

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #137: Leveraging God's Positive Power in You

Multi Voiceover:

- I want to change, but I feel powerless.
- I'm constantly seeking validation from others that my efforts do matter.
- My identity is tied to being perfect.
- I am so overwhelmed by my own life.
- I get so swept up in my feelings of failure that I have to really strain to hear God's voice.

Cheri

Do you ever hear these kinds of voices in your own head?

Amy

I sure do! And usually at 2:37 in the morning.

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

If this is your first time listening in, this is a podcast for women who love Jesus and long for the abundant life he's promised.

Cheri

But some days, maybe even most days, you feel kinda like a puppet with perfectionism and people pleasing pulling your strings.

Amy

If nothing you do ever seems good enough.

Cheri

If you try too hard to do too much for too many for too long with too little.

Amy

If you exhaust yourself spending time to keep everyone else happy and your own needs go unmet.

Cheri

If you struggle with the C-word, control.

Amy

We get it. And you're in the right place, girlfriend.

Cheri

Grit 'n' Grace brings you weekly encouragement from wise, witty women ...

Amy

Because we have the best guests!

Cheri

We do! Women who come alongside you and equip you to replace the exhaustion of self-made goodness with the rest of God's grace.

Amy

Every week we kick culture's bad rules to the curb, so that we can follow Jesus' good plans for us.

Cheri

When you're done listening to this episode, we would love to have you come join the conversation in our Facebook group. Simply search Facebook for Grit 'n' Grace girls, and you'll find us.

Amy

Today we're talking to Suzie Eller, author of *The Spirit-Led Heart: Living a Life of Faith and Love Without Borders*. She is also the author of *Come with Me Devotional: A Yearlong Adventure in Following Jesus* and a popular blogger. Suzie is with Proverbs 31 Ministries as a writer and speaker, and her message is to encourage women to live fully and free in their faith in every aspect of their lives.

We wanted to start by just asking you what made you decide to tackle the topic of the Holy Spirit, or the person of the Holy Spirit, and write *The Spirit-Led Heart*.

Suzie

Yeah. I think the answer I'm going to give you might not be the answer you expect, but I was kind of locked behind a door of growing cynicism. And I was looking at the world and my focus had become less about the power of who Jesus was and what he wanted me to do and what he could do in the world to discouragement with what I was seeing and with what was going on in the world. So I just, you know, I begin to go back, because it's what I have to do, I begin to go back into the word of God and just say, Lord, teach me. Show me, and that led me to this teaching. This promise.

Cheri

Suzie, at the beginning of the book, you describe an encounter with the Holy Spirit early in your Christian life. So share with us, how did that encounter change things for you?

Suzie

I was raised in a home, and I love my parents so much, but I was raised in a home that was pretty dysfunctional at that time. And I was a pioneer believer in my home. And I remember just loving the Lord so much but feeling so ill equipped. People would look in their Bibles and they would understand it, and I would look at it and it seemed like Greek to me. And I would go home and try to live my faith and honestly felt just so ill equipped. And so, one night I was with a group of other youth, and I kind of stumbled to the altar, and I just began to say this one phrase, "Lord, I need help. I desperately need help."

And so, a pastor came and patted me on the shoulder and began to say, “Hey, it's time to go.” And I thought I just started praying. And what I realized is that I had been praying for two hours. And in that two hours that time the helper had arrived, and I was still ill equipped. I was still me. I was still in a dysfunctional home, but I was no longer alone. I had been given help.

Cheri

So how did this encounter address some of the hurts of your childhood?

Suzie

I'm not sure that it so much addressed the hurts of my childhood but exposed me to what was beyond the hurts of my childhood. You know? I was not just Suzie, raised in a dysfunctional home, I was Suzie created by a divine God with a divine purpose and who could redeem the hurts of the past and use those in a way that would come alongside others. And so, I had just begun to see the possibilities of who I was because of Christ, because of the fact that the Holy Spirit lived inside of me.

Cheri

I love that. I also love the way that *The Spirit-Led Heart* is really a sequel to *Come With Me*, which we've talked with you about in the past. So how did the Holy Spirit change the lives of 12 men who were flawed like we're flawed? And how can we hope for the same kind of change?

