

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #100: Dealing with Deep Disappointment with Heavenly Hope

Cheri

Talk to me about a time when you were just deeply disappointed over something.

Amy

Well, this seems so silly now, but bicycles were a big deal at my house. My parents were big believers in having a certain age where you attained things. So I had to wait till I was 13 to get my ears pierced, and I had to wait until I was 7 to get a bicycle. So that's old! All my friends already had bicycles, but my parents felt like that was the point when it was safe for me to ride in the street alone, so that's when I got my bicycle. And I was dreaming of a purple, sparkly bike with a banana seat.

Cheri

Of course. Of course!

Amy

And on Christmas morning, I got the banana seat, but the bike was green.

Cheri

Oh no! Green is not purple.

Amy

No, it's not. And I hope to this day my parents could not see on my face, although I'm so transparent, I'm sure they saw my face fall.

Cheri

Oh no!

Amy

And I don't know if the bike was on sale or what they could do...we've never talked about it, but I was so disappointed it wasn't a purple bike.

Cheri

I'm so sorry.

Amy

Silly bike. The death of a seven-year-old dream!

Cheri

There you go. Well, you know my dream that died so many times, because I just couldn't give up on it, was the dream of having tumbly, curly hair kind of like Farrah

Fawcett and all of the other stars of the seventies. And so I went through perm after perm after perm.

Amy

Oh, perms!

Cheri

And every single one of them was a dismal disappointment. Like one time I lost half my hair it was so bad, but other than that, my hair either is stick straight or it's poodle perm. Literally, you could paint my nose black and enter me in a standard poodle class in a dog show. It was that bad. But I don't know, I've probably tried 20 or 30 of them throughout my life just convinced that this one was gonna be the one that made me look like - yeah, Farrah – never ever gonna happen.

Amy

Okay, listeners, go to the Facebook page and tell us about your perm!

Cheri

That's right. That's right. I'll share a picture, I really will.

Amy

Those are pretty silly examples, but I bet you've had more serious disappointments than that. Have you had a serious disappointment that actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise, though?

Cheri

I have and there was this one guy I was 100% positive I was supposed to marry. And so when he decided that wasn't going to happen, I was devastated, but it turns out I dodged a major bullet. Isn't there a country song...a mushy country song about unanswered prayers or something like that?

Amy

There has to be.

Cheri

How about you?

Amy

I thought about this time that there had been this sort of implicit promise that I would be considered for a job, and without being considered, I found out that somebody else had already been hired. I was devastated. I cried and cried, but when I look back on that now and I watch this person do the job so well. And it's turned into a job that I wouldn't have wanted any way. Man, I'm like, I see God's hand in that.

Cheri

So disappointments aren't always a bad thing.

Amy

Mm. Exactly.

Cheri

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy

And I'm Amy Carroll.

Cheri

And you're listening to Grit-N-Grace, good girls breaking bad rules, the podcast that equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy

Today, we're processing what we learned from our interview with Diane Dokko Kim, author of *Unbroken Faith*.

Cheri

And what I learned is I want her to come live with me, 'cause she's really wise and I just want her to, like, sit and have coffee with me. I know she said she already had too many coffees. God told her to stop having coffees with people. But I want her to just sit at my kitchen table and have coffee with me and walk me and talk me through all sorts of things.

Amy

Exactly. Yeah, the wisdom that came out in that interview really blew my doors off. Because, part of that is I have met Diane, and not only is incredibly wise, as she shared with us in the interview, but she is adorable and also hilarious.

Cheri

She is.

Amy

Which we didn't get as much of in the interview, but just so ya'll know.

<Laughter>

Cheri

She's a little bit nuts in the perfectly right way. Well, you know we started out by talking about how she wrote her book. And she never meant to write a book, which is true for many people. Now that's not my story. My story is that I've wanted to write a book since I was two. So I'm always fascinated by people who never wanted to write a book and then did end up writing a book. What was it about her story of writing *Unbroken Faith* that you found significant?

Amy

One of the things that I loved about the beginning of the interview was how honest she was about her disappointment and facing that disappointment in a faith community. And how she started to sit at the back of the room and that she was having to put on this public faith because her husband was in leadership while she privately was ranting and raving at God. I've been in those shoes. I had a broken engagement when I was in college, and I kept the plastic face on and attended church and did the public faith thing, while at the same time, being so angry with God. And really, what I did, I didn't rant with him, that's probably a lot healthier. I totally withdrew. I was attending church on Sundays and ignoring God the rest of the week. How about you?

Cheri

You know, I just love that she spent 5 years processing and doing her own work, before this turned into a ministry, which then turned into a book. I know one of the dangers for people like me, who are prone to writing, it's so easy to get an idea and then decide, "Well, God will transform me as I'm writing the book." She didn't get ahead of things. She didn't get the diagnosis and decide to become an award-winning author and turn this tragedy into a book. She did a lot of private wrestling on her own, which I think is the way to do it with integrity, to make sure that she had processed her stuff before she started working with other people.

