

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

Episode #112: Using Practical Strategies to Banish Fear

**Cheri**

So when Daniel and I first got married, we saw this pillow that we still wish we had bought as a total joke. Its called The Worry Pillow, and when you squeezed it, it would say things like “Ohhh the bills....”

**Amy**

<Laughing>

**Cheri**

We’ll still look at each other when somebody’s complaining and, we’ll look at each other and we’ll make the hand-motion of squeezing the pillow and we’ll go, “Ohhh the bills...” But what I want to know is if somebody made a worry pillow for your worries, what kind of things would it say every time it got squeezed?

**Amy**

Okay, first of all, it would say that one – ohhh the bills! But it would have a little more of a southern accent, but besides that it would be the same. But mine would probably be, “Where are my boys gonna land?” Because my boys aren’t boys, they’re men, and I’m just watching their life unfold and it’s miraculous, but it’s also like woooo where’s this gonna end you know? And also what if I crash and burn on my latest project. And so when I made this list I was like, “Oh, wow, mine are like really close to home,” which might be indicative of selfishness and others things, so... how about yours?

**Cheri**

Mine aren’t close to home, mine are all in my head. That’s how bad it is. So this is what it would sound like each time you squeezed it: someone is mad at you....for something you did...but you don’t remember...and they’re not gonna tell you....so you have to figure it out....all by yourself....” Yeah, that’s what my worry pillow would sound like.”

**Amy**

I am dying! That is hilarious. Wow, I might have that series also. I need to reprogram my pillow.

**Cheri**

So it’s a really good thing that we got to listen to Maria talk about fear and anxiety and worry and help us along here.

**Amy**

Yes, so good. Oh, Wow. Mmm.

**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 Maria Furlough, author of *Breaking The Fear Cycle*.

**Cheri**

Alright. Well, one of the things that Maria talked about that I know really resonated with you was this contrast between faith-filled prayers and fear-filled pleas. And I know that prayer is your word for 2018, so fill us in, bring us up to speed, talk about how this spoke to you.

**Amy**

You know, I think that I mentioned that it's been an interesting year because I really thought that God was gonna have me diving into these deep theological places with him, but it's just been delightful. He is so delightful. 'Cause I was scared of the word prayer, but he's been giving me these simple things to implement into my life. So one of the books I've been reading is *Praying for Your Adult Children*, and maybe we can provide the link because I think it is just fantastic. But here is just one simple thing from that book that the author suggested that we pray one scripture for our adult children per year. So we prayerfully take a look at scripture, pay attention to what God is saying, mine both popped up in devotions, for example, and I was just trying to pay attention. So what do you want me to pray for Nolan, Lord? What do you want me to pray for Anson, Lord? And both of mine came from Philippians 1. They were from different sources, but both are in that passage. And so, I've written those scriptures down on a card, and then God kind of helped me break them into 5 days, so there's one specific thing from that passage each day that I pray for them. It's kinda easy peasy. I just pull out the card. I look at what day it is. I look at where I am, and I pray that prayer. And so, that has helped me, because my boys' future is uncertain right now. They're in transition as they finish school and so that kind of invokes some fear in me, but praying scripture is building my faith and her point was is that then we get to see over a period of time how God answers those prayers, which builds our faith even more, so I'm super excited about that. How about you?

**Cheri**

I love it. Well, I'm just thinking that would work for anything we're worried about. For you, specifically, right now it's your boys, but it could be work, it could be health, it could be any

other relationship, but to just ask that God guide us to a scripture. I love how you broke it up into 5 days. I never would have thought of doing that. I think that's fabulous. I love that.

### **Amy**

Another simple tool that God has put into my path via Amy Hale, and you can follow her on Instagram, is that she talks a lot about prayer and bible study. And she had this really simple tool that a friend of mine talked about one day with me that's kind of a pre-prayer journal. And it's 5 points, so I just put it in a word doc so I could run it off on my printer when I run out. So every day I start with these pre-prayer thoughts that I write and journal some things down before I even really dive into my quiet time with God. And today one of mine was, "Today, I am anxious about." And her thought was, "Hey, we should get our anxieties right out there in front of God first." Let's deal with that first, so we can really immerse ourselves in His presence. And it's funny, 'cause there's some days that I leave it blank, and I'm like, am I anxious about anything today? "Ehh, not so much." But today, for example, there might have been 5 paragraphs. I mean. But it's so helpful. It's prayer of course, not really pre-prayer. But it kind of helps me get it all out so I can say, "Okay God, I'm handing this to you. Now let's spend some good time together." It's been awesome.