Suzie

There's just this stunning moment in scripture where Jesus has been resurrected from the cross. They have been, like I was, bound by cynicism and fear of what was going to take place and what the world was looking like. Jesus stepped into the midst of their fear, and he began to tell them, “Hey guys, listen, you are now the church.” And so, at once they were assured that Jesus was with them, but at the same time, he looked into their flawed, ordinary lives and said, “Hey, I'm going to use you to change the world.” And you talk about a confidence crisis. But he said to them, I love this, John 14:16-17, and he says, “Listen, I have to go away, because when I go away there's going to be an advocate that comes that's going to be with you forever.” And what I take from that is that this is not just for them. This was for disciples. And that word forever has not changed in definition. However you look at that, that word means forever which means now, which means tomorrow.

And so, what I also love about that word advocate, it's different than the word advocate Jesus used. Jesus used the word advocate in a sense that he was advocating to the Father on our behalf. But what Jesus was saying to them is that this was going to be an advocate that fought for you, to you. And so, when I stood, when I stood that day as a young believer going back into a dysfunctional home, the Holy Spirit, as the helper, began to fight for me, to me, reminding me. “Listen sis, there's a plan for you, and I know you don't know the Bible like everybody else. But guess what? I'm going to lead you into all truth. I'm going to teach you. I'm going to walk with you. I'm going to fill those gaps. I'm going to expedite your learning. I'm going to give you discernment and knowledge and wisdom. Not in one gift package. This is something that

unfolds over years.” But I began to see myself not just as that old creation but truly someone that the Lord could use and that's the difference.

As I looked at these men, and later women, and crowds of people, the Lord looked at them and said, “I know you're flawed. I know you're weak in some areas. I know you're messy. But I'm going to use you as the church, and I'm going to fill the gaps in you that you see that are glaring. And I'm going to use your life, and you're going to become world changers.” That's a promise we can hold onto.

Cheri

All right. Well, this sounds amazing. But there's a word Amy and I talk about frequently on this podcast. We call it the C-word. Control. And so, maybe there's some of our listeners - are in some ways ... I'll just own this one, Amy. I'm not going to throw you under the bus. Maybe some of our listeners are like me and want to follow Jesus but are just afraid of living in surrender to the Holy Spirit. Control just sounds so much better. So how might diving into a relationship with the Holy Spirit change the course of a reforming perfectionist life, maybe in challenging ways and maybe in positive ways?

Suzie

Sure. I think the very first and the easiest step is just to embrace this promise that Jesus made as part of your faith view. And we have made that complex in our world. It's not complex. God loved us. Jesus rescued us. The Holy Spirit helps us live our faith. That is as simple as it needs to be. And so, embrace that as part of your faith. We have been promised that the Holy Spirit will help us live our faith.

And then, the second part is literally to just open yourself up to where maybe that will lead you. And that is hard with that ugly C-word that you're talking about, but you know, I think we often fight the hardest against those things where Jesus is actually trying to give us the desires of our heart. You know? We're hanging on. We're gripping. We're holding tightly because we're afraid that we're going to fall or we're going to fail or that, this is one thing, we're afraid that we're actually going to get what we pray for and then it's going to be too big. You know?

Amy

Yes.

Suzie

Yeah. And so, when we understand that the root of any confidence crisis is fear, but it goes deeper than that. The root of any confidence crisis is fear, but the target is our faith. And so, when I realized that, that we do have a real enemy. We do have one who wants to take this promise and say, “Hey, I'd just really like to make her ineffective. I'd really like to come in and let this C-word become greater than the word confidence that I want to replace it with.” Not confidence in who I am. Not confidence in my abilities, but confidence in the fact that I have a helper. And confidence in the fact that whatever it looks like, that the Lord can use my life in a way that impacts the world for him.

And so, embrace it as part of your faith view. Understand what the battle really is, that confidence crisis. The target is your faith. And then, third, I would just say, you know what? Let's let the Holy Spirit do his work. Let's let him do his work. He doesn't need us to be his project manager.

<Laughter>

Cheri

Are you sure?

