

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode 27: Jesus, the Lord of Grace – Living a Life of Thank You

Cheri:

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

I am thrilled that my delightful cohost, Amy Carroll, is joining us once again. How are things on the other side of the country, Amy?

Amy:

Well, they're rolling right along! The boys are making plans to head this way, and their mama is finally starting the shopping. Christmas is coming whether I'm ready or not!

Cheri:

I love it! Well, we've recorded ten really practical Holiday Break episodes of Grit 'n' Grace to help our listeners deal with all sorts of holiday challenges. But this week and next week's episodes are going to be a little bit different. Tell us a little bit about the change of pace.

Amy:

Well, this week we're turning our full focus on Jesus. Just the way it should be!

Cheri:

Absolutely! We're gonna pick back up where we left off in our conversation with Suzie Eller.

Cheri:

I had decided to skip the chapter on Judas 'cause I was sure there was nothing there that I needed to read. Then I realized that's usually a sign that, of all chapters in a book, that's the one I need to. And oh my word! I was just so hit with conviction because the defining characteristic you pulled out for him was what I'll call *disappointment*. And that he didn't start out as a betrayer. He didn't even start out as a thief, but he started pulling the money out of the bag to help himself. And I thought, "This is what perfectionism does to us."

Suzie:

It's discontentment.

Cheri:

It's discontentment, we're never happy. We're always disappointed because things never turn out the way they should. And we've worked so hard, we deserve to have things turn out better and we need them to turn out better. Share with us a little bit about what you learned about Judas. I felt as I was reading the chapter that you just had so much compassion for him in ways I've not heard before.

Suzie:

I did. You know, this chapter made me really sad because when I began to look at Judas – when Jesus sat at the table and said, “There's going to be someone in this room that's going to betray me, in fact, he already has. No one pointed at Judas and was like, “I knew it!” or “He's the guy!” They all looked around just bewildered and said, “Who is it, is it me?” And that, in itself, told me so much about Judas. He wasn't a bad guy. He wasn't someone that inherently looked on the exterior bad to everybody or evil to everybody.

But what also made me sad is there's this beautiful moment when Jesus kneels down in front of him and takes his dirty feet and begins to wash them. And I felt the Holy Spirit just whisper to me so clear. *What if he had kissed his cheek in gratitude that day for the beautiful service that Jesus was giving this humble, serving Judas, washing his feet? What if he had kissed him in gratitude on the cheek that day instead of the garden of Gethsemane later in betrayal* because there is this moment where Judas runs back to the leaders and tries to give them back the money. And again, I wept through this chapter and many would think that “Living a Life of Thank You,” which is what it's called, would probably be the least important chapter in a book. Yet, it's a chapter that I think if we all began to say, “What is it inside of us, that little seed of discontent or that little seed of not enough?”

What would happen if we began to live a life of thank you instead? What would happen in our marriages? In our ministries? In our churches? In our relationships? And until the very last moment – and we know this because of Jesus' character. Jesus' character was, “I came so that none would perish.” That is scripture. – To the last moment, Judas had the opportunity turn around in a life of gratitude and thank you and say, “Lord, I have so messed up. I choose something different.” He didn't and it breaks my heart for him.

Amy:

One of the things that I loved that you pointed out in the book and that we've been wrestling with, Cheri and I, is how very often we don't deal with failure well. But you pointed out that Judas wasn't the only one who failed in the picture in those last days. Peter failed too. What was the difference between the two of them?

Suzie:

They all failed actually except for a couple because many of them ran and hid. It was fear, and it's what drives us all I think to hide from the Lord or to go towards discontent: fear of not having enough or fear that we are not going to get where we think we should be.

Peter was so remorseful but so was Judas Iscariot. Peter received forgiveness. When Jesus offered it, he received it, and allowed Jesus to put his feet back on the path that he was always supposed to be walking. I think that's a gift that's available to us always. There's never a place until death that we can't receive what the Lord is holding out to us so freely.

