

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #19: Creating Intentional White-Space in a Black-Out Season

Cheri:

That Facebook Live thing was kind of fun.

Amy:

It was! It turned out alright. I went back and watched it, too. I couldn't help myself.

Cheri:

You don't even take your own advice. Cracks me up...

Amy:

Oh, you've got to watch it or else you can't learn and do better the next time. What do you think about just looking at the camera versus looking at the person on the thing.

Looking at the camera is better?

Cheri:

I think so.

Amy:

I think so, too. Plus, it shows my double chin when I turn side-ways ...

Cheri:

Well, forget that!

Amy:

So, let's avoid that at any cost. I'm down with that.

<music>

Cheri:

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

My deLIGHT-full co-host, Amy Carroll and I, decided to live on the wild side earlier this week by doing Facebook Live together! It was crazy trying to get all the technology to cooperate, but it actually was a lot of fun.

If you missed us Live, you can still find the videos on our Facebook ministry pages.

And, we'll be going live again each Monday morning, for the rest of this year!

8:30 Pacific / 11:30 Eastern on Amy's Facebook page,

and

8:45 Pacific / 11:45 Eastern on my Facebook page.

We would LOVE to have you join us!

Well this is Week 2 of our HOLIDAY BREAK, when we encourage you to break a holiday bad rule before it has a chance to break you!

Today, Amy and I are talking about our holiday calendars and our travel plans.

Cheri:

So, I think the bad rule for this time of year, in terms of our calendar, is that your November and December calendar should be black with events written in pen. Does that resonate with you?

Amy:

Oh Absolutely. Absolutely. There used to be no white space on my calendar at all, so just it looked like one ... like I had colored it in.

Cheri:

How does this happen to us? I mean, do we do this intentionally going into the holidays, or does it happen to us? Where does this even come from?

Amy:

I think it's the desire to do every good thing, or everything that looks good, you know? I do think it's a heart's desire to connect with people. Why we decide we have to do all of it in those

two months, I'm not quite sure. If we spread it out over 12 months, surely that would be a little easier.

Cheri:

You know, I was thinking last night about the kinds of events that show up during November and December, and they are. So many are so good. I think about some of the musical events, and then all the theater things I want to go to, like if anybody is showing or playing A Christmas Carol, I want to go see that. Then, there's all the movies we want to watch as a family, and I think a lot of it is FOMO, again. Fear of missing out. "Oh, I need to go to that, and that, and that, and that." Everything does look so good. None of it's bad.

Amy:

Exactly. Oh and I love that they've come up with a term to describe that fear of missing out that we've all felt for a long, long time. It's great to have a word for it now. It's true. Well, I think that you've kind of expressed to me that for highly sensitive people that this is a particularly difficult time of year. Tell me about that.

Cheri:

The difficulty for those of us who are HSPs is that we overload, especially if there's a lot of change. The thing about the holidays is, because we're going from one thing to another so quickly, there's no downtime. So we can be on the go, go, go, and for somebody who's not an HSP, especially for those who actually need a lot of adrenaline just to keep themselves from being bored, the holidays can just be one big buzz, but for those of us who need the downtime... A lot of people think I might be describing an introvert, but there's an overlap between HSP and introvert, but they're not necessarily the same thing. A highly sensitive person gets overwhelmed by too much sensory stimuli, and so yeah, I love going to a wonderful church concert of Christmas music, but by the end of it, I've heard too much noise, or been with too many people, and I do need that downtime, as opposed to the person who can then go to the reception afterward and the party after that.

Amy:

Well and I'm an extrovert, and I've always sort of considered myself an extreme extrovert until this year, when I read the book, *Quiet*, which is fantastic. I took the little test at the beginning of the book, and found out that I was about half and half, which also has a word attached to it now, which is ambivert. If you're one of these people that you go, "Well, I don't consider myself a highly sensitive person necessarily, and I'm not an introvert, so why do I feel so fried?" You might be wired like me. You're one of these people that's fueled by the people time, or a little bit of an adrenaline junkie, but still you crave the downtime. Even if you don't, Cheri, I think downtime, and silence, and quiet is just good for our souls.

Cheri:

Absolutely. As an ambivert, do you find yourself hitting a wall suddenly, like the switch just flips off?

Amy:

Yes, absolutely. Now, for example, my mother and sister in law and I -my mother in law, too, depending on which household I'm at- we're not hardcore Black Friday people, but we kind of enjoy ... We go out mid-afternoon. We don't go out at 3:00 in the morning.

Cheri:

You don't pitch tents?

Amy:

For the first little bit, I enjoy all the people, and the crowd, and the people watching the sales, the adrenaline rush of getting a great sale, but I will. I'll get to just this point, and all of a sudden, I'll think, "I'm done. That's it. Time to go home."

