

Grit 'n' Grace Episode: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #12: How to Be Confident that Happiness is NOT Joy's Evil Twin

Cheri:

Good morning, Jennifer.

Jennifer:

How are you?

Cheri:

We are not happy with our technology.

Jennifer:

Oh no.

Amy:

Amy is a goofball so we can't figure it out, or I can't figure it out, but it's okay.

Cheri:

You're going to help us with this. I'm sure *The Happiness Dare* is something that will help us win in these moments when what worked yesterday suddenly doesn't work today!

<music>

Hey, this is Cheri Gregory, and you're listening to Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Today, my deLIGHT-full co-host, Amy Carroll, and I are talking with Jennifer Dukes Lee about her new book *The Happiness Dare, Finding the Sweet Spot of Your Heart's Deepest, Holiest, and Most Vulnerable Desire*.

Amy:

So Jennifer, what is up with Christians who think that frowning is more virtuous than smiling? It's so funny, I think about I guess the way we always say it if we're being super spiritual is that, "I choose joy over happiness." What do you think about that?

Jennifer:

Yeah, that's a very common question. I think, unfortunately, over the last one hundred years, happiness has definitely gotten a bad wrap. Even a hundred, two hundred, three hundred years ago, such distinctions weren't made, and Jesus didn't make those kinds of distinctions. The church has tried to make this division between joy and happiness, and so we've become sort of scared of the word happiness, and it's true that happiness and joy aren't the same, but they certainly aren't opposites. Let me just give you an example; a while back, do you remember the mother who put on the Chewbacca mask?

Cheri:

How could we forget her?

Amy:

The best.

Jennifer:

Right? I posted a video of her and I made a remark about how happy she was, and somebody very well-meaning put into the comments of my blog post, "But don't you think this has more to do with her joy in Jesus than her actual happiness?" It's like we're that ...

Amy:

Sister Super Spiritual, I'm telling you.

Jennifer:

This really just happened not very long ago, and so what I'm thinking here is that I don't think that anybody can look at Chewbacca mom and say with a straight face, "Oh, she's joyful, all right, but she is definitely not happy."

Cheri:

That is so true.

Jennifer:

Right? That will be absurd, she exuded happiness, and so if someone says they have the joy of the Lord but you have to dig like a mile deep to find evidence of it, I think the question we have to ask is, is that really joy? Now, granted there are seasons where we don't have happiness and where we do have joy, and so in some ways in the life a Christian, joy is more durable and a deeper evidence of the work of the Lord and the Holy Spirit and people, but we shouldn't throw happiness out as some kind of evil cousin of joy, right?

Cheri:

That's a great distinction.

Jennifer:

I think that--I have a lot of definitions for happiness that I talk about. One of them is this, and I think it helps us as Christians when we talk about joy and happiness. For me, happiness is the outward expression of an inward that is found in Jesus.

Cheri:

Awesome.

Jennifer:

We naturally have a happiness. I think God expects us to be happy. Grumpy Christians are horrible advertisements for Jesus. ... I have a hard time thinking that people would find the Gospel very attractive. I think one of the first things that people can do is look into the scriptures and find evidence of a happy God, of a God with a sense of humor even just by looking at what He's created, some of the crazy animals and fish and birds that He has created, and the facts that children learn how to smile before they even learn how to say a word.

Cheri:

Oh, I love that.

Jennifer:

God also created tears, just as—the same God who created our smile created our tears, so happiness isn't kind of a slap or a smile on your face and everything is going to be okay. Happiness, it's something that wells up deeply from that inward joy that's found in Jesus.

Cheri:

I want to talk about one of the major happiness hijackers that you talk about in the book: "If I could be just like her." I so resonate with that one, and especially because as a child I was constantly having her point it out to me when I speak to women's retreats. I even put up this picture of a her and I pointed out that I hated her, because she was so perfect, and she always did everything right, and she never lost her sweater, and then we grow up and we're surrounded by all these hers. Talk to us a little bit about this whole, how trying to be just like her diminished our happiness.

