

***Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules***  
Episode #140: Seeing the Good in Revealing Your Hurt

Multi Voiceover:

- I must always be prepared.
- My biggest fear is failure.
- No matter how hard I try to keep everyone happy, someone is always mad or annoyed or upset.
- Everyone expects me to have it all together.
- **Authenticity sounds great. But there's nobody I feel safe being real with.**

**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**

Today, we're processing what we learned from our interview with Melinda Means, author of *Invisible Wounds*.

**Amy**

Cheri, have you ever been through what Melinda called Whack-a-Mole season of pain?

**Cheri**

First of all, that's just so expressive.

**Amy**

It's a great visual.

**Cheri**

It is. This takes me way back. I'm sure I've had one since then but the one it really takes me back to is right around the time that Daniel's dad passed away. So that was kinda the big thing that popped up that we were all trying to deal with. And then, somewhere in that same timeframe, he accidentally hit and killed his favorite cat. Then, in that same timeframe, I was diagnosed with a tumor, and we didn't know if it was malignant or non-malignant. And the church that he was pastoring blew up. And on top of that, we were doing all the normal things like trying to parent two small children and go to graduate school and work, and, you know, be normal.

And I don't think I recognized it as a Whack-a-Mole season while it was happening. I think that may be part of why it was so hard. In retrospect, I can look back, and I just feel so sorry for myself trying to handle all these things and deal with them. But in the moment, it just ... I just kept thinking I can do this. I can do this. I can do this until I got to the point that I couldn't do this.

**Amy**

Oh, that's really good. Well, before we move to me. I want to know what did you learn in that season?

**Cheri**

Part of what kept me whacking the moles was this belief that the most important thing was to keep up appearances and to not end up being a burden to anybody. That was back when I really believed you just didn't share anything with anybody. You just didn't have problems. You wouldn't burden people with problems if you didn't have problems. And so, I was so in that fix-it mode. Like, so if the mole popped up, we were going to fix that mole. So I would buy a book

for it. I would go to a seminar for it. I would see a counselor for it. And I'm a big believer in seeing counselors, but my motives were not right. My motives were we're going to make it go away rather than we're going to learn and grow.

And I look back at that. I was so strung out on anxiety at all points in time. And I couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong, and if I just tried harder, surely, we'd whack all those moles down and cover them all up and put steel plates on top of their holes and sit on them. And they weren't going to come back up. And dang it, Amy, they kept coming back. That's what I learned. I learned that moles come back. And really, you've got to, at some point, to normalize it rather than to think that if I just do things that right thing, they're going to go away. Life doesn't seem to work that way.

**Amy**

Oh yeah. What was it Jesus said? In this life you will have trouble, right?

**Cheri**

I didn't think that this applied to good people like me.

**Amy**

Yeah, really. In this life, you will have trouble unless you're a perfectionist, and you try and fix and prevent everything ahead of time. That's what he really meant.

**Cheri**

Yes. Yes, that was my belief. You have absolutely nailed it, girl.

**Amy**

I believe that my example is probably from about the same time of life as yours. And I was thinking about that because I thought, I think, I hope, what that means that we have to go that far back, is that we have learned something. That we've learned to respond to these seasons a little bit differently. So let's go there next. But mine was similar to that. We were in a terrible church situation and in some ways; we were freed by a move. But you know, a move has its own stuff. So bad church situation, move, looking for new churches, which I thought was going to be fun but is actually no fun at all, and then ... because church is so important to us and like family to us, and we didn't have a family.

And then, I had this child that was dealing ... My youngest was dealing with significant childhood anxiety. We were having trouble with school and had a couple of friendship breakups during that time. And man, it was one painful thing after another. Big painful things just like you described. These are not minor. These are not hangnails. These are legitimate, painful things just piling one on top of the other. And I do think that one of the things I learned ... of course, I was in a situation where I was trying to build community in a new place but this is why community is so important: people who really know us. People who see behind the plastic smile and go, "No, you're not okay. What's really happening here?" But I would say that that's

one of the big things that I've learned is to build community that's willing to push behind the plastic smile.

**Cheri**

Oh, yeah.

**Amy**

Yeah. Just the other day, I had a really hard circumstance and can I confess that I behaved badly?

**Cheri**

Uh-oh.

**Amy**

In fact, I behaved in a way that I've never behaved in my entire life before. And some of it was assertiveness and some of it was just plain bad behavior. And the next day, I asked my friend here. I said, "So, tell me the truth. How bad was that really?" And she kind of said, "Yeah, pretty bad."

**Cheri**

Oh. Oh.

**Amy**

But I was going to try and glaze over it and act like I was ... slap some self-righteousness on that thing. Good friends won't let you get by with that.

**Cheri**

You know what I'm thinking listening to both of us here? I wonder if there's something about that early season in life when you first have to play Whack-a-Mole, and it's so disillusioning. 'Cause I then think the next time around, I went cynical. The first time, I was optimistic. Then the second time it was like, I've heard that when you're a prisoner of war, your first torture is bad, but your second is worse because you know it's coming. And so, I think the second round, which was probably somewhere in my early 30s, I think I went really cynical. And I think, then, once you start realizing, "Oh, this is life."