### **Cheri**

I love that thought, because when we talk about writing, we talk about pre-writing. We talk about brainstorming, we talk about taking notes, about doing research, about observing before we sit down to write a blog post or write a chapter. And I'm also thinking of athletes who will warm-up. They'll do stretching, they'll do warm up exercises, before they even hit the track or hits the weights or whatever. And I guess I just thought that prayer is prayer, you just do it or you don't do it, and what you're saying is you're learning that there's different ways and there's almost a warm-up, but none of these are threatening. They're all very, very doable. Something a little more uncomfortable that Maria talked about is was she talked about her pattern of running away from pain. And then she said that God leads us through the fire, and we learn from him. She made the comment that she likes post-fire Maria better than pre-fire Maria, and she's grateful to the Holy Spirit for the transformation in her life. So I was wondering, first of all, what patterns of running away that Holy Spirit has revealed in your life?

### **Amy**

This is something God's been doing within the past year or so and it has to do with prayer. I've made no secret that I have trouble sleeping at night. I'm kind of an insomniac at certain times of the month. Anyway, TMI. So what I used to do is I would read myself back to sleep, but recently God has been showing me that reading in this circumstance is a way of running away from him. Because a lot of times it's connected to worry and anxiety. That is why I'm still awake in the middle of the night. And so, he was saying you're using reading as numbing, and running away, and instead I want you to pray. So like, face the anxiety head on, don't turn away from it by reading something, and then pray about it, and so I've thought of reading as running and praying as staying. Like, I need to stay in the anxiety for a few minutes with God so that I can go back to sleep rather than running away from it.

**Cheri**

So I'm watching your mouth moving, and I'm just not listening to you. You can just stop talking right now, Amy Carroll. You have said that reading is not always good. How could you go there?

**Amy**

Even I have a hard time forming those words. Can I say that? And I want to say to everybody who's listening, look, that's not always the case. And it hasn't always been the case in my life, but it became the case.

**Cheri**

No. The only reason I want to tell you to stop talking is 'cause I don't want to hear it, because it's so convicting, because both you and I can intellectualize. We can go straight to our heads. And what's the reading? At least for me, the reading is looking for solutions. I'm gonna read a book that's gonna solve the problem, or I'm gonna Google rather than go to God. So reading is just another way that we bypass God and try to solve our own problems. Okay, so I identify with that pattern of running and the other thing that I'm becoming aware of is productivity. I love to be productive and have something to show for my time. And so, I can run from healthy connections and opportunities or painful situations that I really ought to be dealing with, and I feel like I can justify it if I go do something, and go, "Tada! Here's the thing. Look what I did." And God isn't fooled by look what I did. Here's another thing, because if he's asked me to connect with somebody, if he's asked me to celebrate, or if he's asked me to sit with the anxiety and trust him, he's not looking for me to show up with some new thing I just did. So reading and productivity can be forms of running away. Whew, light and fluffy with Amy and Cheri.

**Amy**

Oh, wow. But when you say that out loud, reading and productivity...the problem with that for us recovering perfectionists is that it looks like something good on the surface.

**Cheri**

Oh yeah.

**Amy**

So we can fool other people, and we can fool ourselves for a good long time with that. So hopefully none of you who are listening know what we're talking about at all. We hope this doesn't hurt you to hear as much as it hurts us to say.

**Cheri**

Yeah, we're both smiling but it's the strained smile of ouch, ouch!

**Amy**

It is. It's kind of funny. We should post pictures of those. Grimaces.

**Cheri**

Pain...grimaces...that's the word, grimaces...Alright, well let's do something a little more positive and that is, is there a post-fire version of Amy that you like better than the pre-fire version of yourself?

**Amy**

Well, the most recent fire in my life is a blessing, but it was also a fire, so just to put that in context, because Maria's was such a devastating loss. So this was not in that realm at all. But the hardest fire for me in the last 5 years was writing the book. And you know...

**Cheri**

Can we be clear which book you're talking about?

**Amy**

Oh, *Breaking Up With Perfect*. Because it's amazing how no matter what, no matter if you're trying to communicate things to people, truth that you've lived out, whatever that looks like for you.... teaching Sunday school or talking with your neighbor over the fence. It's amazing how that's the area that the heat gets turned up again. You know?

**Cheri**

So true.

**Amy**

So since I was talking about my own perfectionism, oh my goodness, it was wave after wave after wave of things coming against me to say, "Have you really dealt with this? Have you really dealt with this?" and the answer was no.

