

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

Episode #138: Seeing the Gift in the Neglected Member of the Trinity

**Cheri**

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

Multi Voiceover:

- I really want to do God's will, but I always feel like I'm falling short.
- People don't understand, but I need quiet time to figure out how I feel about things.
- Oh [groan], I just want to crawl in a hole when I make a mistake.
- I am my own biggest struggle.
- **Perfectionism is a barrier to hearing from God.**

**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**

In fact, when you subscribe to our email list, you'll receive a set of free permission slips that will help you identify and break some really bad rules. You can subscribe at [gritngracegirls.com](http://gritngracegirls.com).

**Amy**

Today, we're processing what we learned from our interview with Suzie Eller, author of *The Spirit-Led Heart*. Susie described an early encounter with the Holy Spirit and said, "The helper had arrived." I just love that. So, Cheri, how have you experienced the Holy Spirit as your helper?

**Cheri**

You know, when I'm in a new situation, like, if I'm traveling alone and everything is unfamiliar and confusing, I tend to fall into just this real conversational prayer. I'll just kind of talk through what's making me anxious, like, talking through the decisions I need to make, and I'll even say things like, "Well okay, I need to get my rental car but I have no idea where it is so I guess that's the next thing I'm gonna do is I'm gonna find my rental car," and you know, our listeners may think I am a complete nut job. I'm okay with that.

But, the older I get, the higher the likelihood that is I'm gonna pull a muscle while I'm traveling and end up kind of hamstrung, which is not good if you're gonna be a speaker. And so, for the past few years I've noticed that as I've gone by that Smart Cart stand, where you can put your credit card in and, for at least some places, it's \$5 you can get a cart to put your luggage on. I have literally been having this impression, "Cheri, just get a smart cart" and part of me has always been like, "No, I can handle this myself," and it's just like, "Cheri, just get a smart cart" and so I have been doing that, I have been like, "Okay, fine, I'm just gonna go ahead and get a smart cart," and it's not like the Holy Spirit shows up and schlepps my suitcases for me, but I feel like he does help me by steering me in the directions of options that I used to pride myself in not taking. How about you?

**Amy**

Well, I love that description of the Holy Spirit in your every day life. Oswald Chambers talks about Holy Spirit as the helper, and he says that it's naturally unnatural, which I love that because I always thought it was like, some big thing and the story I'm about to tell is some big thing, but, anyway, but it was some big thing and big story and big miracle and all that. Oswald Chambers and what you just said is, "No, he's just there naturally leading us through our every day life. If we're wanting to tap into him and his guidance and traction." So that's beautiful.

**Cheri**

Okay, so tell your big story. I think it's both. It doesn't have to be either or. It can be both.

**Amy**

Yes, I agree. When I was in college, I was engaged to someone that I was madly in love with and that engagement was broken. I was heartbroken over it and one of the results of that was that I withdrew from God. I've been a Christian since I was 10, I've been passionately in love with Jesus since I was 16, but during that period of time, I didn't know what to do with God. I felt like I had heard from him and the things that were happening didn't line up with what I had heard. I was so crushingly disappointed and angry and grief stricken and I liked to bring cheerful to Jesus. I couldn't do that and so I had just withdrawn from him completely.

I was going to church. I was doing all the church girl stuff. I had the plastic smile permanently in place but I was in deep pain but not taking it to God. So one night I was alone in my apartment, my roommate was out, and I was laying on my bed, and I just had this, gosh, it made me tear up talking about this how many years later. Had this irresistible pull towards God, and I had literal thoughts like, "I can't stand it anymore. Like, I really just don't want to do life without God. I'm just gonna face him, because I know I'm about to get it." Like, "This is what I'm thinking 'cause I haven't been doing the things," you know? "I haven't been praying and having my quiet time and he knows that I'm really not happy with him, but it's okay 'cause I'm just gonna brace myself and take it." This is seriously what I was thinking.

**Cheri**

You felt like you were gonna be taken to the woodshed.

**Amy**

I did. I did, I just knew I was. I was gonna get the big rebuke, you know? Suddenly, in that room and I've only experienced this twice in my whole life, was the most tangible presence of love. It was so overwhelming, and it was the Holy Spirit was helper who was coming to help me reconcile with my Father when I couldn't do it on my own. Gracious, gosh, I'm old. That was a long time ago.

**Cheri**

Oh, but it matters.

**Amy**

You can hear that it's just as real to me today. I needed a helper. I couldn't return to the Father on my own. The Holy Spirit said, "Here, come let me love you back into place."