Cheri:

Suzie, that's so interesting that you're emphasizing receiving. One of the things God's been working with me on for my entire life I'm sure, but I've been more aware of it just the last couple of years, is learning to receive what's offered rather than demanding what I want.

The scene when Peter and his friends had been fishing all night. This is after the crucifixion, and then John nudges him and says, "It's the Lord onshore". I've been so struck by Peter's immediate response to just get to Jesus as fast as possible. That's not what a perfectionist would do.

We hide, we blame, we shame, we try to dress ourselves up. We may never even face the person again. But Peter must have been able to just constantly be receiving, whereas Judas had so little practice receiving. He couldn't imagine that what he had done was forgivable. He couldn't imagine that he could receive from Christ after what he'd done.

Suzie:

He allowed shame to speak. He allowed shame to cause regrets. There is always a U-turn. Always.

Amy:

It was so great to just have that point that you made that their failure was not unequal but the difference was the way they responded to Jesus' offer for forgiveness. That was so great.

Cheri:

Suzie, could you elaborate on this whole idea that there's a difference between being stuck and being stagnant?

For somebody who is a producer — that's how my perfectionism tends to express itself. That I'm constantly having to achieve, achieve, achieve, and have something to show for myself, to kind of prove that I deserve to take up space in the world — the idea that I cannot be making progress but still be growing felt foreign but very appealing. Can you unpack that for us?

Suzie:

I'd love to. And there's times that we feel stuck. I was trying to move to Arkansas for three years. We knew that we were supposed to be here. Time after time after time, I felt stuck. It wasn't moving according to my plan. We were praying and we believed and we knew what God had spoken into our heart. And yet, every time that Richard and I would put our hands across the table and pray and say, "Lord are you in this? Just checking, just want to make sure we are still where we're supposed to be." We knew that he was.

So many times what we would hear during that process is, "Well, if this was really the Lord, doors would open." I thought, "Really, is that scriptural? Is it even close to scriptural?" When I think about the hardships that Jesus suffered and the disciples suffered — really? Were we promised an easy path to where He took us? And so I felt stuck at times but that's because I was moving. It's because I had his promises in me. It's because I was so expectant and wanting to be there. Being stagnant is being in a place where you are just not moving. You are not moving, and it might be that you're in a place where it's hard and you're just, "You know what? This is hard, I'm packing up, I'm going home. I'm throwing up my hands and I quit." Or you're in a relationship or in a hard place.

And the Lord is there, He is present, He is doing a work in you and a miracle in you in that hard place.

Stagnant is like, "You know what? If I can't get to the finish line, forget it. There is no value for me here."

There is always value. If we are listening to the Lord, if we are responding in obedience. If we are following and walking with him daily. There is so much happening in our lives. And the result of feeling stuck is not being stuck but feeling stuck. If we transition, I'm going back to a life of thank you. If I flipped that to gratitude and I begin to say, "Lord, look at where I was and look at where I am now." And "Lord, look at what you're teaching me in this hard place. My goodness. I used to reach down and just trust my strength but now I know that when I am weak, I am strong because I'm depending on you."

And there were times as we were, again, trying to get here that we'd lean across the table and we'd pray and we'd say, "Lord, you're teaching us to trust. You're teaching us to listen to your voice. You're teaching us to be content where we are until the door opens tomorrow by you." There's so much that we gain in that place of feeling stuck if we allow it and we don't move into being stagnant.

Cheri:

So you were intentionally receiving what He was giving even though you couldn't see the movement and kind of felt like you weren't moving.

Suzie:

You just picked the perfect word. Living a life of gratitude is *intentional*. It's absolutely intentional. It's asking the Lord to open your eyes and see the miracles all around you. It is asking the Lord, sometimes going into his presence and saying ... and we have such a sacred space to be honest with him ... "I feel stuck but Lord I'm thankful that if I'm feeling stuck, I'm still hearing your voice and you're still with me. And I'm open to whatever it is that you're teaching me. And Lord where I am today, will you help me just bring joy to you today? I choose it. I choose it. I'm intentional."