<Laughter>

I have not fully dealt with that, which, you know, the thing about the heat being turned up, just like the picture that we all know, is the dross gets, it lifts to the top. And so, my post-fire experience, the heat being turned up, the dross being raised to the top is I am more refined than before. Here's how it played out the other day at my house, I said to Barry, "I need some accolades."

<Laughter>

He just rolled his eyes. Like, oh boy, what's coming?

**Cheri**

Okay Barry, eye rolling does not count as an accolade, sorry, dude?

**Amy**

It did not, and he's like, "Okay, I'll play. About what?" And one of the things that I've shared about the last little month or so is that we're having renovations done on our house. Now any

of you that have ever had renovations know that there's no perfection in renovations, lots of problems, very little perfection.

**Cheri**

You've talked about a fine layer of red-dust. That doesn't sound like perfection. You have a lot of white in your house. So red dust and white don't go together.

**Amy**

Yes, oh my goodness. It's just I could talk for hours, but we've had these great crews, but there's always bumps in the road, and my house has been torn up like for...

**Cheri**

Your nest!

**Amy**

My nest has been a wreck for two months, but you know what? I realized God has had me in process and there has been growth. This is the good news. I haven't freaked out. I don't think I've freaked out once. That is unbelievable! So the post-fire is better than before. Not perfect. But better.

**Cheri**

You've podcasted from your son's closet perfectly calmly.

**Amy**

In the dark last time I couldn't see a thing. But you know.

<Laughter>

**Cheri**

I love it.

**Amy**

So how about you post fire? What does this look like?

**Cheri**

Probably the biggest fire for me in the last five years was discovering that Ann Marie had gone from having no tattoos to full sleeve tattoos, which I have blogged about in a series called, "How to love your daughter when you hate her tattoos." And you know, what God has done in my heart over the years I can think back to how shocked and horrified I was and how the only thing I wanted was for them to go away so I didn't have to deal with it, to me feeling like it's very normal. I used to think success was I wouldn't see them any more, and no, that's not success; success is I see them, and I see her, and I accept and love all of her and they're no longer an issue. Like they don't – they're not an obstacle between us anymore. And because of that I am so much more aware of my prejudices. One of the major lessons God taught me is

that perfectionism produces prejudice. And I've become much more aware of how judgmental I am about all sorts of things when I give people a quick glance. You know, why do they look like that? Why do they dress that way? Why don't they do this instead? And it's a work in progress, you know, I didn't realize. In fact it's almost. It's a little worse to realize how judgmental I am, but I know, and this is why I like post-fire Cheri better than pre-fire Cheri, is at least I'm aware of it so as those thoughts are rising to the surface, I can hand them over to God, and say, okay, work with me on this. Teach me through this. Walk me through this. Why are these thoughts even coming to my mind? And I can surrender them. Just as a small practical example, I'm now very comfortable starting conversations with somebody who has a tattoo, which I had never once done in my life before Anne Marie got her tattoos. Now, I'm not about to go get my own tattoo, let's just be really clear on that, but God has helped me let go of a lot of fears and beliefs that were inaccurate. And a lot of habits of mind and heart that were incredibly destructive. And he continues to do that, and so I'm really, really grateful for that.

### **Amy**

Well, one of the things that came out of my mouth recently that I've been repeating to myself is that I'm thankful for those types of pain because the pain points to the problem.

### **Cheri**

Oh. So good.

### **Amy**

I think sometimes we just confuse the two. We don't like the pain. We don't like whatever is causing the pain. But so often we need to be thankful for that because it's the pain that moves us forward to then address the problem and grow.

### **Cheri**

Ugh. That is so good. That is so good. And so true. There was a moment in our interview with Maria where you look up and look out, and I throw my hands into the air because, she had said something so profound. Here's what she said: she said, "There's a difference between fear and pain, and I don't want to cause my own pain through fear. Life is gonna throw pain at you that you cannot avoid, and I don't want to waste my joy-filled days making my own pain with my own fear in my own mind." Talk to me about why that spoke to you so much.

### **Amy**

Well, I mean I think that the whole life is going to throw pain at you that you cannot avoid...hello. Anybody that's older than 5 listening to this will agree with that, and I think so many times we amp that up because of our reaction to it. And the reaction so often is fear. There's that adrenaline reaction to pain, but we have to figure out well what do we do with that at that point when we're having that normal, human adrenaline pumped reaction to that. I'm getting a chance to live this book thing again, and I've just decided I'm not doing it the same way again. I'm not going to write a book that has joy in the subtitle and live in misery. I'm just not going to do it. Do you know what I'm saying?