Jennifer:

Well, I think that we give away so much of our happiness when we're looking for it in someone else's life, when we don't stop to pause and see the happiness that is created right under our own two feet. I think comparison is one of the major hijackers of happiness, "If I could just be like her," and the crazy thing about it is that the person that you're comparing your life to is also comparing hers to someone else who's also comparing hers to someone else, and so this cycle goes where we're comparing our lives to someone else, and then no one is happy.

It's exacerbated on social media by a filtered existence. I think it was Steven Furtick who first said that we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else's highlight reel, and that can leave us feeling so unsettled and really unhappy, so yeah, that's a huge happiness hijacker. One of the things that I encourage people to do is instead of wishing for her life, find happiness in my own. Sometimes that can be really hard because there're some people, some of your listeners right now are like, "Yeah, but you don't have my life. You don't know what I'm going through." There is no doubt that happiness is a feeling, that it's also a decision, and happiness is a choice that we get to make every day, even on our hardest days.

Amy:

One thing that I thought was revolutionary in your book, and by the way, I love it so much and cannot put it down, was that there's this idea that you introduce us to, that there're different happiness styles, and you have a quiz in the book, and I love a quiz.

Jennifer:

Yes, I do. I have five happiness styles, and when I was doing my research on happiness, when I took my own happiness dare to see if this was even okay to be a happy Christian, I found that there're five main determinants of happiness:

1. believing that one's life has purpose,
2. having a sense of belonging,
3. calling happiness from moments and experiences in life, like a vacation or a picnic in the backyard or what have you.
4. Number four is, helping others feel loved and cherished,
5. and then the fifth is, using the power of our minds to learn, plan, and dream.

Out of those five determinants of happiness came these happiness styles; the Doers, the Relators, the Experiencers, the Givers, and the Thinkers.

All of us as Christians are a combination of all five types, but most of us have one style that will rise to the top because of the way we were wired by God. So that's why on a Saturday night a relator is excited about going to the block party at the end of the cul-de-sac, but a thinker is content watching a documentary on TV. An experiencer wants to hike through the park and watch the sunset over the lake, and a doer, I mean, she might actually be really happy weeding the garden on a Saturday night, and a giver might prefer to serve soup at the homeless shelter. I created this assessment to help people identify their style, and it's available at the back of the book, but it's also available right now online at thehappinessdare.com. You can just click on the yellow icon and go right to the assessment and in five minutes you'll be able to clearly identify your style.

Cheri:

I love this because it gives us permission to enjoy what we actually enjoy, not what other people think we should enjoy. I'm in the midst of writing a research paper, and on Saturday night I was literally looking at journal articles and having the time of my life, but I'm not sure that I really wanted to confess that on Facebook because most of my friends might have thought I was crazy.

Jennifer:

Right, and so you might be a thinker. I'll be so excited to hear what you find out.

Cheri:

Definitely, I've taken it. I'm definitely a Thinker. I'm an over-thinker, but I'm definitely a thinker.

Jennifer:

A lot of us just need that permission and that affirmation or a lot of us just feel weird or different that what makes everybody else happy doesn't make me happy. I remember going to a scrapbooking party ten or fifteen years ago, and it was a Friday night and there were all these women and they were cutting these pictures and writing these beautiful descriptions on their pictures, and they were all like in this sublime state of bliss and I'm like, "I do not like this." I am the opposite of happy, I am cutting off my babies' heads, my handwriting isn't nice, this is not fun for me. I'm looking around thinking, "But, Jennifer, this is what women love, this is what women do." And so what I have found as women have been taking that test is, I'm not weird or different. I'm wonderful. This is how God made me.

I think it's helpful first to know who we are, it's also helpful to know our family members' styles so that we can relate to them and understand what makes them happy, but also, when we understand our own style, we have to understand that there are red flags that come with it. Since I'm a doer, I am prone to be a workaholic and prone to legalism and perfectionism. I can throw myself so much into the happiness of my work and my doing that I can actually fall out of my sweet spot of happiness and fall right into like idolatry, really, idolatry of work. The areas where we're most wired to experience happiness is the area where the enemy will come in and most tempt us to step outside of our sweet spot and step right into sin.

Amy:

So good, and I love that you give us permission, you talk about stalking happiness, I love that picture.

