

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

Episode #15: Finding the Beautiful in Messy Situations

Amy:

Wow, you've got lipstick today and everything.

Cheri:

I know. I'm all ready to go to class.

Amy:

Ah. Got it.

Cheri:

You hardly recognize me at this point.

Amy:

You always look pretty, but this is like made up Cheri.

Cheri:

Yeah, I've been trying to do my makeup and even my eyeliner and lipstick. For me, it's--lipstick, I can throw on, but the eyeliner is what really, actually, makes me look like I have eyes at this stage of my life. I'm always like, "Oh, it's so much work. Thirty whole seconds per eye. Ugh."

Amy:

I know.

Cheri:

I'm trying to be less crabby about the little things in life.

Amy:

More paint for the barn these days. Right, girl?

Cheri:

You know, a little still goes a long way. I am grateful. I am glad we tackle such significant issues on this podcast.

Amy:

We get right to the heart of the matter. That's for sure.

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Intro:

Hey, this is Cheri Gregory, and you're listening to Grit 'n Grace, Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules. Today my deLIGHTful co-host, Amy Carroll, and I are discussing what we learned from last week's interview with Sheila Wray Gregoire, author of *Nine Thoughts That Can Change Your Marriage*, and how we've been incorporating it into our everyday lives.

Cheri:

I was re-listening to the interview that we did with Sheila on my way back home from, of all things, my father's wedding, which I know that there are many other people in this world who have used that phrase, it's just isn't one that I'm used to talking about.

Amy:
Sure.

Cheri:

One of the things Sheila talked about was recognizing that there is no one right way to see the world. And just for myself this weekend and just in the weeks and months leading up to it, I've just become so aware that we each have our own unique realities that are ... make sense to us ...

Amy:
Yes.

Cheri:

But it can be so easy to be totally unaware of other people's realities. For example, in this situation, my mother passed away just about 10 months ago, and my father—the woman he married is absolutely wonderful. We are thrilled for him. We are thrilled for her. But there's a few of us in the family that are also, at the same time, it's like there's two parts to us ...

Amy:
Sure.

Cheri:

...there's the part that's thrilled and then there's the part that still mourning the loss of my mom.

Amy:
Of course.

Cheri:

It's one of those situations where I realize there's not a right and a wrong going on here. It's what's true for him is totally true for him, but what's true for us is still true for us, in terms of the continued mourning. And so it really struck me this weekend as we had various celebrations and then at the wedding itself that, I don't know, relationships and life are just more complicated than I supposed I had ever realized and for a recovering perfectionist ... Perfectionists, we want everything to fit in a neat little box.

Amy:
Yes.

Cheri:
We want everything to boil-downable to a rule.

Amy:
Black and white.

Cheri:
Absolutely.

Amy:
You're black and white people. Yes.

Cheri:
Trust me. There were no rules for this weekend. There was no right way to respond.

There was one person. Her name was Bobby Sue. I think she may have been from your neck of the woods...

Amy:
How could you tell?

Cheri:
That and her accent. But you know she was just so sweet. There was a Saturday afternoon reception, and she pulled me aside, me and my husband, as we were getting ready to leave. She said, "I just I want to let you know that I know that this is hard. I know you're glad for your dad. I know that you're thrilled," but she expressed that she had gone through a lingering illness of a loved one and then a remarriage. She said, "I just ... I want to recognize that what you're going through is complicated." At that point, of course, I lost control and everything I had been holding inside. I started to sob on her shoulder and gave her a big hug. But what I realized in reflecting on that afterwards is she honored me so much by recognizing the complexity of the situation and, also, believing that I could handle talking about it. I know that as a perfectionist I tend to back away and just not talk about things because it might be too hard and it might get too messy. What if I say the wrong thing?

Amy:

Yes. It made me tear up to hear what she said to you because I've been praying for you all weekend and...

Cheri:

Thank you.

Amy:

...Recognized that couldn't be easy, but there was so much grace in what she said.

Cheri:

Yeah.