Cheri:

Part of the reason we're doing this holiday break series is to give women permission ... I'm just going to pause and say, we give you permission to recognize when you've hit that point, and you don't have to keep going or pretending. It's okay to say, "I'm done for now, I need a break right now. Let's go to the food court, get a drink, sit in the corner for five minutes." For a lot of us, five minutes will give us just that little break we need to keep on going and make it through. What I find, it's the refusal to give myself permission. I don't necessarily like being HSP, and for many years, it was like, "No, I can do it.." I was so terrified of being a failed extrovert that I would push myself way beyond what I needed to. It was miserable for everybody involved.

This is a time of year where being extra aware of our needs and practicing self-care is a gift to everybody around us.

Amy:

Yes, because as you were talking, I was thinking that pushing through can seem like such a brave, courageous thing to do, but usually it has disastrous relational results. That's when I get snappy. That's when I don't have as much patience with the people around me, and so it's not worth it for anybody. Good point.

Cheri:

Can we even say it takes grit during the holidays to practice self-care? That that really is the most generous thing we can do? I think, as Christian women, it's so easy to feel like, "Self-care has the word 'self' in it. That must be selfish." Actually, we're the only ones who know what we need in a given moment. The people around us, how are they supposed to know if we, ourselves, don't know?

Amy:

There's the grit of self-care that leads to being able to extend the grace that we need to be able to extend.

Cheri:

Absolutely.

Amy:

We've got both in there.

Cheri:

I love it. All right. One of the corollaries to this crazy, busy calendar concept is that regardless of how busy I am, or how strapped for cash I am, I have to travel to keep the family happy. You said sometimes it's worth it. Tell me about that.

Amy:

Yeah. I have a pro and a con. One year, our first year that we had a baby, little baby Antson had arrived. We thought, "This is the year. This is our excuse. This is our chance to tell our families that we're not doing all of it. That we're not going to everybody's house." We did. We said, "We're staying home, and you all can come to us on Christmas day." Of course, these grandchildren, they have their own gravity. They pull everyone towards them, especially grandparents. They did come, but guess what we found out? We had this really quiet, lovely Christmas morning. We found out we didn't like it, Cheri. It was just so funny, because I know a lot of families really insist on that. We're like, "Yeah, we're kind of bored here by ourselves." We actually like going to other people's houses for Christmas, the grandparents' houses. The solution we have found is that we do Thanksgiving with one family, Thanksgiving day, and Christmas day with the other family. We try to spend time during that time period with both, but the day itself is only in one place, so that's how we've pared back.

I will say that one year, there was this tugging in my heart to go see my grandmother that lived out in Kansas. We really didn't have the finances to do it, and it was not ... Western Kansas,

there's not a lot to do there. That was not really high on my teenager's list of places to visit and go, but I just had this longing to see her. I told my husband, and Barry said, "You know what? This year, we break out the credit cards. We're just going to make a plan of how to pay them off over the next year. You want to go see your grandmother? You feel strongly about it, we should go." We did, it was really a God thing, that he had put in my heart. That next year my grandmother fell, broke her hip, and was moved into a nursing home. It was really our last opportunity to go see her.

I'm not an advocate of getting into debt. If Dave Ramsey ever listens to this, don't call me, please. In that particular circumstance, I'm saying sometimes it's worth it to extend yourself a little bit, to see someone that's important to you that you haven't seen for a while. You have a balance to that, I think.

Cheri:

Well, so many of these decisions need to be made so prayerfully. One size doesn't fit all. I know sometimes on this show I have shared that my mother and I didn't get along, and so I wanted to share this particular memory of her that is so positive. Any time we had plans, and it sounded like it wasn't going to work out, she offered nothing but grace. She was always the first one to say, "If it doesn't work out, stay home. Do what you need. Take care of the kids. Take care of yourself." Now that I have adult kids, I'm beginning to understand how hard that must have been for her. She never guilted us. She never said, "Oh, I was so looking forward to seeing you, and now I'm so disappointed." It was always a message of, "I look forward to seeing you as soon as it's possible and healthy for you."

That freedom ... I listen to friends of mine who have so much guilt, and so much pressure. It's like you've rejected the whole family if you don't show up to every single event, and it's basically scheduled for them. I'm grateful I didn't have to experience that.

One of the things that I have found over the years is that there's a lot of different costs to travel, and I want to encourage our listeners to think about them and even list them out, because yeah, there is the financial cost to travel, but there's a lot that goes on before we travel. There's all the preparations, especially if we're leaving overnight. There's everything that happens while we're traveling, and then there's the clean up afterwards. The laundry, and getting the household up and running again. One of the things that I deal with is chronic pain. I have an old back injury, and one of the things I have recognized is that I will procrastinate preparing for the travel, because I'm being kind of passive-aggressive. This is the really dark side of being a perfectionist. It's like, "Well, I don't want to go, so I'm not going to plan well, and then I'm going to throw everything together at the last minute." Who does that end up punishing? It doesn't punish anybody except for me, and the people who are stuck with me.

The things I need to take with me are my foam roller for my legs, and I need to take the thera-band for my back.