Jennifer:

Yeah, I love that image too because I think that in a world right now that feels really heavy, a world that is very cynical, that expects the worst to happen, we really have to stalk happiness, and not only for our own selves and our own well-

being, but as an example, for our families, and for our communities, for our world, that happiness is possible, it's not only permissible by God, but it is possible and achievable through Him. We stalk it for the good of all and the Glory of God.

Cheri:

Another thing that I really kind of latched on in your book is this whole concept of good enough, and boy, that's one I still wrestle with because I come from a background of being the A plus, plus, arguing for even a half point of extra credit and so putting the words "good" and "enough" next to each other still feels very suspect to me. You also talked about satisficers and maximizers, and there were some real surprises in there for me, can you talk about this whole idea of good enough?

Jennifer:

Yes, good enough is really hard for people like us who achieve excellence and find value in excellence, which of course, the Lord asks us to do our work with excellence. But it's this fine line that exists between excellence and perfectionism, and I am so prone to jump over that line. Sometimes I have to realize that good enough is good enough, and then instead of rat racing our way through the A plus ... What research is showing is, like you mentioned, there're the maximizers and the satisficers, Barry Schwartz actually came up with these terms, he is a psychologist. Satisficers settle for good enough, maximizers are always going for the goal, and you can about guess which type is happier.

The maximizers do earn more in the workplace, but they question every decision they make. They suffer from fear of missing out, they're raising that bar and they face disappointment when they fail to reach these standards that they set for themselves, and so they are actually less satisfied with their jobs than the satisficers. The satisficers settle for less than perfect, they settle for good enough. They might not earn as much as their maximizer friends, and they might not like lead their team to victory or what have you, but they know what it means to cut themselves some slack. In the end, research shows us that the satisficers are considerably happier. It's hard though because culture sells us a different promise. We have expectations in our work for standards of high excellence.

I'm headed to Haiti in a few days and I have to give four talks, and I haven't had an opportunity to prepare like I normally would, partly because presenting the gospel to women in a third world country is a lot different from presenting it to the American women. A speaker friend of mine said, "Jennifer, so often you are going for such a high level of excellence that you're only giving God so much room to show his faithfulness. What would it be like to just go completely empty,

just once, Jennifer? What would it be like just to risk making a little bit of a fool of yourself and seeing how faithful God can be?"

I really feel, oddly enough, for me, that that is what God is telling me to do, is to not go where I've prepared with the manuscripts like I am prone to do, but to let His excellence lead this time. It's hard because the principle of good enough is not an excuse to be a slacker. We still do need to be excellent in our work, and in our parenting and what have you, but I think it does—it's a wake-up call for me, big wake-up call for me.

Cheri:

Well, and it explains why I have been so resentful my entire life of people who didn't work as hard as I did, didn't try as hard, didn't do as well, but still seemed happier. It just seems so unfair, and so now I'm recognizing, I think you mentioned that those that get the bronze medal are actually happier than those who get the gold, and that actually makes sense, to be happy to have medalled at all versus ...

Jennifer:

Right, the silver medalist, they are more inclined to compare themselves to the gold medal winners, whereas the bronze medalists generally compare themselves to someone who didn't get a medal, which isn't really a very good idea either, to compare, but it just, it does illustrate the point, doesn't it?

Cheri:

I think it's just a matter of perspective. For me it's a very understandable way of realizing, "Hang on, you can still be really, really good. I mean, getting a medal is great without having to always be the best of the best of the best." "What's my bronze medal?" is kind of becoming my new mantra. How can I aim for the bronze, be pleased with that level of achievement, and just be happy, rather than doing the way extra effort to go far, far, far above? I mean, for those of us who've been the A plus plus girls, realizing that ninety-three percent is still an A, ninety percent is still an A, it really doesn't matter if we got all the bonus points and stuff. It's finding that good enough so that we can relax and then truly enjoy what we are doing has been a struggle but a worthwhile one.

Jennifer:

Yeah, perfect performances don't generally boost our happiness, which can be a surprise to perfectionist. We have a hard time enjoying our success because

there's always something better that could be done or else something else where we have to have some level of mastery on the next task in front of us so we don't spend a lot of time lingering and being grateful for what good thing has already been done, because we're already projecting into the future so far about how we might fail to reach that level of achievement the next time around.