**Cheri**

Yes.

**Amy**

Writing is always painful for me. You probably have something that is always painful for you. But we can decide are we gonna let that pain shift us into fear mode which makes the pain more painful, or are we gonna take that pain and do something with it?

**Cheri**

A habit I come by honestly is the habit of worrying about all the possible things that could go wrong, and then trying to contingency plan for them all, and then when they don't all happen I then feel the satisfaction of having prevented them by being hyper vigilant with my worry and my anxiety. Now the problem with that line of reasoning is they didn't happen because they didn't happen, not because of all my hyper vigilance and worry and anxiety. But when we get caught up in that whole fear cycle and all of that adrenaline is rushing, we end up with these cause and effect relationship in our own head that are inaccurate. Those of us who are recovering people pleasers, and recovering perfectionists, and also those of us who are HSP, highly sensitive people...because we're reflective people, we tend to think and reflect on things, we can get caught ruminating and that rumination can go into an endless fear cycle that then causes the adrenaline and it goes around and around. So I think it is so important to realize that fear is natural, but sometimes we can feel pain when there hasn't been any injury at all. It's just what's happening in our own heads.

**Amy**

Mmm. I think that fear is natural. That is such an important statement because, listen, we're all gonna experience pain, we're all gonna experience fear, so the first step is the same for everybody. What Maria was teaching us was how to do the second step and the steps beyond that in a better, more healthier way.

**Cheri**

Well, at the very end of our interview with Maria, she asked the questions, "How would life look different if we no longer held onto fears about failure? And how would life look different if we no longer held onto fears about relationships?" And I thought those were two great questions. I'm gonna let you start by answering the one on how you feel like your life would or is looking different without fears about relationships.

**Amy**

Okay, well, I had this delusional moment before we interviewed Maria where I was like, "Oh, I'm really glad we're doing this episode about fear, but that's not really my issue."

**Cheri**

We're doing this episode for other people.

**Amy**



Oh, my gracious. Well, by the end I might have identified a whole bunch of fears. But the big one was at the end when she talked about relationships and how we should not be so hard on ourselves in relationships. And this is my primary fear. I think that saying the wrong thing is going to implode a relationship, that doing the wrong thing, that not doing enough...all the things that we've talked about here, and just giving myself grace in that. So, one of the things I do, because I don't think fast on my feet is I always replay conversations in my head, and then I parse every word. It's a fear thing. And, you know, truthfully I share here that I had a period of about 5 years where I did implode about four relationships so that has kind of been a reinforced fear that I actually have done some of this. And so, I've realized I really need to let go of that fear though because that quenches friendships and relationships. I mean that really puts a kibosh on openness and vulnerability and all of the things that relationships thrive on. I need to trust myself more, and I need to trust the other person more, that when I say the stupid thing, which I will and so will you and everybody else, right? Is that the other person loves me enough to give me grace or to confront me, and say, "Hey, that hurt my feelings, can we talk about that?"

**Cheri**

Mmm. So good.

**Amy**

Was there something that Maria said that was your thing?

**Cheri**

Yeah, you know, I was thinking about the fears about failure. And um, we haven't talked about this on the podcast yet, but about a month ago now, I actually called my own intervention, because I have a bunch of new projects on my plate. And I believe God has brought them all there, but it means that I need to let go of some things. And so, I called together, and this was actually, I was afraid to even ask people for help. You were one of them, Kathi was one of them, and there were a couple of others. And I realized, no, I'm gonna go ahead and ask and I'm gonna trust them to either say yes or no. I'm gonna trust them to be adults. I'm not gonna make decisions for them, because in the past, because of fear, I have made decisions for people. Isn't that generous of me, Amy? I make decisions for people. I know what's best for them so I just go ahead and decide it for them. So I overcame that fear, and in the process of talking, and I basically said on the call I said I want you guys to tell me the things that you would wish you would tell me if I burn out. And so I had four women on the call who were very honest with me. But the thing that was so amazing is, and these were all writing projects that God has given me for the next year, when it came down to it what I recognized is I was trying to keep too many things on my calendar, too many things to do, because writing didn't feel like enough. Like, just writing for a year felt like failure. Like, there was nothing to show for it. Like I said, I like to be productive. And people say what are you doing these days Cheri? Oh just writing. Six months from now, what do you have to show for your life? Oh nothing. Just writing. It just felt terrible. But it was so beautiful that when we came to that place where I realized, "Oh, I'm trying to keep all these other things and not quit things I need to be quitting because of this fear." This fear that just writing is not enough. And it's actually a failure. Suddenly, all of you