Suzie

I'm so sure of this. And so, how does that change you? It leads you into paths that you may not go otherwise. It gives you permission to fail and see the victory in that because you actually took this step. And eternally, the external things that we see do not equal the eternal value of following Christ, of what he can do with that, what he's probably doing with it that we can't even see, and what he's doing inside of us, as we do.

That was a mouthful!

Amy

It's so good, Suzie, because I think in a lot of mainstream churches we're sort of even scared to talk about the Holy Spirit. And yet, he's a gift!

Suzie

Yes.

Amy

He's a gift to us. He gives us so many different gifts that you pack in *The Spirit-Led Heart*. One of them is boldness. And we reforming people pleasers, boldness is a real weakness for us. We shy away from being bold. So how does the Holy Spirit embolden us and what does that look like in our lives?

Suzie

And I think the reason that we're afraid of boldness, especially if you're a people pleaser, is you never want to take something as beautiful as faith and use it to step on someone. And so, what we do in order not to do that, we completely go the other direction. That's not what boldness is. That's not what it is at all. Boldness is actually humility and the ability to listen to the Lord and to speak as he leads. And a lot of times, boldness comes in a way that is just simply going a little bit past your comfort zone to trust that God sees what you don't or that God, in that moment, has someone on your heart and it really doesn't have a lot to do with you but it has a lot to do with his love for them. And he's inviting you to partner with him in that moment to love someone.

So we have to redefine boldness. That word *dunamis* comes from dynamite. And so, we're like, oh, I don't want that kind of boldness or power in my life. But that's not how Jesus did. Jesus was gentle. Jesus was impactful. He was insightful. He was discerning. There was wisdom. And all of that is tied up together in that act of boldness.

Amy

Who's a biblical example of boldness or who gives us a biblical example of boldness that we can follow?

Suzie

I think that one of the greatest ones that I love is Peter, and what I see in his boldness - He's so impetuous. He loves so easily. His heart breaks so easily. But when you see the transformation in Peter, from a week earlier, running from a scene where he was unable to say the name of Jesus, identify with Jesus before a servant girl around the fire while Jesus was being crucified, and then, we see Peter step up in front of a crowd of 3,000 and begin to speak in such a way that others are drawn to the Lord. I love that that boldness acknowledged you know what, I know I messed up a week ago, but I still love him and this gift is within me, the need is still before me. And so, Lord, boldly I'm going to step past my failure into this assignment you've given me in this moment, and I'm going to trust that you're going to use this in a way that will draw people to you. I love that definition of boldness.

Amy

Mm-huh. I have had the pleasure of having a front row seat watching the Holy Spirit at work in your life. He has taken you to some interesting places. Tell us about those.

Suzie

I'm actually going to ... I know you and I went to India together, and we've done some other things. But not too long ago, I ended up standing up in front of a group of women in a local prison. And it started with just offering a devotion to a group of women who were meeting with these beautiful women housed within this prison. And they called and asked if I could give them more books. Well, absolutely, however we needed to do that.

Well, it went from giving 30 more books to then 60, and then, I was called by the chaplain and said can you give us 115, which as authors you know that's a huge investment. And yet, I began to pray and say Lord, if you're opening the door for 115 books, which was every person within this prison, every female person, do it. Show me how to do that. Then they called me when they got the books and said can you come and speak?

And I remember walking through those clanging doors and looking back to years and years ago, this young women growing up in a dysfunctional home who didn't know the Bible, and now he was allowing me to walk through prison doors to stand in front of 115 women and tell them how good Jesus was and how much they loved him and the power that he had in their lives. You know, I look at that and I see was it unfamiliar? Yes. Was I uncertain of what to expect? Yes. But

he had given me the assignment for that day but he also gave me the ability and the courage and the confidence to do it.

Well, the next morning I got a phone call from one of the women that was ministering to some of these women. And I wasn't able to pray with them. I wasn't able to put hands on. They stood with their hands behind their back as I spoke. One of the women had taken her devotion; this was actually my *Come With Me Devotional*. And she had snuck into the bathroom and hid, because it was the first book that she had ever had in her hands that talked about a Jesus who loved her. And she read the entire thing, 260 pages, that night. She got in trouble for it. She was put in isolation. But what the woman told me is she said she came out of that bathroom stall knowing that she was loved by Jesus, that he was real, and it changed her life.