Amy:

Yeah. I so resonate with what you said about reforming perfectionists. We are so black and white. And, yet, there are black and whites in scripture. There are absolutes that we're called to live by, but in these things there is a lot of grey. And I've been reading I Corinthians this month with First5 app with Proverbs 31 Ministries, and it has just been speaking to me over and over and over again that the overriding principle that we're to live by and to err on the side of is love. It's love, and there was so much in what your friend said to you.

Cheri:

And to realize that there can be almost opposing things true at the same time. I'm sure that some of our listeners have been in some of these situations where two things are true and, again, nobody's right or wrong, but it can be good and hard at the same time.

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

Part of me wishes that I had learned how to handle this much, much, much younger and part of me is glad that I'm at least ... I mean my big thing this whole weekend was lean into the pain. Lean into the pain, which is not been my approach for most of my life. Most of my life has been run from the pain. Hide from the pain. Blame other people for the pain. This weekend it was simply: feel it, honor it appropriately. I tried not to have any melt downs in particularly public places.

Amy:

Well, it shows a maturity, too, that you were able to both lean into the pain and celebrate with your father. Again, in the past, it would be black or white.

Cheri:
Yeah.

Amy:
I either do one or the other, but you did both. There's a lot of beauty in that.

Cheri:
Is that grit, by any chance?

Amy:
It sounds like grit to me.

Cheri:
To be able to do the slightly harder thing rather than the thing that comes a little bit more easily? All right. Well, let's move on to something else really easy like conflict. Let's talk about conflict.

Cheri:
What are you learning from all of this wonderful practice that you're getting with conflict?

Amy:
I'm on the other side of some things and on the other side I'm starting to see the beauty in the messy of conflict. I'm starting to see that sometimes things have to get really messy before they can be cleaned up.

Cheri:
Okay, hang on just a second. I thought I had heard you say something about "the beauty of messy." I think we had distortion. Skype failed us for a moment there.

Amy:
Well, it just really the same idea of what you've been talking about. Two things being true at once. Conflict is awful and I hate it. I'm a girl that would rather run from conflict, hide from conflict. Avoid it at all costs. And, yet, the beauty of it is that it has boiled some things in me to the surface that God wanted to deal with, which beautiful and painful, again. Right? I'm like, "Hey, God. Can we give my character a break for just a month or so? That be so great right now." I'm ready for a break. He hasn't said yes to that, yet, by the way. There's that, that it has boiled some things to the top that needed to be dealt with, but also in these situations that I've been dealing with—and it's been multiple, it's been like on all fronts of my life.

Cheri:
Yeah.

Amy:

The reason that it was so painful is that these are important fronts of my life with people that I love with my whole heart. It's been worth it to work through the conflict. To work through the messy to get to a beautiful result. Sometimes the beautiful result is not even resolution of the messy, but just that it's in some way cleaned up. That it is either resolved with that person and your back to a place of peace and unity or it's resolved with the person because you've done the best you can. As scripture says, "You've done all that you can to live at peace." Thankfully, in both of my hard situations, or two of the multiple, that it looks like things are going to have a really good resolution with peace and unity

Cheri:

Good. So how did you handle having so much upheaval and so much mess all at once?

Amy:

Hmm. I wish I could say, "Oh, wow. It was so easy. I just spent time with Jesus every day and did what he said. That's what I did." No, it wasn't really like that. I wish I could tell you because some days were really bad and I was ugly in it and said terrible things not necessarily to the person I was in conflict with, but at least to Barry. Then and some days, I mean, shed buckets full of tears in the last couple of months and so that wasn't much fun. Then other days, I really was able to go to Jesus, hear what he said, put it into practice -- and that doesn't alleviate all the emotions, but goodness gracious it helps us to manage those emotions and head in the right direction. Thanks for asking those questions, Cheri.

Cheri:

You're ... Hey ...

Amy:

So happy to talk about it.

Cheri:

I am nothing if not a good friend who is more than happy to snoop in somebody else's business to avoid my own. Oh, wait. That doesn't sound so good, at all.