Amy:

Jennifer, I was just reading this morning about this idea of lingering and why lingering increases happiness. Would you talk about that?

Jennifer:

Yes, when you linger you're letting yourself sit with good thoughts, so in the example that I just spoke of, a perfectionist or a person completes a task and when you linger, you sit and think about, "Wow! I got that done. That was great. I feel so good that I just completed writing this chapter in a book," or stepping back and looking at the bed that you just made, like, "That looks so pretty. I love my bedroom. I love that bedspread. I'm so glad I have that," like lingering in that moment, just a small, even ten seconds of lingering. What we tend to do is immediately jump to the next thing on the to-do list without lingering on the good that has been done. We do the same things with complements.

Someone will pay you a complement and you don't let that linger. But the next time someone pays you a complement, let it linger, like really linger in and set in on the good that has been spoken over you. Another thing that we can do is linger on those promises in the Bible. After you've done your quiet time in the morning, what does God say about who you are? What is He speaking into your identity? Linger on that just a little bit longer. Linger on who God says you are. I think that's really important in boosting happiness.

Cheri:

And learning to linger is going to slow us down and make us a little less accomplishment-oriented.

Well, Amy and I are going to be diving in and taking the happiness dare, so how should we ... I know this is going to a very perfectionistic question already, but I just have to ask, how do we do it right? How do we prepare, and are there any cautions we can give us so we don't make mistakes and are guaranteed to do it right?

Jennifer:

Guaranteed success. I think first of all is, the first step is to take that quiz so that you can be affirmed in who you are. To answer those questions honestly and don't overthink the answers. We can tend to be over-thinkers, right, and thinking, "Oh, there is a superior happiness style and that must be giver, because Jesus was such a giver." No, the Bible is filled with evidence that God appreciated and created all the styles, and that He is all of those styles. God is definitely a doer. Look at Jesus thinking, and the experiences that he created. Jesus was the ultimate experiencer.

I mean, he walked on water and he made everything. All of his lessons are just done in a such a creative experiential way. God is a combination of all those happiness types. So I think preparing yourself to accept the style that you are and live into that and how God created you to be and to know that you are capable, all of us are capable for a happiness boost immediately by putting into practice simple practices that are outlined in the book. Research tells us that fifty percent of our happiness is governed by our genes, our genetic makeup.

We have a set point for happiness, just the same way we have set points for metabolism and intelligence and our athleticism. And then ten percent of our happiness is dictated by the circumstances in our life, the good things that happen in our life or the bad things, so that leaves a full forty percent that's left to us. In that forty percent, research tells us is the key to increasing our happiness. That forty percent is within our ability to control, and it includes what we do and how we think, and that can begin today by applying some really basic principles.

Amy:

That's terrific, really helpful as we get started, because I've already signed my happiness dare on my book. I'm ready to go.

Cheri:

You overachiever, you beat me.

Amy:

This time I was the maximizer.

Cheri:

All right, thank you so much, Jennifer! Thank you for your time, and we will be absolutely praying for you for your time in Haiti.

Jennifer:

Thank you so much.

Cheri:

One bad rule that's haunted me ever since I was a kid is the one that goes like this: "God cares about your holiness, NOT about your happiness." I spent decades feeling guilty that I was looking for happiness, and I felt way less spiritual than people who focused just on holiness. So it's a relief to realize that holiness and happiness aren't opposites. We were created to experience and express the joy of the Lord.

If you head on over to the web page for today's episode at CheriGregory.com — that's C-H-E-R-I-G-R-E-G-O-R-Y-dot-com — you'll find links to some great resources from Jennifer.

You can take the Happiness Style Assessment, download Chapter 1 of The Happiness Dare, sign up for "Dare of the Day" — 10 days of happiness dares right in your inbox, and you'll even find "The Ultimate Happy Playlist!"

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #12 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules. Next week, Amy and I will be back, sharing what we're learning from taking *The Happiness Dare!*

<music>

For today, grow your grit ... embrace God's grace ... and when you run across a bad rule, go right on ahead and: BREAK IT!

...

Amy:

We love technology, we love technology, we love technology ...