**Cheri**

Aww, that's beautiful, Amy. How many years ago was that?

**Amy**

31 years ago.

**Cheri**

I love it. Well you know, combining Suzie's, one of the first books that we talked with her, "Come with Me," about how we are the 13th disciple with her newer book "The Spirit-Led Heart." What's the big change, or what is a big change in your life because of the Holy Spirit, or maybe what's a role of the Holy Spirit that shows up in your life?

**Amy**

Well, I did a study recently with one of my small groups about the roles of the Holy Spirit, and he really is just so incredible and this is just a short list but like, teacher, helper, counselor, reminder, he says he'll remind us of all the things that Jesus said. I wrote down, "Word giver," because he said when they didn't know what to say, he would come and speak through them. He told the Apostles that. And so, he's all these things, when I thought of all these roles; I thought the one that's precious to me is that he is my teacher.

One of my spiritual gifts is teaching, but really, I can just, I have a limited ability to do that in my own power but having the Teacher, capital T, Holy Spirit Teacher pouring into me changes all of that. He empowers me in a way to teach that I could never accomplish on my own. One of the things, and Cheri, you know this 'cause we've been working on our book together, but my process for writing or speaking is that I study the Bible first.

**Cheri**

Yep.

**Amy**

And it is the most miraculous thing to me that when I sit down with my Bible, something to write with, something to write on and I say, "Okay, Holy Spirit. Do your thing. Show me what this passage means," and I will get all these fresh insights and new facets and all this stuff that my brain just could never do on it's own and the teacher comes in and does something in me so then I can share it with other people. Sometimes it's from a stage and sometimes it's on my blog but lots of times, it's just with the person that I interact with that day and he teaches me and gives me something I can pass on to them. How 'bout you? How do you experience the Holy Spirit?

**Cheri**

I love that. The word I chose in terms of the role is that the Holy Spirit is that the convictor in my life. I'm not even sure if that's a word, but I really feel like it's in terms of teacher or guide or mentor. For me, it's the toe stomping and you have this expression, "It hurts so good," you know? The Holy Spirit takes me from the "Ow" of conviction, like, "Ow, oh yes, that's so true" to the "Wow, now here's the change that can happen as a result of the "ow," and so it's something that's painful in the moment, but overall it's exciting because it's a catalyst for change. It's a catalyst for growth. It's a catalyst away from blame and shame and, like, "Oh, I can never change," you know? "I'm so defective." To, "Oh no, I get it now. I get it. Okay, now we can do -"

I go from ruminating Cheri to being action Amy because of the Holy Spirit, you know? In a good way, in a good way.

### **Amy**

That's what I'm saying. Are you sure that's good?

### **Cheri**

Recently what happened is, tomorrow night, actually, as of the day we're recording this, I'm gonna be giving a message for our senior class at the little Christian boarding school I teach and they invited me to speak for senior recognition. As a side note, abject terror has set in. It set in at 2:37a.m. last night. I'm like, "Ahhh." So I don't know if I'm gonna sleep between now and then, but it's okay, God is good. And here's the other thing, okay, I'm on a rabbit trail, but let me throw this in. I mean, literally, I laid awake panicking about all the things, and yet because of my lifelong experience with the Holy Spirit I know that I'm gonna be okay, even though I can't quite get my hands to stop trembling, even though I can't get my breathing quite the way I would like it to be, and I did not go back to sleep, I still know it's gonna be okay. I know the message that God has given is going to land in the hearts of the students and the parents who are there regardless of what happens with me.

So actually, you know, I was invited to give a prayer request, and I almost requested sleep but I'm like, "No, it's actually kind of irrelevant whether I get sleep or not sleep, because what God needs to have happen is gonna happen" and that kind of thinking is the Holy Spirit, 'cause you know, Cheri Gregory's brain does not think that way. Cheri Gregory's brain is the panic producing brain.

Okay, so anyways, when they invited me a couple of months ago, I was like, "Yes I would love to do that. That will be so much fun." And then, I started thinking about some stuff that the Holy Spirit has been leading me to in scripture, and the more I worked on it, the more I was like, "This is dull. This is boring. This is heavy. Let me do something fun from my files. Let me do this talk. That will make them laugh. Let me do-" You know? And I kept trying to pull out fun, funny talks that I had given in the past, and the Holy Spirit would not let go. The Holy Spirit is like, "No, this is the message you're supposed to give" and so I was like, "Are you sure? Are you sure it's the right message for this audience?"