Now, she said that when faced with disappointment there's 5 questions that we ask, and I recognized all 5 of these. I want to read them and see which one of them do you have the hardest time with? There's the double question: Why did this happen? Why did God let this to happen?" So that's number one. Two: Is He going to fix this? Three: How am I going to get through this? Four: Can I trust Him? And five: What does the word of God have to do with this?

Which of these do you have the biggest struggle with?

Amy

Um. It kind of embarrasses me to say, but it is the "Can I trust God?" When I get down to my sleepless nights and my angst that I have over things that turn out to be disappointments or not the way that I thought, it is a lack of trust of God. And, you know, I'm too much of a church girl to say out loud. Do I trust God? Or I don't trust God. But my actions reveal my heart in that. How about you?

Cheri

Well, I understand cause mine is number three: how am I going to get through this? And so, I go into planning mode and me trying to plan it and fix it myself really is a form of saying I don't trust God. It's all up to me. So I think they're actually really, really closely related. Well, I ended up having my toes very, very firmly stomped on, in a good way. We knew that was gonna happen, but when I asked her why she had verbalized this is not the way it's supposed to be. That really resonated with me. And she said, "It's important to acknowledge that we expected perfection, so we can grieve. If we can be honest, we can't heal. If we can't heal, we can't move on." And then she said, "If we

can't move on from past hurts and disappointments, we have no room in our heart to receive the new blessings God has in store." And that really hit me, because in the last few weeks, God's been making it really clear that I need to take more action. It's all well and good for me to mull things over in my head, it's great for me to talk things through...but I really need to move on to taking action and there was an article that I read last week called, 'The difference between honoring an emotion and indulging it.' And it talked about that the first 3 steps are the same either way. To identify the emotion: that's number 1. Number 2 is to accept. Number 3 is to understand. My problem is I tend to go in circles with those first three: identify, accept, understand. And I live in my head. I end up getting kind of stuck there, like Diane said. And if I get stuck, then I don't move one. And so the number 4 thing was to decide what to do and actually do it. And so that's what I felt really challenged by Diane. It's just so much easier for me to ponder and mull and stew and imagine what I would do if I actually took action. I mean, I do amazing things in my head! I have great conversations, and if I need to have conflict. Let me tell you the conflicts in my head are scripted to perfection, which may be why I don't actually live them out the way I should!

Amy

But those are so much better in our heads 'cause then we win the conflict every time. But, anyway, that's a whole different show.

Cheri

Yeah it is. So Diane really challenged me to take that action of moving on so that there is room to receive the new blessings that God has had. Because, when I have done that in areas in my life, I have seen those blessings come in. The things that I thought I couldn't let go of. Once I do, and God has moved me on, I forget what they were. They're no longer that important.

Amy

Can you give an example of an action that you had to take to overcome a disappointment? I'm trying to imagine this.

Cheri

You know it could be something as simple...as simple...uuh. It could be something as simple as stating my preference. I mean Mother's Day comes to mind. In my family, we don't do Mother's Day, ever. Like nothing happens for Mother's Day. And year in and year out, I have hoped that at some point something would happen on Mother's Day, other than me going on Facebook and scrolling endlessly and feeling sorry for myself. If I were to take action on that, I would say to my kids and to my husband, with large amounts of notice, here's what I'd really like for Mother's Day. And of course, the reason I haven't done it is because what if they ignored it? If I actually say what I want and say what I need, and then Mother's Day comes and still nothing happens, then what? Well, then I have some new data. Or I can say here's what I'd like from you, and if not, here's what I'm gonna do for me. I'm gonna take myself out to breakfast. I'm gonna take myself out to a movie. Or I'm gonna find a girlfriend whose family also doesn't do Mother's Day, and we're gonna do something together. I mean there are all sorts of

things. There's probably Mother's Day events I could go to that I have not gone to, because I know I would sit there resentful and hurt and sad. And what this is suggesting is that I could make the decision, a predecision to go and have a good time, even though it doesn't match the picture of perfection in my head. Maybe I could let go of that picture of perfection, and do something different, and choose to have a really good time with this thing that is different. It's not a sad substitute. It's just something different.

Amy

Ohh. That's a great example! 'Cause I was trying to extrapolate what you meant. So that's very helpful, and I bet there are a lot of listeners out there that Mother's Day, all of these, Valentines is coming up, all these things have these expectations attached don't they? Whew! Gracious, gracious!