Amy:

Well, Sheila did such a good job of explaining to us the difference between peace making and peace keeping and it's true in personal ... any interpersonal relationships, but even our relationship with ourselves, as well as our marriages, because unlike you, I tend to stuff emotions. Letting ourselves feel our emotions is part of the peace making in our own lives. I think in our own souls. It was interesting, years ago — it's been a long time ago now — on my son's first youth retreat, we had a student that fell from a zip line and died.

Cheri:

Oh, wow.

Amy:
It was a terrible tragedy.

Cheri:
Yeah.

Amy:
Students saw it. Parents saw it. It was horrible.

Cheri:
Yeah.

Amy:
But we had ... and so our pastors did a very wise thing after the fact. They brought in a Christian counselor to talk to the group.

Cheri:
Sure.

Amy:
To talk to individuals who needed it. And one of things he said though is that Christians are the worst people to try to treat because we try to gloss over things.

Cheri:
Wow.

Amy:
That we try to deny things. We try to make it look okay and he said there's no healing in that. What he encouraged us to do is something I really carry ... try to carry into my everyday life is he says, "Feel everything and lay it at the foot of the Cross."

Cheri:
Yeah.

Amy:
I just love that because that doesn't allow us to wallow.

Cheri:
No.

Amy:

It doesn't allow us to stay stuck, but it does allow us to feel it, acknowledge it and hand it to Jesus. It's just been so helpful for me.

Cheri:

Oh, that's great. I love that. For me one of the most healing movies was the movie *Inside Out* — the Pixar movie a few years ago. I literally went to see it seven times in a row while it was in theaters. I was just so astonished that Joy and Sadness work together. I needed to keep seeing it over and over to realize, "Oh, I don't need to run away from the pain of sadness or regret or whatever it might be. They can come along together." Again, the perfectionism says, "If it's not pure joy, it's not real joy. If it's not 100% happiness, it's nothing."

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

And life is never that way. In fact, for me, one of the most moving moments in the whole movie was as the memory balls started coming out in multiple colors because they were a combination of multiple emotions. None of them was a pure ... Again, that's maturity. When we're two, we have pure joy or pure sadness or pure anger, but as we get older we have ... Life is more complicated. No one experience is just any one thing.

Another thing that Sheila brought up, which I thought was just so brilliant--and I'm still learning how to do it and that is, instead of criticizing — whether it's a marriage relationship, criticizing our husband or criticizing somebody else for their behavior and telling them what they did wrong — just telling them what we want. How good are you at (A) Knowing what you want? And (B) Having words for it? And (C) Actually figuring out how to say those words out loud? Tell us, Amy. How are you doing at all of that?

Amy:

I'm terrible. Terrible at it. All of the above. I'm terrible at it. And it's so interesting to me that one of the blessings of doing this podcast with you is talking through these things. It makes me realize ... I heard Michael Hyatt one time when he was speaking say ... somebody had asked him, "Well, what do you think about that?" And he said, "I don't know. I haven't blogged about it, yet."

Cheri:

So true.

Amy:

He hadn't written it down, yet. Well, I'm the opposite of that. I have to say I don't know. I haven't talked through that with Cheri, yet. It has been tremendously helpful to hear some of

your thought patterns and recognize it in myself. Then just to talk through some of the things that I need both from myself and other people. How about you?

Cheri:

For me this whole idea of just trying to figure out what I want or need ... It's easier for me to say, "Oh, what I need ..." Even coming out with, "What I wo ... wo ... wo ... want?" Oh, my goodness. How dare I want anything? That's so selfish.

This weekend I was actually able to be semi-successful with this. Of course, my initial reaction when we are in conflict over the way to do something, my initial reaction is to talk to death until he agrees with me that my way is the right way because, of course, yes.

What I really tried to do is listen for what the need was. What need did he have? What was my need in the moment and then to just kind of weigh them and go, "Okay." I wanted—before we left to go, the ten-hour drive to Southern California, I wanted to take his car in and tank it up and wash it, so that after he was done teaching we could hop in and go. He started to go into the long explanation as to why no it needed to be done in the order he wanted to do it.