One day, in class, my students just kind of out of the blue were like, "Hey, Ms. Gregory, do you have any hints for us as to how to survive the big project that Pastor Gregory gives third quarter?" 'Cause he teaches the religion four class and I started to say, "No, I don't" when it hit me. The message I'm giving, the three points I'm gonna make, actually, are three great hints for surviving their third quarter religion project. It totally, totally matches, and so the subtitle of my message is, "Three ways to avoid flunking your religion class project starting now." Yeah, literally, that's the subtitle. It doesn't apply to the whole audience but it'll apply to the kids who are in the choir loft, which is the seniors. If I hadn't had listened, if I had gone and done one of my other talks that would have gotten a few laughs and made me feel good and feel like, "Okay I could just pull out the old thing and dust it off" I would have missed out on this moment of

going, "Oh, this is why the Holy Spirit wanted me to do this message which felt heavy and uncomfortable"

But then the Holy Spirit, I believe, orchestrated that moment when the student was able to say, "Ms. Gregory, do you have any hints?" And I was able to say, "No, I-" and the Holy Spirit reminded me, "Oh, yes you do." That, I don't know, you know, there's just nothing like that experience of knowing like, I didn't force it, I didn't make it happen. Clearly God is at work. It's all good.

**Amy**

And now, I and all the listeners should sing the Hallelujah chorus, because I'm just telling you there is no testimony of the awesome power of the Holy Spirit, nothing more powerful than being able to reach into the hearts of very scary teenagers. That's incredible!

**Cheri**

Oh, oh, okay, but here's the thing. So I go to class this morning and I don't remember how it came up in conversation, but I admitted to them that I'm terrified. Oh I told them, I know why, it's because my class only has 15 of them, but when I speak there will be 66 of them and it occurred to me at 2:37 last night that I don't know most of them and they probably won't like me because I'm mature like that at age 51, Amy. I'm like, you know, totally on top of this maturity thing. I'm like, killing it. So, literally, these kids are like, "But we're rooting for you, Ms. Gregory." One of them said, "I might not like what you say, but I'm planning to like how you say it."

I mean, come on. I'm like. I came home. I'm, like, "Thank you, Holy Spirit. I actually did need that. I didn't mean to fish for compliments ahead of time, but I really did need that."

**Amy**

Well, I think we all get that a group of seniors is probably the scariest audience possible, possible.

**Cheri**

I like to say they keep me humble.

**Amy**

Well, I mean, you've given us a great example of this but okay, I'm gonna use the dreaded C-word now, Cheri. In what other areas of your life would you have to really give up control to see the Holy Spirit move?

**Cheri**

You know, I'm reading a book right now on hostage negotiation, and the reason I'm loving it is because the number one hostage negotiation, I have to do this with my own brain, like I obviously failed that negotiation at 2:37 last night. But here's what astonishes me about these highly skilled hostage negotiators is how unoffendable they are and how much grace they live

their lives with, like, reading it is almost a holy experience. They talk about tactical empathy and they are there, and they are listening and they are fully present for people in ways that I'm like, "We Christians talk about this, but do we do it at that level?"

If I were to give up control, I would become unoffendable. I would be able to listen and have grace to the level of a hostage negotiator. That's kind of like my new goal. How about you?

**Amy**

Oh my goodness. Well I am reading a book of someone that we're gonna be interviewing soon. I'm reading the book *One: [Unity in a Divided World]* by Deirdre Riggs. Oh my goodness, she has a chapter that just nailed me to the wall. We'll save it for her upcoming interview, the majority of it, but basically the idea is that we have two seats to choose between. One is the judgment seat; one is the mercy seat. We cannot occupy both of them. God can occupy both but we cannot occupy both. The decision is which seat will I sit in? I'll you which seat I sat in most of my life.

<Laughter>

**Cheri**

The easy seat. The easy seat, right?

**Amy**

The judgment seat, yes. Yes. Yes. But her point was is that when we move to the mercy seat we allow God to sit in the judgment seat, and we allow God to do his full job and God to be God. Holy Cannoli. I mean this is messing with me. I mean, I have a situation in my life today that I had to decide yesterday, will I sit in the judgment seat and, oh, can I just tell you, I feel so right. I'm just telling you I felt so right. Or will I move over into the mercy seat, give up control, and let the Holy Spirit do his work in this situation? And I made a decision to move to the mercy seat. Now. we'll see how it all falls out, it might blow up. I'm pretty sure if I'm not in the judgment seat that this might not work out. I'm just kidding. I'm kidding.

