

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

*Episode #13: Finding the Grit to Be Happy*

**Cheri:**

I wonder what duck-billed platypuses or pi, what's the plural? It doesn't matter. I wonder what they think of us. Do they look at us and think we look strange? Do we look really abnormal to giraffes. I think they're adorable, but, oh, my goodness, hello, proportions.

**Amy:**

Exactly. They probably do. I always wonder that when I go to the zoo. What are those animals thinking about us as they look at us looking at them?

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**Cheri**

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 debriefing from our conversation with Jennifer Dukes Lee about The Happiness Dare, finding the sweet spot of your heart's deepest holiest and most vulnerable desire.

**Cheri:**

You've actually read more of the book than I have, which is something I don't really want to confess on air unless it makes a good outtake, "Cheri's a slacker."

**Amy:**

No. No.

**Cheri:**

Let's start out with the question you tackled here. Is it really okay to be happy, and is God happy? Talk about some of the "Ahas," the reason why that was even so revelatory for you.

**Amy:**

To me, it was amazing that Jennifer had to take so much of the book convincing me that it was okay to be happy, that God is a happy God. It took the three or four chapters that she dedicated to it. It really did. You know, it's so funny.

Years ago I was having this interaction with this person that I love deeply, who loves God deeply, and I was talking about this old series of videos that some of our listeners might know about. It was called the Matthew Series. It was just beautiful. In that, Jesus was very robust, carpenter-ish, and he laughed a lot. He smiled and he laughed a lot. I just remember it made a huge impact on me to watch that.

**Cheri:**

Yeah.

**Amy:**

I was telling my loved one about this, though, and how wonderful I thought it was, and I got a little rebuke.

**Cheri:**

Oh-oh.

**Amy:**

He said to me, "Well, that's not right. Scripture says Jesus is a man of sorrows."

**Cheri:**

Oh. Of course.

**Amy:**

I just was like, "Oh, good grief," because this particular person I could say that to. But really that stuck with me. Over the years I kinda started thinking, "Well, is he right? Am I wrong? Was that not correct?" So it kinda had just really worked on me more than I thought it had. But when I read the book, I thought, "You know, that is true. It does say that in Isaiah, and it's a beautiful part of Jesus's character, but it is only part of Jesus's character."

Jennifer spends a lot of time talking about God as a happy God. I loved in her interview that she mentioned some of the funny things in creation, and I thought, "Hello, duck-billed platypus." What an odd creature. What was he created for except to make us laugh and think, "What is that strange mix of an animal?"

So there's that. Then I love --- she really centers in on Jesus's first miracle, where he turns water into wine. Really the significance of that is, number one, Jesus was at a party, and it turned out that the happiness of those at the party was important to him, and so he did a miracle purely ... There was no other purpose for that except to make the party lively and keep it going and make the people there happy. What an astounding thought.

**Cheri:**

I think the reason that I love this book so much is because my natural personality is one that likes to have fun and be happy. I have felt my whole life that that makes me somehow less spiritual, like somehow it's only being really serious and sober and super-duper deep -- that's what really matters and that we should try to be more like that. I love the freedom that she offers, especially with, and we'll talk about this in a bit, the happiness styles. Actually, let's talk about the happiness styles.

**Amy:**

Oh, great. That was so fun to me. I think I said in her interview, I love a quiz.

**Cheri:**

Oh, absolutely.

**Amy:**

That teenage girl has never quite gone away. I did it in Tiger Beat or Teen Beat, or whatever that was.

**Cheri:**

What's your happiness style?

**Amy:**

My number one was Relater.

**Cheri:**  
Of course.

**Amy:**  
Are you shocked?

**Cheri:**  
No, not at all.

**Amy:**  
This is why it is so much more fun to do this podcast with you than sit behind my computer screen and write. It is so true. If I have any chance to do something that's going to make me happy, it involves my husband or my kids or my friends. It's my favorite, yep. And you?

**Cheri:**  
Probably no surprise. My number one turned out to be Thinker.

**Amy:**  
Awesome.

**Cheri:**  
Here I am, once again, a nerd. And she said, probably the thing I would be most lost without is my books. I'm like, "Well, yeah, of course." It's so helpful to realize two things. One is it's okay for me to be this way, and, oh, yeah, not everybody is this way.