Cheri

Yes, Hallmark has set us up! Alright. Well, I wanted to go through the helpful comments that Diane shared with us, 'cause I thought that was so practical. And I was even a little surprised at how grateful she was for the chance to share those. I almost didn't add that question to the interview, 'cause I thought, "Oh, that's, I don't know, controversial!" I asked it because I wanted to know, because I am constantly chewing on my foot.

Amy

It's so helpful! And I'm sure she was grateful, because if you've walked in difficult shoes, whether it's a loss of family member or a child with a disability or whatever it - or a personal disability - whatever it is. You know that if you say these things out loud without being asked, people perceive you as being ungrateful or whiney or why do you have to parse people's words. And so, she probably was just thankful for a safe space to say, "Hey, you know, this is not helpful!"

Cheri

We've probably all experience people saying something like these when we've been in a situation of disappointment, so let's just kind of talk through them. The first one she shared sounds something like God only gives special challenges to special people. And Diane's comment was she that does feel particularly special. The circumstance doesn't feel special to her. And I thought, for me, when I hear this kind of thing, it almost makes God sound like a high-functioning sociopath, like, he knows us so well that he knows just how to really mess with us and that doesn't sound loving. I'm like, "No, thank you." I don't believe that's how God works, but that's kind of where my mind goes with that.

Amy

Well, that's really interesting, because what you're saying is not only is it not helpful to the person that's hearing, but it's actually bad theology.

Cheri

I think so!

Amy

Not true. Not good theology. I applied it. I was thinking about my friend that's in a wheelchair. She has been for her whole life. She has Spina bifida. Because of my sweet friend, I've just learned so many things. And she also has her own kind of community, and they come to church with her to church sometimes. So we get - I'm friends with her friends, and so I watch Facebook. And one of her friends addressed this recently, specifically. And said, you know, there are lots of things that are special about me because God created me. She has a gift to write. She has a gift to speak. All these things, and she said, "Being in the chair is not one of them." That's part of my struggle, and so, being recognized for that kind of dismisses what's truly special about the person and dismisses it.

Cheri

Yeah. That's a good point. The second thing she said was basically that painful trials are a blessing from God. And I love her point. She said years out, we can see that, but in the moment, it's not really helpful to have somebody else tell us that. And I find that when someday tries to tell me what I'm going through is a blessing from God. They've usually not experienced it, and so it's really easy for them to say that, because it's unfamiliar to them. They're very distant from it.

Amy

My mom gave me a book years ago that's been really helpful and the author painted this picture that when you are in a place of grief or disappointment, that your bucket, your emotional bucket, is full. It's like up at the full line. So he said when we try to make these comments to make things better, we're dumping it into a full bucket, that they're unable to receive that in any kind of positive way. His solution was to climb in the bucket with the person. He's like don't say things to try to help. Just be present. And that has been really, really helpful for me, because as we went through these I was like, I'm pretty sure I've said some version of these before. And my heart was in the right place because I really, really did want to help. I'm the glass half full kind of girl so I want to help people see the glass half full, but it took reading that book and walking through some hard things with some friends to realize, yeah, but it's not helping. We're saying these things to try to be helpful, but they're not helpful. In fact, they're hurtful.

Cheri

When Diane said she knows that people mean well. I'm like, yeah, I've been one of those people who mean-ed well, emphasis on the mean. I mean-ed well. It's, like, uh yeah I ended up accidentally being mean. And I love that image of a full bucket, because, if we could see that, we would know better than to put something more in it. Like, if I could image a person as having that full emotional bucket, that's a great visual, Amy, I like that.

Okay, so the next one she said was just pray, God will answer your prayers. And I hate how presumptuous this is, because first of all, it assumes the person hasn't been praying. Like, we can tell that they aren't a good enough prayer, because they haven't gotten the result that praying enough would have led to. And I just think that's so presumptuous.

Amy

Well, it's an implicit criticism.

Cheri

It is.

Amy

It's funny, because I started thinking that this is something I've told myself over the years. "If you just pray enough, things will be resolved" and that is not always true. I started realizing that when our youngest struggled with severe anxiety as a child. It was a super hard time walking through that with him. And I was praying and praying and praying. But what I realized is I had seen prayer like a magic wand. If I just wave prayer over this, it's all gonna be okay and you know, it's just not how it works. Prayer is such a mystery to me. That my word for the year, and I'm trying to dive in. It is a mystery, that yes, we are told to pray, but the answers don't come in our way and in our time frame so we have to be careful with seeing prayer as a magic wand.

Cheri

Absolutely. And then the fourth one is have you tried fill in the blank? When people if I have thought of something or tried something, I just want to strangle them, because one, I am nerdy girl. I have done my research. And two, I'm control girl; so you know I've done absolutely everything I possibly could have done to prevent this. And part of the depth of my disappointment when there is a disappointment is with myself. It's not just with the external circumstances. It's that somehow I didn't do enough to keep the bad thing from happening or make the good thing happen. So 'have you thought of' or 'have you tried' just makes me feel so much worse.

