, what I'm currently in, a church where I'm volunteering for, a staff member, and she told me the other day that she had this really great idea. She's the communications director for our pastor. And he said, "That is brilliant. Do you have time to do that within the hours we pay you for?" And she said, "I really don't." He said, "Then we're not doing it."

Cheri Gregory

Holy smokes.

Amy Carroll

I almost fell on my floor, like with my arms around myself, giggling. I just was like, "Are you serious?" I'm in a healthy system, man, and I need to hear these things more than anybody. It's great.

Cheri Gregory

It's possible what you're describing there is somebody who is looking ahead and creating sustainability, so, instead of that cycle, the danger of burning out over and over again.

Dorcas shared this in a private conversation, but she said "The danger of burning out over and over again is that the time span between each burnout is going to get shorter and shorter, and the duration of each burnout is going to get longer and longer," and so what an act of leadership. What an act of servant leadership to say, "I don't want that to happen to you, and we're going to miss out on the short term from a great idea so that we have this long term together." Incredible. I am so encouraged to hear that.

Okay, so you have some thoughts on how you got out of that space of feeling like 'Not only I never feel like I'm enough, but I am worse than not enough. I am terrible.'

Amy Carroll

Number one, I left some of those spaces.

Cheri Gregory

Yeah.

Amy Carroll

Yeah. This kind of ties back into our candid conversations. There was always the hope that 'If I stay, it'll change,' or, even more, 'If I stay, I'll be able to change it. But it just wasn't true. And you know, some of my grief has been realizing I deceived myself about that for a long time.

Cheri Gregory

You know, that whole line 'Be the change you wish to see in the world,' is a lovely line; but I think there's also, 'By the fruits, we will know if something is actually working or not.' So, yeah, leaving is hard, and it comes with grief, so, but so important.

Amy Carroll

I'm going to say something that you said to me, that set me free, that I feel like maybe somebody needs to hear.

Cheri Gregory

Oh, do tell.

Amy Carroll

When I was wrestling through some of this 'Do I go or do I stay?' you said to me that you had done a lot of study and a lot of research on leadership structures, and that 'Change never happens from the bottom, it happens from the top,' and it haunted me. And you know what, I believe you now! And someone who is listening might need to hear that. I have someone that I follow, an influencer, that has worked through some serious devastation and grief, because she thought she could change a whole system; and she's a wonderful person, but she could not change that system because she wasn't at the top.

So anyway, it's important, but when we leave these spaces, we move into a spacious place, yeah, and I've been in a spacious place and in lots of different ways in my life, and it's been beautiful. Another – see, I'm really unveiling the genius of Cheri Gregory here. So there was that. And then there's the book *Try Softer* –

Cheri Gregory

By Aundi Kolber. Love her!

Amy Carroll

– I mean, Cheri gave me that book as an assignment going into a really, really difficult situation, and it saved me. It saved me because we are try harder girls. We've been – we were try harder girls, and now we're trying softer. And the change is coming. And the try softer, if you're not familiar with that concept, it's basically self-compassion.

Cheri, please tell us your definition of self-compassion. God, I repeat it much to myself on the regular.

Cheri Gregory

Of course, I struggled with the whole idea of self-compassion because it has that prefix 'self,' and I was trained that if it has the word self, it's automatically pride, which is automatically sin, the end. I mean, what could be more terrible, right, than to focus on yourself? Which we're going to talk about in a future episode as well. And so to recognize, though, the way I've, I've come to understand it, is that self-compassion is intentionally and fully receiving God's grace for myself. It's not about me, it's about Him and His grace. It's just for so long, it was like everybody else gets grace. You get grace, you get grace, you get grace. I get the never-ending voice of my self-critic tearing me down and reminding me how terrible I am. And so self-compassion says God's grace is for me as well, and it's for me today, right now, in this situation, no matter what it might be. It's changed everything, Amy, absolutely everything.

Amy Carroll

No matter what it might be, and no matter even if I'm wrong. Even if I'm wrong. And that's been hard. That's the hardest thing for me, because that – somehow I've believed that slow flagellation is what needs to come. But no, it's, it's accepting God's grace in that moment.

It's seemingly silly, but actually very important. Years ago, I was speaking at an event, and they gave me a beautiful gift basket, and in this gift basket was a bracelet that was made of clay, and in it was stamped the word beloved. I thought that's nice, but how, I kind of thought 'How strange.' And like my my word

of the moment was joy. And I was like, 'I wish it said joy.' And I kind of threw it with my other jewelry, and didn't pay much attention to it, until one day, I don't know what, but I all of a sudden, I was like, 'Wait a minute. That event planner was intentional and did something so beautiful for me, and I did not recognize it.' My name means beloved. And now I need to cry a little.

And so when I was going through that, that, was in that deep pit, and I knew God was just calling me out. I had gone from feeling to wallowing, and God was calling me out. I wore my beloved bracelet every day, every day, and I'd look at it and I'd hear God whisper, 'You are my beloved.' And I had to believe it again because I had believed I was the villain, and so I had to work back into believing that I am God's beloved, and so are you.

And this is the truth about us, even in our worst moments, because I, that situation was hard for me, because I actually didn't do everything right in it, you know, I actually didn't. And so because I had, I knew I hadn't done everything right, and this person believed I was the villain, then I must be.

And so anyway, those were the things. Like, who knew wearing a bracelet – it was a, it was a physical reminder of the truth that God wanted me to step back into, which is, I am the beloved.

I mentioned in one of the other episodes earlier this season about the beach retreat that I went on. And on that beach retreat, God did the same amount of work. And the morning I was going to leave, I was going to sleep in, because I had really been spending so much time with God. But I woke up really, really early, and I laid there kind of mad about it, and was like, but then I was like, 'Well, God, do you have something else to say to me?' And I felt like he nudged me out of bed. I want to read something from my journal. And it was the last day, and it was the thing that I needed.