who know me were so affirming in saying, no, writing is enough. In fact, it is exactly what you're supposed to be doing. This is what you've been waiting your whole life to do. And it was so valuable to open up to that kind of input, but then to have that realization, and now on a daily basis when I sit down, and I've cleared my schedule, and I'm doing what it is that you all have affirmed that God has called me to do. To be able to say, it may not look like much right now, but it's not failure. That the reward of being vulnerable enough to say I need you guys to speak into my life. To say that that, and here's the thing, if I wouldn't have asked you guys, I would have failed. I would have fallen flat on my face, because I would have tried to keep everything going. I would have never given myself permission to clear my plate of certain things and to schedule the time to do the writing that God has called me to do this year. Now, I'll admit there was a certain amount of control freak in there, 'cause I called my own intervention ahead of time.

### **Amy**

No, that was wisdom, girl, and I'm sitting here, and I'm like, when we get to October and November, when we do our holiday ones, this needs to be a whole episode about the intervention. I learned so much from watching you. So valuable. So incredibly incredibly valuable. So we need to learn from you about how we could all stage our own intervention.

### **Cheri**

I highly recommend. The benefits have been amazing. So what is the scripture that you have chosen to go along with these episodes?

### **Amy**

1 John 4:8 part a. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear. And so the bad rule...if I ignore fear it, will go away. You know, how I tried to deal with fear. If I just pretend if it's not there, maybe it'll slink away.

### **Cheri**

How has that been working for you, Amy Carroll?

### **Amy**

Not so well. But the truth is...I think embedded in this is if I live loved fear will go away. It's a choice between the two things. I mean the scripture makes it so clear. That we can live loved, and I think that includes God and others, and if I live loved that is a place of security. It's a boundary that fear cannot penetrate. But if I try to ignore fear, there is no boundary, so it just attacks over and over again.

### **Cheri**

Well, and the grit in all of this to me is...I can get so caught up in that worry, anxiety, adrenaline cycle and it feels so real, and we talk a lot about fight and flight, but I tend to be a freeze and fawn kind of gal. Like I either freeze up or I fawn. I make nice. Like, I'm overly nice to people. Those are the ways that my fear comes out and that one especially, which is just another way of saying people pleasing, that works really well on surface level relationships. It works

especially well in some churches, and so the grit for me is...should I not have said that?  
Hahahha.

**Amy**

That was so powerful. I think you should say it again. Especially “in some churches” but go ahead.

**Cheri**

But for me the grit is gonna be some kind of discipline to say no I’m not gonna go back into this cycle. I’m gonna find something...I’m either gonna pull something out of my peace jar, or I’m gonna go to scripture, and if I, on my own, cannot break out of this, I’m gonna go seek help. I’m gonna go see a counselor, I’m gonna talk to a pastor, whatever it takes to not live going round and round in that fear cycle believing that if I ignore it, it’ll go away. Because the truth is, of course, if I ignore it just build and builds and gets worse and then I feel helpless and hopeless and that’s no good. How about the grace?

**Amy**

Mmm. Absolutely. Well, I default back to the relational place where my fear resides, and I need to accept safe spaces in relationships that people create for me. God certainly just models this. He is the author of the second chance, right? And the third chance and the fourth chance. And that feels so safe and so nurturing, and so I need to accept those when people create them for me. But I also need to create them for other people. This is one of, we talk about vicious cycles, but I think cycles can go either way. And if I create safe spaces for my friends, for my family, for the people that I love, there’s less fear on their part and then they create safety for me and then there’s less fear on my part, and it just builds and grows and flourishes in love. That’s the key.

**Cheri**

Head on over to [gritngracegirls.com/episode112](http://gritngracegirls.com/episode112).

**Amy**

There you’ll be able to find this week’s transcript, our digging deeper download, the bible verse art, and our giveaway for *Breaking The Fear Cycle*.

**Cheri**

Come join our Facebook group, where we’ll continue this discussion.

**Amy**

And make sure to join us next week when we’ll be talking to Crystal Stine, author of *Holy Hustle*.

**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!

**Outtakes**

**Cheri**

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

**Amy**

And I'm Amy Carroll, who is without words. Oh, wow, that was articulate.

**Cheri**

Okay. I'll start over. Well, this is Cheri Gregory.