I don't want to miss opportunities like that because of a confidence crisis or because I'm standing saying, "Lord, I'm not capable." Because the truth is, I'm not. I'm not. But the Holy Spirit within me is.

Cheri

As you know, our listeners tend to be recovering perfectionists and reforming people pleasers and those of us who are highly sensitive people. And HSPs tend to feel things very, very deeply and tend to be very spiritually sensitive, so one role of the Holy Spirit is actually really good news for us. The Holy Spirit is called the comforter.

So Suzie, tell us about a time when you experienced his comforting presence in the midst of a valley?

Suzie

What can happen when we have the weight of the world on our shoulders or we feel like that we have to please everybody, one of the ways that the Holy Spirit comforts us is a promise to lead us into all truth. And the Holy Spirit liberates us from the expectations placed on us that have nothing to do with God's plans for us.

That is an area of comfort if you have the weight of the world on your shoulders. And I do want to say that one more time, because I truly ... I sensed the Holy Spirit leading me here completely in a new direction, but it's because he loves you and he wants us to live free is the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. And the one way that he does that is to offer comfort as he liberates us from the expectations placed on us that have nothing to do with God's plans for us.

And see, the thing is, those expectations can come from a lot of places. It can come from our background. It can come from experience. But unfortunately, sometimes those expectations can come from ourselves. And they honestly have nothing to do with God's truth for us. And so, the more that we have truth in us, the less room there is for lies to flourish. And that is just an area where the Holy Spirit absolutely comforts us and regrows a groove in our brain so that we can ask this question: Lord, is this from you?

I put a chart in this book, on page 65, actually. What happens is lies that are ingrained inside of us become assumptions or beliefs that become actions. And so, say the lie is you can never change. You can never change, Suzie. Well, the assumption is this is just who I am. This is my background. This is all that I know. I didn't go to Bible School. I'm not this. We have this assumption. And the actions are that we can feel really trapped by circumstances that had nothing to do with us or we can not take risks, even healthy ones. It can cause us to give up easily or compare ourselves or get frustrated.

But this is what happens. When that lie is replaced by truth. The lie is it's just who I am. But this is the truth. I am absolutely free to be whoever God made me to be. I am absolutely free to be whoever God made me to be and that is not limited by my background. That is not limited by my experience. That is not limited by somebody else's words. I am free to be who God made me to be. And that brings comfort, so different road, different highway, but that brings comfort.

Cheri

I feel, like, all the praise hands happening right about now. I think we just need to cheer.

Thank you, Suzie! That is amazing for everybody listening, but especially for our HSPs. That'll be amazing.

Amy

So I think as we listen to what you just said, Suzie, the natural next question is how do we do this? If we have a desire to step out into the spirit-led life with a spirit-led heart, how do we do it?

Suzie

Let's rip the complexity off of this gift. It's a promise. It's a promise! So let's receive that promise and open our heart to the promise that there is more for us. You know? And that it's free. And so, when I start my day, I have two questions. And the first one is just between me and the Lord and that's what can I do to bring you joy today, Lord? And it usually has nothing to do with something big. It's usually really, tiny small. The Lord might just say see her, Suzie. Or come see me. You know? It's usually pretty simple. It's not my grand plans or my whiteboard. But the second thing that I do is I just surrender and open myself to the Holy Spirit. Help me live in truth today. Give me discernment where I don't have it. Step into those gaps where I need to. And whether I'm in a valley today or on a mountaintop, just help me walk and follow Jesus and listen for his voice because that's all that's required of me.

And so, what happens when we begin to do that, the pressure to perform is replaced with the power of his presence and that's sufficient.

Cheri

We hope you've enjoyed Episode 137 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Amy

Head on over to gritngracegirls.com/episode137, there you'll find our digging deeper download, a printable resource that helps you to apply what you've learned in this episode, show notes where you'll find a link to Suzie's powerful book, a *The Spirit-Led Heart*, and our transcript for today.

Cheri

Won't you help us share Suzie's message with your friends? You'll find easy social share buttons at the webpage for this episode.

Amy

Make sure to join us next week when Cheri and I will be talking about the lessons we've learned from Suzie.

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 and Cheri

Break it!