**Cheri**

You've heard one of my favorite ouchie quotes. It's from Pastor Clarence Shield in a book called "A Life to Die For" he says, "We do much, if not most of our sinning when we're in the right." Yeah. Yeah. I just thought I'd share that with you today, Amy, 'cause you just look like you needed to hear that.

**Amy**

Dead silence.

**Cheri**

I really love to be the friend that brings comfort.

<Laughter>



**Amy**

Dead air. That's all I've got to say.

**Cheri**

Moving right along. Where have you landed that you never expected to land because of the Holy Spirit?

**Amy**

Well, and this is tied into the source of my angst today, which is very interesting, women's ministry. Good, googly moo, who wants to do women's ministry? We're such a freakin' mess.

**Cheri**

Amy, I wish you'd learn to be a little more honest and get in touch with your feelings and tell us what you really think and feel.

**Amy**

I can barely tolerate to be in the same room with myself. What possessed God to put me in rooms of women? No, I love you, all of you. Please.

<Laughter>

**Cheri**

I get it. I get it. When we're lovable, we're so lovable, but boy, when we're a mess we are such a mess.

**Amy**

Oh my goodness, well, and I was an elementary school teacher so I had always seen children's ministry. This is my jam. This is what I do, and it was so interesting because I had a friend, this is years ago, that called me. I actually had a succession of two friends. The first friend asked me to be women's ministry director, and I was like, "Oh, thank you. No." Then, the second friend called, and I asked her first has she talked to the first friend and she said, "No." And so, I said, "Alright fine, I'll pray about it" and I remember, I mean, this is a moment I'll never forget. I was standing in my kitchen I was trying to make something for the bake sale at my kid's school. I mean, this is a rare moment, and then, the Holy Spirit started to speak and said, "The answer is yes, and here's how you're gonna do it."

It was so clear and, like, a structure and everything. It was crazy, and I was like, "Women's ministry? Who would've thunk it?" Have you been taken some place unexpected?

**Cheri**

Well, yes, but it ties so well into the thing that Susie said. She said sometimes that we hang on the hardest where Jesus wants to give us the desires of our heart, and we're afraid that we'll get what we want and it will be too big. The place I've ended up that I've never expected to be

is in collaborations because I was, as a kid, I was a best friends kind of girl but I kept losing best friends. They kept moving away or hating me so I kind of gave up on it. I was like, "I'm just gonna be alone. People don't actually like me." So for me to be slowly led back into these very nurturing, creative collaborations has truly been too good to be true and as I was reviewing our interview with Susie and she was talking about the confidence that comes because we have a helper I realized, "Oh, so it's the helper who collaborates with me who makes it possible to then collaborate with these other women in my life."

But I always have that collaboration, like; the Holy Spirit is my foundational collaboration that makes the other ones possible and healthy, so yeah. I haven't thought of that question at all so it was a great question to realize what I always wanted, I have. In a really much, much healthier way than I could have possibly done it on my own.

**Amy**

Well, and what occurs to me is that both of us expressed that the Holy Spirit has taken us to an unexpected place that brings us great joy.

**Cheri**

Yes.

**Amy**

I can joke about women's ministry but the truth is, you know me, Cheri. I'm a community girl, and I love community and you just expressed the same thing. I think we're so afraid of the Holy Spirit in some ways. We're just sure he's gonna make us move to Africa, you know? We've just expressed that wherever he takes us, it may be unexpected, but it will be more filled with joy than anything we could've dreamed up ourselves.

**Cheri**

So true. So true.

**Amy**

So when we were talking to Suzie, Cheri, you said that you can see the Holy Spirit is the cure for perfectionism. What did you mean by that?

**Cheri**

Well, two things. First of all, as she retold the story of Peter, who failed so miserably before Christ was crucified, but then later, not too long after, he was speaking with such boldness to a crowd of 3,000 people it hit me. The Holy Spirit guides our focus away from our failures and onto God's forgiveness, which then motivates us to action, and I'm like, 'cause you know, for us perfectionists failure is where we focus naturally. When it can get moved away from that, okay, that means we're moving away from perfectionism. Second of all is she was talking about her experience ministering to the women in prison. She said, "I don't want to miss opportunities like this because I'm saying Lord, I'm not capable, because the truth is I'm not. But the Holy Spirit within me is."

So Suzie chose to take the risks, and so, what I saw in all of this was that the Holy Spirit shifts our focus off our past failures and our current fears of failure and moves us to take action and to take risks, 'cause when we're taking action and taking risks perfectionism doesn't stand a chance.