It changes you. It may not change your circumstances, but it changes you.

Amy:

It occurs to me too Suzie as I listen to you that these places of feeling stuck are such a training ground. I mean, you talked about what you learned in that. Even the disciples – of course the disciples' story didn't end with the gospel, it goes into the Acts. And their place of waiting for Jesus and waiting for the Holy Spirit was such a training ground for the persecution they were about to face. And I was thinking about the ministry that I know that you moved to when you went to Arkansas – how did that training ground of feeling stuck train you for what you were to do when you got there?

Suzie:

This is what I love. Whenever I heard the Lord whisper in my heart we were moving to Arkansas was because I had come and spoke to the world's smallest women's conference. It was eight women and the church had put on – and it was a large church. A large church with a couple of thousand, but there were these eight beautiful fierce women just affected by poverty and abuse.

And they put on this beautiful conference for them, and I was their speaker because my daughter volunteered me. When I left that day, I wept all the way home. I'd been in the same church for thirty years, I'd been in the same city for thirty years and I knew that I knew that I knew that I was going to move to Arkansas. And I can't tell you why I knew that except for that scripture where Paul is going one way and the Lord speaks and said, "Hey, there's someone over here that's prayed and you are going to go this direction now."

I went home and told Richard, "We're moving to Arkansas." And he was like, "Good to know." He and I began to pray and as he felt that same thing we began to go. I never told anybody except for my daughter and my son in law, that we were moving to Arkansas because of all the shut doors.

When we finally got there, three years later, I went to the women's coordinator of this small group and showed up her door and I said, "This is gonna sound like the craziest story ever but I'm now here in Arkansas and I'm not sure why. We have a home and I'm supposed to be here and my husband has a job and I still have a job as a writer but I'm supposed to be here and it has something to do with you and those ladies."

And she told me that that day, after the women's retreat, she was so incredibly overwhelmed and tired from fifteen years of ministering. She said to the Lord, "Lord these ladies never trust anybody, but they loved her. Father would you please send someone to help me just like her?"

Cheri:

Wow.

Amy:

That's great.

Suzie:

I didn't know that until three years after. So today, I get to meet with these beautiful ladies every Wednesday night in my home. I've been doing that for the last two and half years. And they are some of my most amazing, beautiful friends, and it's messy ministry, and I love it.

Cheri:

Could I ask you to give some perhaps closing encouragement to our listeners who as recovering perfectionists, people pleasers, and highly sensitive people. We can run on the high maintenance side. Sometimes we get called attention-seekers and drama queens. What would you tell a tired perfectionist or people pleaser or highly sensitive person about Jesus' love for her, based on your experience of being the thirteenth disciple?

Suzie:

Well, I want to say two things and one is that you are the thirteenth disciple as well. Some of those very things that cause you pain or angst are the very things that the Lord wired in your DNA that he can use in a beautiful way in the kingdom. And so, what I would say to you is just to surrender. You may not know what this is gonna look like and you don't have to. This is gonna to be the hardest thing but to just surrender to the Lord and say, "You know what? I give you all of me. I give you every quirk, I give you every part of me that sometimes I don't like. I give you every good part of me. And Lord, I just surrender to whatever it is that you want to do with that and I will walk with you and we'll discover what this adventure looks like together.

Cheri:

If you head on over to the web page for today's episode at gritngracegirls.com – that's Grit, the letter "n", Grace Girls (all one word), dot com – you'll find several free downloadables, including this week's permission slip.

It's a reminder that you don't have to obey the bad rule that says: "You don't have to clean up your messes – your failures – yourself."

Amy:

Instead, we can focus on the fact that we need a Savior, and Jesus came to cover our failures with His grace.

Cheri:

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #27 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Amy:

Join us for next week's Holiday Break, when we hear some absolutely breath-taking truth from our friend Michele Cushatt.

Cheri:

For today, grow your grit, embrace God's Grace, and when you run across a bad rule, you know what to do! Go right on ahead and...

Amy & Cheri:

...break it!