I started in my head to refute him and explain ... and I was like, "It doesn't matter." The why's actually don't matter nor does the how because... his voice was starting to get some irritation in it, which made me start to go, "Well, clearly he doesn't love me." It's like, "No. No, that is not the issue right now at all." This issue right now is I was hoping to leave a little earlier, but he has a need to follow his plan. He will feel better if he can follow his plan. I can choose to deal with leaving 20 minutes later than I would have preferred to leave.

I was done. Literally done. I thought I do I need to revisit this again? Do I need to lose sleep over this? Do I need to blog about it? No ...

Amy:

Having the car washed. In retrospect you're like ...

Cheri:

Exactly it's really ... Then I was like, "Well, how many conflicts have we had in which I've gone to the mat over *the way* he said something and *when* he said something."

My biggest one is I want to resolve it so in the future when something like it comes up, we can prevent it from being difficult. It's like but we really can't. We don't know what the future's going to hold. It was just, "Oh, I had this idea. His idea was going to work for him better than my idea. The end." Moving on.

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

Then I just got to deal with ... In that case, I didn't get what I wanted. I think that's one of the really hard things that when I talk to women about learning to express what they need or want, they're terrified that if they actually say it out loud then other people are going to say, "No."

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

Are going to say, "I don't want to," or, "I can't."

Amy:

But one of the a-has I had a couple of weeks ago that you said when we were talking about VBS Decorating Lady is ...

Cheri:

Your VBS Decorating Lady.

Amy:

Here she is again, popping up to inform us. But you said, "Well, if somebody would have said to her, "This is obviously important to you. Tell me why it's important to you." Some of this conflict I've been thinking about this week, I've thought that's what I need. I don't need to have to have somebody to ask me that. I need to ask myself that before I get into a snit about small things, so I could say, "Okay, so you had to say no to that. Let me tell you why this is important to me. Maybe the two of us can come up with an alternative way to fulfill that core desire other than the way I suggested that you had to say no to." That's kind of what you and Daniel did, too. It was important to both of us that the car was washed. Ultimately, the timing was more important to him than it was to you and so you were able to let it go. Wow. Wow.

I mean really. You think, "Wow. This is how grownups act."

Cheri:

Exactly. Well, in this case, when I thought about it my reason for wanting to leave early was I didn't want to drive when I was exhausted. I didn't drive the entire trip. He and Jonathon took over all the driving. I still got what I needed. I was not driving at one in the morning. He was doing that final leg, so he'd got what he needed for whatever reason he needed it.

Amy:

Yeah.

Cheri:

In terms of the car wash and I got what I needed ultimately, which was to not be driving when I was exhausted. It actually did work out. Those questions ... We made a really pretty

downloadable of those questions. Full page, half page and quarter page. Those have been downloaded a lot. I'll link them again to this episode.

Amy:
Oh, good.

Cheri:
Because I love your idea of using them with ourselves. We intended them, originally, to be questions we could use with somebody else, but I think they also work just as well with ourselves.

Amy:
Well, they do get to this idea of what is really your core want or desire. And sometimes it's hard to get to that even in ourselves. I've taken a no as an affront when the person's heart was not for it to be an affront. It was ... We just needed to understand what the core desire was.

Cheri:
I don't know. For me ... for me the word "no" means you hate me. I mean, what other possible interpretation could there possibly be? Yeah. No. It doesn't mean that anymore.

Amy:
Yes.

Cheri:
I'm moving in a better direction with that.

Amy:
We're growing. We're growing.

Cheri:
On the webpage for today's episode you'll find links to some great resources and you can enter this week's giveaway. You'll find it at Cheri Gregory. That's C-H-E-R-I G-R-E-G-O-R-Y.com.

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We hope you've enjoyed Episode 15 of Grit and Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules. Join us again next week when Amy and I will be interviewing another very special guest. For today: Grow Your Grit. Embrace God's Grace and when you run across a bad rule, by all means break it.