Part of the preparation is accepting whatever decision has been made, and for me, for too many years, I would say yes with my mouth, "Okay, we're coming," but then my behavior was this resentful, "I'm going to do it poorly in a way that shows that I really didn't want to." There's neither grit nor grace to that.

Amy:

You brought up, two, really, I think, essential parts, as you talked there. You talked about praying through things, and then really, in essence, you were talking about our priorities. Somebody said just something heart-piercing to me one time recently. They said, "The way we spend our time reveals our true priorities." We really have to think, we're talking about calendars, and time, and our time, and the way we spend it this season, reveals our priorities. As I thought through these concepts, I thought what we really need to do over the holiday season is to pray-oritize. It's the combination of praying through, and listening to God for his voice, and making our priorities align with what we truly see is valuable as we seek God for that. Pray-oritizing our time leads to peace during the holidays. That's going to be what we replace all this angst with.

Cheri:

I love it. I love it. Then, if we have pray-oritized, then we are more likely to pray-prepare adequately for whatever decision we've made.

Amy:

I love it. I love a little wordplay.

Cheri:

The thing that I've come to realize, for our family at least, is that sleep is vital. Sleep deprivation is like alcoholism for us. That's one of the biggest things that happens when we travel is we have to get up early. When the kids were little, they didn't get their naps, or we adults didn't get our naps. If we're staying with family, we might stay up late, that sort of thing. For most of us, with travel, our sleep cycles get thrown off, so I've become really intentional.

Obviously, none of these are going to guarantee a good night's sleep, but they sure help. Earplugs are our best friend. Travel with extra-strength, jackhammer-strength earplugs. I take my pillow with me now. I used to think, "Oh, I'm such a prima donna. I don't want to have to take my own pillow." Well, I sleep better with my own pillow, hello. Some places I go, sometimes it's a hotel, sometimes it's a family member's house, they love big poofy ones, and I need one that's really, really flat. What works is what I'm doing. I had one person tell me, "Take

a favorite blanket." Again, I was like, "That seems so high maintenance," but a lot of us, special textures, or it's the right size, and it just makes us feel cozy and helps us relax.

Amy:

It's a comfort.

Cheri:

It is absolutely a comfort. Speaking of comfort items, I take my teddy bear with me everywhere. Don't you judge me. I've read statistics that say one-third of adults travel with a stuffed animal, so I do not feel too bad.

Amy:

I am not judging you. If Daniel is okay with it, then I'm certainly down with it, too. My family used to travel a lot during Christmas because we had grandparents in Kansas and Colorado, and we lived in North Carolina. We were either on planes or on the road, and one of the things my parents did is make sure that we got some exercise. I think this is for adults as well as kids.

There are so many hotels now that have indoor pools, and they're not even expensive hotels. I think you can book intentionally and take the swimming suits along, or at least get out and take a walk. You'll sleep better. Your bones will feel better the next day when you're getting back in the car. Exercise, I think, for me, is more for my head than my body. It just gets those endorphins going, and it's just positive all the way around.

Cheri:

Absolutely. These are two of the most basic things we know we need for health, and yet they are so easily the first two things that just fly out the window for the holiday season. We get crabby and we get grouchy and wonder what's wrong. What's wrong is the most basic things for self-care being neglected. I think you're so right on that.

Cheri:

You know, you had some verses that I just thought really applied to what we're talking about so well. Can you share those with us?

Amy:

Yeah. This is from The Message version, and I love The Message, because sometimes it kind of jolts my brain out of that traditional ... Having heard a verse so many times. I love to read it

beside my other version I use. This is from The Message. It's Matthew 11:28 through 30, and it says, "Are you tired, worn out, burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me, and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me, and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Those are the words of Jesus. I mean, does that make you want to exhale?

Cheri:

I could literally feel my shoulders just kind of starting to drop, and not be so tense and anxious.

Amy:

Yes, I think that we really have, here in America, made Thanksgiving and Christmas almost a religion of their own. He's saying, "Are you burned out on religion?" I think a lot of us are burned out on this perfect idea of the holidays, but he encourages us to learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I love those words, and how they're strung together.

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Cheri:

Amy and I would LOVE to hear from you! Head on over to GritNGrace.Info

That's Grit, the letter N, Grace (all one word!) .Info

and tell us how YOU are breaking BAD RULES over the Holidays.

You'll also find two great free downloads that will help you pray-oritize your holidays and make a plan to be sure your November and December calendar includes white space.

And, there's another permission slip you can print to remind you that you don't HAVE to obey the bad rule that demands, "Your November/December calendar should be black with events written in pen."

You can keep in mind that pray-oritizing our time leads to peace.

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #19 of of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Join us for next week's HOLIDAY BREAK, when Amy and I will be discussing **gifts** and **budgets**.

For today, grow your grit ... embrace God's grace ... and when you run across a bad rule, by all means: BREAK IT!