**Amy**

Oh, so good. You know, I think there's been a backlash in our culture against this whole, "I am enough."

**Cheri**

Yeah.

**Amy**

Appropriately so, but for perfectionists we never believe that anyway, right?

**Cheri**

Yep. Yep. Yep. No. We never bought into it.

**Amy**

Here we go. The Holy Spirit's our solution, because he flows in and fills the gap.

**Cheri**

Absolutely. Well let's end with something really encouraging and beautiful. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit as the comforter?

**Amy**

This is very close and personal this week. It's funny, because I told one from a long time ago and so I was glad I had a story that just happened. We've had a really scary week this week.

**Cheri**

Yeah.

**Amy**

Barry started having, suddenly, I mean, one minute he's fine and the next minute he's not. He started exhibiting some really extreme symptoms that pointed really strongly towards something that's genetic and a health issue that's genetic in his family, so we went to a doctor appointment yesterday, as you know 'cause you were praying fervently.

We really expected to walk out with a major diagnosis yesterday. The good news is, I'll do the spoiler alert first, is that that wasn't what happened. It turned out to be something significantly more minor. However, the night before the doctor's appointment was pretty intense. We had serious discussions about what life could look like if this diagnosis came to pass. But we got in

bed that night and Barry has often done this for me when anxiety is plaguing me and he was the one who was the more anxious of the two in this case.

I grabbed his hand, and I was like, "Okay, so let's count our blessings," and we went back and forth and back and forth just naming the things that God has done. Remembering, and that's one of the things the Holy Spirit said he would do is that he would bring to remembrance the things that Jesus has said and done. And Jesus is alive and active today so he has said and done things in our lives, and we went back and forth and back and forth. The comfort that came from that was incredible. We were able to sleep most of the night.

**Cheri**

I love it. So what's the scripture that you've paired with these episodes?

**Amy**

Well, it goes with my story, but the advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26.

**Cheri**

And what's the bad rule for this episode?

**Amy**

The Holy Spirit is too scary for me.

**Cheri**

I love it.

**Amy**

That may sound crazy, 'cause you know, a church girl would never say that out loud, but come on, let's get real. You know? The Holy Spirit, in mainline denominational churches at least, is not spoken of, taught about, thought about very much. He is the neglected part of the trinity, and so, I think we have been kind of hands off. I just love that Suzie has brought this into such a Biblical, beautiful space.

**Cheri**

Absolutely. So what's the fact to focus on instead?

**Amy**

The Holy Spirit is a gift to me and you. He is. He comes and he fulfills all these amazing roles in our lives and makes the reality of God and his presence just tangible.

**Cheri:**

Absolutely. Well, alright, so the grit of all of this, for me, is gonna come back to to that C-word. The dreaded C-word, 'cause here's another quote here from Suzie that just stuck with me. "The Holy Spirit doesn't need us to be his project manager."

**Amy**  
What?

**Cheri**

And then, she also talked about that we might need to be liberated from our own expectations that have nothing to do with God's plans. Expectations of others but also ourselves, and so, being hands off with the Holy Spirit and just being able to say, "Not my will, but thine" and assuming that he's gonna lead without giving me a blueprint or even a map. That's hard for those of us who prefer a plan and something that resembles control. So that's the gritty part. What's the grace part for you?

**Amy**

Oh sure. Well, the grace part really is that the Holy Spirit is our comforter. For so long, I have just felt like I had to manage my own emotions. I really have, and this is a place where I feel like surrender feels like something really great. It feels like a warm blanket, you know? I mean it really goes back to the story I told at the beginning. I think I've tried to manage my own emotions, 'cause I thought I would get the stick, and God says, "No, the carrot is for real. It's for real. You get the carrot."

**Cheri:**

We hope you've enjoyed episode 138 of Grit 'n' Grace, good girls breaking bad rules.

**Amy**

Head on over to [gritngracegirls.com/episode138](http://gritngracegirls.com/episode138) where you'll find this week's digging deeper download, a printable resource that helps you to apply what you learned in this episode, some show notes, and a transcript of today's conversation.

**Cheri**

If you're looking for some really great books to read, visit [gritngracegirls.com/books](http://gritngracegirls.com/books). There you'll find a list of all of the books by all of the authors that we've ever interviewed.

**Amy**

Make sure to join us next week when we'll talking to Melinda Means about her book, *Invisible Wounds [Hope While You're Hurting]*.

**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!