Two solid decades ago, Daniel and I were going through marital counseling, and I remember driving home one time, and I was trying to get him to understand that my goal in life, which was happiness, was a worthy goal. He said duty was the only worthy goal in life. Just talking and thinking about the happiness styles, it's occurring to me, he must be a doer, because doers and a sense of duty go together.

Learning to validate and respect other people's happiness styles without feeling like we have to imitate them. I think that's really, really important.

**Amy:**

Absolutely. Did you have a close second? My close second was Doer, I mean, very close second. They were very close together. I thought, "Oh, this explains my sick love for cleaning out a closet."

**Cheri:**

Yeah. I think my second was definitely Doer. I love getting things done. I love a good check-mark. I also appreciate how Jennifer pointed out that what is our strength can also, taken to extreme, become a weakness.

This is for a thinker specifically. "You can get so lost in your mind that you neglect relationships that need to be nurtured." That's something that I have to shake my head and realize, "Oh, wait, there's a real actual concrete world outside of my own head with real people who I need to be interacting with more."

One of the things I loved in the book, in her discussion of comparison, she has a creative quote from God. "I didn't ask you to be her. I asked you to be you." I thought that was such a great reminder that we have these different happiness styles, and I get to be me, and you get to be you, and everybody else gets to be who God created them to be. I think we are all happier and happiest when we're all working out of our strengths, and we can start to rely on each other to fill in some of the gaps rather than trying to be all things for all people.

**Amy:**

That really goes into that perfectionist piece of trying to fit in and trying to be part of the crowd. I've been reading Brene Brown's book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*. So amazing.

**Cheri:**

So good.

**Amy:**

She talks about how one of our main needs is for belonging. We think we have to fit in to belong, but we never find that sense of belonging if we're trying to fit in. We only find belonging when we are our truest self. That has been a big "Aha" for me. And it really does go into these happiness styles, that we were never made to be cookie-cutter women. We were always made to be our unique selves. When

we appreciate that in ourselves and in others, that's when true belonging happens.

**Cheri:**

My daughter and I were talking a couple weeks ago. She was talking about how she's learning to quit comparing herself, and she's only 25, so of course I'm like, "Yes, you're learning it earlier than I did." But she said, "I'm done comparing myself with people I don't even want to be."

**Amy:**

Wow.

**Cheri:**

I thought, "That's brilliant," because so many of the people I've compared myself to and tried to be more like, I didn't really want to be them. I just for some reason wanted to be part of the group they were in or whatever. Then the few times I managed to succeed by being somebody I wasn't, then, A, I had to maintain a façade. I had to maintain this person that wasn't me, which is exhausting, and, two, it turned out, I really didn't want to be there anyway.

**Amy:**

Yes. Yes, girl. Yay for your daughter, learning the lessons early.

**Cheri:**

Absolutely. As I was reviewing *The Happiness Dare*, it occurred to me, happiness requires grit.

**Amy:**

Oh, yeah.

**Cheri:**

I would love to think that happiness just comes naturally, and that's maybe the only kind that counts. It should be spontaneous, so you either feel it or you don't feel it. You're either blessed with it, or you're not blessed with it. What were you thinking in terms of the neuroplasticity, which of course you get bonus points for using such an amazing word.

**Amy:**

Okay. This should appeal to the thinker part of you, but my background is education, so brain science geeks me out. Jennifer put a lot of brain science information in the book that to me was fascinating. One of the things that she said is that we are actually wired for negative thinking, and it was probably just one of those survival things when a lion could eat you, that you're on the lookout for the next bad thing. But how it takes work to change that natural wiring to think negatively, to begin to think positively, to stalk happiness. I love how she says that. Stalking itself is work, and that requires grit. Neuroplasticity is this idea that we can change the way that our brain functions. I'm so encouraged by that, that our brains are changeable. They're still malleable. They're plastic.

**Cheri:**

I love it, and more than just because it's a polysyllabic word. In addition to talking about stalking, she talked about lingering in happiness. I had something happen last week that I think connects to it. I was in Target buying notebooks. Staples happened to have them at the price I wanted to pay. That's a long sad story that I won't linger on, because it's negative. I go to Target and they have them for a slightly higher price, but I needed them that day, so I go through check-out, and I notice that my total is a lot less than I thought it would be. I realized I got them for half price. They must have been on sale.