I said "I didn't sleep well last night, but by 7:30 I knew I needed more time with the Lord than more sleep. And as I make coffee, these thoughts began to form, and I believe they're from Him." And I wrote a little bit more, but here's the idea. That God was calling me out of a slave mentality into a daughter mentality. And I want to change it today, to say a slave mindset – and can I pause just a moment because, you know, I'm involved in racial equity conversations and it's really

important, I have never been enslaved. And yet our mindset can enslave us in, in a different way than what we've seen in American history. And so I want to be sensitive to that.

So from a slave mindset to the mindset of the Beloved. So I started thinking, 'What's a slave mindset?' I Googled slave mindset, and there was a lot from American history that I was like, 'But that mindset, I've put that on myself.' So here's what a slave mindset is, or maybe a never-do-enough mindset, or never-am-enough:

'Work to survive, produce or die. Accept your bondage as your lot in life, try to make the best out of the worst. It's a mental attitude that includes feelings of inferiority. It's a conditioning to accept the harmful, to accept harmful circumstances as normal, and it causes you to doubt yourself. You view your worth or maybe your voice through others eyes. You're expected to work without complaint. Your words mean nothing. The lavish lifestyle belongs to the 'master' – and I say that in quotation marks, in other words, other people and not you, right?

And then, so I flipped it to say, well, what's the Beloved's mindset then? You live loved in your father's house with obedience as the only condition. That you accept loving abundance as your lot in life. That you believe the best is yours, even when things are not so good. That you have a mental attitude of love, acceptance and belonging. It conditions you to believe that safety and protection are normal and causes you to believe that you are worthy and worth protecting. You view your worth through your loving father's eyes. You have a safe, empathetic place to take your complaints and someone there who will help set things right. Your words are valued, and spiritual abundance is made for all. And I go back to this list because I have to, have to keep, as you said, we have to keep working on renewing our minds. We are the beloved.

Cheri Gregory

Well, and just listening to you, that first list, I could feel my stomach tightening up, and as you flipped it, I could just feel everything about me starting to relax. Amy, thank you. That's just incredibly beautiful and powerful. And it's interesting that you had that bracelet on your wrist, and you have these definitions of the slave mindset.

For me, something that has become symbolic for me, of these external sources that, in my case, I kind of believe have brainwashed us to burn out. And I really feel like that list of the slave mentality, that's brainwashed to burn out right there, right, conditioning.

But I had a little experience that kind of illustrated it to me, and that is Daniel gave me his old Apple Watch. I'd never had something like that before. As you know, I've been swimming laps, and it's been good for me, but I started noticing that on a day off, my watch keeps reminding me of what I should be doing instead. In fact, we went to visit Daniel's mom for her 99th birthday. My watch was yelling at me all day long, and it was saying things like, 'It's not too late. You could still get your rings closed, you could still get your exercise and stand up more. Do this, do that, you're close to this award.'

And Amy, they aren't real awards. They're pixels on a little watch screen. I mean, it's, it's – and it suddenly occurred to me, this watch is pre-programmed with values that are not mine. And it's just a watch, right? It's not a person. Like, I started feeling guilty, like maybe I should go take some walks around the convalescent home, or, you know, jump rope in place or something. I'm like, what is this? Why am I responding to this external force telling me what to do? And I'm like, oh, because that's what I've been doing my entire life, right? And recognizing I have the ability to reprogram this watch.

But it was such a huge reminder of the power of these external demands that encourage us – expect us to burn out as proof of loyalty or proof of godliness or proof that we're a real Christian women. It is unsustainable. It becomes self neglect and self abandonment. And research is showing that when we unnecessarily push ourselves beyond our limits, our bodies actually register this as trauma and injury, and so we are literally doing it to ourselves because of these external forces.

What I've come to conclude – so this has my been my takeaway – is that burning out my body is way worse than disappointing other people, and that's really hard for me to say. And again, for those who are HSPs, I want to reinforce this is the HSP brain and body that God has entrusted to you to care for, to listen to and

learn from. He didn't give us these bodies so that we could punish them into submission.

We started out with these two concepts. 'I never feel like I've done enough.' My conclusion is there will always be more to do. We will never do enough. It's not humanly possible. There is way more to do. And so my takeaway is that burning out my body is way worse than disappointing other people.

Amy Carroll

And I really feel like I have moved for the final time. 'I never feel like I'm enough' to knowing 'I am the beloved.' It's where we have to live, because it's true and accepting less is living less than that, and you said something really important about disappointing other people. There will be people who will be disappointed in you, and there may be people in my future who will see me as the villain, but the way that we serve our people, our people – because those probably are our people – the way we serve our people best is by not living in burnout and by believing that we are the beloved.

Cheri Gregory

If you'd like to learn how to embrace your identity as God's beloved, and learn how to discern when enough truly is enough in a safe community of other Highly Sensitive Christian women, I would love to invite you to join me in the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe.

For details about the Sensitive & Strong Community Cafe, check out CheriGregory.com/cafe or click the link in the show notes.

[Outro music]

Thank you for listening to *Grit 'n' Grace: The Podcast for Highly Sensitive Christian Women!*

I hope this episode leaves you feeling encouraged and equipped to thrive, especially when it comes to worries about being or doing "enough."

Be sure to follow in your favorite podcast app and share this episode with a friend!

If you're brand new to the whole HSP concept, come take the "Am I a Highly Sensitive Person?" quiz — you'll find that link in the show notes.

And remember: God created you sensitive; in Christ, you are *always* strong.