Amy

Well, this is where my spirituality goes out the door because with both my pregnancies I was really, really sick. And I thought, the next person that asks me if I have tried crackers beside my bed, I'm just gonna slap them, because not only had I tried crackers beside my bed. I had tried everything else, like you said, and it will drive you around the bend. It'll make you lose a little of your Jesus.

Cheri

And well, speaking of that, we're just not even gonna touch number 5, whether there's any hidden sin that might have caused the situation. I just refuse to dignify that. So well, you really responded strongly to Diane talking about comparison and disability being the sharpest tool in heaven's drawer and the ghost of grief. What was it about all of that? I remember your reaction was pretty strong. How did that resonate with you?

Amy

Well, I had just come home from a visit with part of my family with someone that I love deeply that has severe mental illness. So I have watched her parents walk through just, they've been dealing with this for about 20 years now. And it's so painful, Cheri, to have

someone you love deal with mental illness just like I'm sure that Diane's situation, it's painful for her to watch her son struggle with his autism. And I had just been there, and so this woman that I love so much that's mentally ill now is in her 40's, and so her parents, you know, they've given up on weddings and on grandchildren from her and, you know, those kinds of things, and it's been hard. It's been a long road for them. There was a lot of denial for a long time, and then I really saw them grieve and now they are at a place of acceptance. But no matter how much you get to that place of acceptance, that ghost of grief, is still there and her mother talked to me about the pain of her isolation. And how she wished there was someone that would love her and take care of her but that probably isn't going to happen. And so it was just really fresh and really raw, and, you know, I think if were living in that place of disappointment, there are those things that we know have been missed and that's painful.

Cheri

Umm. So what's the scripture that you pulled for these two episodes with Diane?

Amy

Well, okay, so I'm gonna read it but just know that I wrestled with this. It was painful even as I put this together. It's Isaiah 55:8 where God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord." And here I am tearing up even reading that, because I just want God's ways to be my ways sometimes. Disappointment is so disappointing!

Cheri

I'm right there, girlfriend!

Amy

And even though I know – see here's the trust thing again – I have to go back and remind myself that God's ways are better, that his thoughts are higher so that I can manage my disappointment. It's hard. It's painful.

Cheri

So what's the bad rule?

Amy

The bad rule is I can't accept what I can't understand.

Cheri

Oh gosh, that sounds so logical! I'm like, yeah, and your point would be?

Amy

I mean I've lived there. This is the reason I can write these things. Because I've, you know, lived with that bad lie for a long time.

Cheri

So what's the truth that we can replace it with?

Amy

I can trust God's plan when I don't understand. And you know, there's just some things, look, in the end we're not gonna be able to understand. I'm sure there are still days, even though Diane has wrestled through all this, that's she's like, "God, why autism?" It's the nature of our humanity.

Cheri

So what do you see as the grit for these episodes?

Amy

I need to accept some mystery. Prayer is a mystery. Why do we live in this tension of disappointment? It's a mystery. And I don't like mystery. You know, the whole God is a light unto our path. I want a floodlight, thank you very much. Have the mystery erased, all the nooks and crannies illuminated, 10 miles down the road in view and that is just not how God works, and the grit is living at rest in that.

Cheri

Mmm! Right there with you. And I think the grace is gonna be multifold. We spent some of this episode talking about how what other people say to us is so unhelpful and so part of it is grace towards other people who don't live in our head. They don't have access to our hearts. I know I can be so judgmental of other people when they seem so insensitive to me, but they're probably doing the best they can. Learning to extend them grace for their intent, even if the actual words and the impact aren't that great, to still know that they did or said, what they did or said in love. I think there's a lot of grace there. Then the grace for ourselves is, I don't know about you, but I feel like at this stage I should have arrived. I shouldn't be this disappointed anymore. I should be much more spiritual. I should completely, "Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus." I should just be singing that all day long, and I'm disappointed in myself. You know we've spent the whole episode talking about being disappointed. I'm disappointed in myself that I still get so disappointed. When I open scripture, I don't see God saying, "Cheri, why haven't you arrived yet?" I open it, and I keep seeing him pursuing and forgiving and inviting me to once again trust him.

Amy

Mercy.

Cheri

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode100.

Amy

There you'll find this week's transcript, our digging deeper download, the bible verse art, and a giveaway.

Cheri

If you've enjoyed this episode of Grit-N-Grace, we would so appreciate it if you would leave us a review on iTunes. You'll find a link in the show notes.

Amy

Make sure to carve out time to join us next week when we'll be talking to Donna Jones, author of *Seek: A Woman's Guide To Meeting God*.

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!