**Amy:**

Ooh, yippee.

**Cheri:**

Exactly. I literally could feel the adrenaline and the positive hormones and chemicals starting to flow, and then my brain did this automatic shut-down thing, because it sent the message, "But that doesn't always happen. You don't always get a discount." I stood there in the check-out line at Target, and I'm having this argument with myself, and I mentally put my hands on my hips, and I'm like, "You know, you're right. It doesn't always happen this way, but this time it did."

**Amy:**

That's right.

**Cheri:**

I thought, "I'm just going to focus on the fact that this time it did." I realize so often, and Brene Brown calls it, "Foreboding joy," so often something good happens, and I cut it off at that pass. I knock the knees out from under it. I don't fully experience it, let alone linger in it. I'm like, "Oh, well, it's happening, but just wait. More bad things are coming." It's like, "Well, yeah, of course." Like you said, negativity is our default, but this time a good thing happened. This time it did.

Then I got home and I thought, "So often I complain to my husband and my son about all the things that go wrong," and so I came home and I thought, "I'm going to tell them about the good thing that happened." It's not as riveting a story as all the things that went wrong, because we're so used to, socially, it's part of our conversation, complaining to each other.

**Amy:**

That's true, yeah.

**Cheri:**

We're like, "Oh, I hate it when that happens." What do people say when a good thing happened? "Oh, nice." We don't know what to say next. We don't really ...

**Amy:**

"You got notebooks on sale at Target."

**Cheri:**

Exactly. I come home and I tell them. Then I checked the receipt. I got them for 80% off. I was like, "This is really, really cool." I went back and I told them again. I said, "You know, I told you the good story. It's gotten even better."

I thought, what we dwell on, and we know this scripturally, we know that what we dwell on is what changes us. "What I hear I take to heart," whether I hear it out loud through what I'm saying to other people, or whether I hear it inside my head, it's what's going to make a difference.

**Amy:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. One of the things I've been processing is this whole idea that I always say that I'm very glass-half-full for you, but tend to be glass-half-



empty for myself. Just thinking about what is that about. For me, I believe it's a lot about being self-protective. If I assume the worst, then I won't be disappointed. If something good happens, well, that's icing on the cake. But that is no way to live.

Reading Jennifer's book has just really made me think about changing that perspective, because when we focus on the negative, we take it to heart, like you said. Or my friend Holly says, "Whatever you focus on grows." There is brain science before that. You actually get a rut in your brain, so when you say, "I'm in a rut," we are in a literal rut when we think negatively over and over again.

Here's how I'm living it out this week. I have a meeting coming up that I'm just nervous about. My normal thing is to get fearful and to think the worst and, "Well, this will probably happen," so that I protect myself from the devastation if it doesn't turn out the way I would hope it would turn out. Instead, God is really working on me. I got a great sermon yesterday at church. My pastor, I told him, "The other people might have thought that that sermon was from Jesus for them, but it wasn't. It was for me. I know it. I know it."

**Cheri:**

Wonderful.

**Amy:**

It was the sermon. Then also, my friend Carol, what she taught us in our Sunday school class. I came home and I decided what I was going to do is write down all the positive outcomes that I believe will be true. I wrote them down, and the longer I wrote, the more encouraged I was. I just decided, "This is what I'm going to focus on." If I wake up, because my meeting is tomorrow, in the middle of the night worrying about the negative, I'm going to pick up that list and read the positive, that I'm going to retrain my brain to think about the positives, because I do believe there's going to be a positive outcome. She talks a lot about happiness and joy and the difference between the two but that they're not evil twins. I loved that.

**Cheri:**

Yep.

**Amy:**

I thought, "I can choose to think the worst so I won't be disappointed, but how awful in between, or I can choose to think the happier thoughts and be happy in between and deal with disappointment if it happens."

**Cheri:**

That made perfect sense because our brains really don't know the difference between fact and fiction, and so when you're starting to rehearse the negatives about all the things that could go wrong, especially if you're imagining a person saying something to you -- I'll just speak it for myself. When I do this, when I imagine it going wrong or the worst case scenario and a person says this to me and then I would feel such and such, the event hasn't even happened yet, and I'm already feeling the such and such.

**Amy:**

Exactly.

**Cheri:**

Then I'm going into a full-blown reaction about it. There's times I'm in my bathroom doing my hair, and I'm actually starting to tear up, I'm so upset over something that hasn't actually happened, over something somebody might say. Now, they haven't said it, but they might say it, and then ... This is the really scary part ... I start developing beliefs about that person because of what in my head they said, but they haven't actually said it.

**Amy:**

Oh, my goodness.

**Cheri:**

They're not even ...

**Amy:**

I do that all the time, Cheri ...

**Cheri:**

It's not real. None of it is real. I call this, "Living hypothetical lives." What you're describing is so important, because, look, if we're going to live hypothetical lives,

if none of it's going to actually happen one way or the other, we might as well, why not, go ahead and practice the positive? Why not practice it turning out really strongly, in a really healthy way, not Pollyanna? You're not saying that you're going to suddenly be given a million dollars at this meeting. It would be nice. Remember we're friends if that happens.

**Amy:**

Sure.

**Cheri:**

You're talking about some real strong, healthy outcomes.

**Amy:**

I love what you just said, that word "Outcomes" because some friends and I have been processing hope, and we talked about the difference between hope if you're a Christian and hope if you're not a Christian. If you are not a Christian, then your hope is always in outcomes, but as Christians we're supposed to live differently than that, the key word being "supposed to." Our hope is supposed to be in Christ, not in outcomes. I realized how much my hope has been in outcomes recently. God's really been pointing his divine finger at that and saying, "Hey, let's change this up." But if our hope is in Christ, happiness comes from hope in Christ rather than the focus on the outcomes. It's a big switch in thinking.

Back to the whole idea of it being grit is, it's hard work. I'm finding it's hard work. I have to be intentional about it, because it doesn't happen naturally for me. And it takes perseverance, because I'm just telling you I've done it for a couple days, but it certainly isn't changing literally overnight. It's going to take a long time to form a new habit.

**Cheri:**

Yeah. Other people support the old habit. I can tell a hilarious complaint story. I can have people rolling in the aisle with my "ain't it awful" stories, but if I come home and say, "Well, here's what I'm working really hard at doing in changing my attitude positively," and everybody's going to look at me and go, "Okay, well, you have fun over there with that, little Miss Goody Two Shoes."

Back to what you were saying, I really like what you were saying about hope. I think you've seen my Hurt and Hope Cycle before. I'll put those up as downloads for this week. The way I've looked at it is that expectations versus hope -- expectations are always about the outcome I need from other people, whereas hope is anticipating what God is going to do. What I heard you say is, it's where the focus is. Is the focus on the outcome with the people, or is the focus on what God is going to do? The thing about hope that scripture tells us is that hope never disappoints.

**Amy:**

Oh, right. So good.

**Cheri:**

We will throw that up there.

**Amy:**

So good. All of that ties into the happiness part, because we've already dissected expectations and the terrible things that they do to our friendships and marriages and relationships with our kids, all of that. Yeah. Expectations do not lead to happiness clearly.

**Cheri:**

I think we're going on five years ago now, I ran a one-month blog series that I'm now calling, Break Free from Baditude. It was the complaint-free challenge. It was Break Free from Baditude with God's Word in Gratitude. That was when I really first started keeping a gratitude journal. It has made such a difference to every day be trying to find at least 10 to 20 things that I can be grateful for.

Then when I go through and I read the back pages of my gratitude journal, there's certain things that just keep repeating and coming back again. I realized these are the things that make me happy, so when I'm having a difficult day or I'm having a hard time, I can go back and intentionally do those things or focus on those things again in my life rather than waiting for something or somebody to magically show up and make me happy.

**Amy:**

So good. Even talking about going back and rereading your gratitude journal is that idea of lingering, which is what just captured my heart in the book, that you're going back and being intentional about lingering over the blessings of life. So amazing.

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**Cheri:**

We hope you've enjoyed Episode Number 13 of Grit 'n Grace, Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules. Next week Amy and I will be talking with Sheila Wray Gregoire about nine thoughts that can change your marriage. For today, grow your grit, embrace God's grace, and when you run across a bad rule, by all means, break it.