Like you said, Christ really meant what he said and being surprised and horrified and shocked and thinking that, oh my goodness, it shouldn't happen to me because I tried so hard to prevent it from happening. I feel like I can laugh at myself now in a really healthy way. So I think you're right, I think the fact that we had to look back is a sign of growth. I also think it's a sign perhaps of just a natural maturity cycle. I'd like to think it's a lot of really hard work and conscious growth on my part. But some of it, I think, is just stumbling our way to, yeah, none of those other ways actually worked. Acceptance seems to be the healthier place to land here.

**Amy**

Acceptance and dependence.

**Cheri**

Mmm, Ooh, so good. So good.

**Amy**

And so painful.

**Cheri**

Yes, thank you. Thank you. I love how Melinda said she got to the point where she was just gut honest with God. And she said I don't even know if I even trust you. I'm trying to serve you, but I don't even know if I can count on you. So have you ever gotten into a painful situation, because you were serving God?

**Amy**

Absolutely. And I have made no bones about the place that I got to eventually while I was in the midst of serving God, serving God, serving God, serving God, when I realized I was completely numb. And I couldn't feel God's love for me anymore. And what that revealed to me that I realized is I had started - my view of God had shifted into an untruth and a very unhealthy place of seeing God really as a taskmaster. I really had gotten to this place that if I was gut level honest that I just thought God valued me for what I was doing for him, which is ridiculous. He doesn't need me to do anything for him. But that was the underlying belief that got me to that place of being so numb.

**Cheri**

Sure.

**Amy**

Dangerous stuff.

**Cheri**

On the one hand, that could almost seem egotistical, like God needs you, like he can't do this without you, and yet, on the other hand, what a huge burden. The idea that there's this much riding on your shoulders that God needs you to do it. So pretty much either way you turn in that, it's going to be overwhelming.

**Amy**

Well, it's that performance-ism that you and Kathy talk about in *You Don't Have To Try So Hard*. It is clearly that. And that's probably what I've battled most of my life.

**Cheri**

Yeah. Totally get it. For so many years, I was a pastor's wife and a church schoolteacher. And so, pretty much all week long, the moment I left the house, I was serving God. Of course, I was supposed to be serving God in my house but even the way I'm verbalizing it, you can tell what

my mindset was. It was like okay, on the job, game face on; spiritual Jesus Cheri shows up in the classroom at the church school and teaches all day long. And then, when it's time for church, I show up and, of course, many of the church members were also parents of students. And so, I was always on.

Whether it was as a teacher or as the pastor's wife. And sometimes, both hats were on or I was busy flipping hats. I was greeting people as the pastor's wife and then somebody would come up, "Mrs. G., I'd like to talk to you about Johnny's grade." And I'm like, really, at church, we have to talk about Johnny's grade? So I'd quickly flip hats and try to keep that person happy. And I know God never asked me to live that way. I also don't think I intended to live that way. I think at some point that's where we get the expression it's the nature of the beast. That these roles can just land on you and then just bury you without you knowing it. I never gave consent to any of that.

I remember one day after church, after talking to three parents, and I was so frustrated, and I'm like, I didn't sign up for this. I didn't ask for this. I didn't agree to this. And yes, those who are listening are correct because they're saying, well Cheri, you should have had better boundaries. Of course, I should have had better boundaries, but when you're 24 you don't know. You know?

**Amy**

Yes. Yes.

**Cheri**

I was trying my best to do a good job at these things God called me to do. And I really ended up in this place where I felt really, really trapped by these roles that I had gotten into. And the longer I was in them, the less I was myself. Like, I lost myself. And there was nobody I could point to and blame. I couldn't blame Daniel. I couldn't blame the parents. I couldn't blame the church. It just really, kind of, was the nature of the beast, and so, to finally realize that God didn't place any of that on me. He didn't ask any of that from me and, really, if anything, he wanted me to be serving him 24/7, including at home, because as you could probably guess from what I said earlier, the version of me at home was not necessarily the prettiest version, 'cause it was the tired version. It was the game is not on version of me.

**Amy**

Jesus Cheri didn't go home from school?

**Cheri**

Jesus Cheri, she was too busy performing. And, yeah, so it really does come down to performances. And so, if any of our listeners are identifying with anything that either of us are saying here, first of all, we're sorry. But I just, looking back, I realize how it just crept up. It was never something that I meant to do. If you had said Cheri, are you going to become the kind of person who fakes it till you make it while you're serving Jesus? I would have been like no. I want to be authentic. I want to be real.

And part of the reason I think it happened for me is I had nobody I could turn to at that point, because everybody had hire or firepower. Everybody was a parent or was in ministry. And so, if I had confessed any concerns to anybody it would have ... and, see, this is the story I told myself. I'm not saying it was true ... but it would have reflected badly on my husband or it would have reflected badly on us as teachers, and we might have lost our jobs! I don't know if we would have lost our jobs, but, yeah.

### **Amy**

You know, as you're talking, it's interesting because I thought what Melinda was talking about in her interview mostly was physical pain, health issues, those kinds of things. And I love that we did a show on that, because I have some friends in that situation right now that are dealing with significant health issues so I'm glad we talked about that. And so, there's this physical pain. What you're talking about is like a psychological, spiritual pain. That's mostly what I've had experience with too. But everything that we're talking about either way really ties into identity. And Melinda talked about that. And she talked about how she didn't want to be known as the sick girl. You didn't want to be known as the slack teacher. I haven't wanted to be known as incompetent or irresponsible. Uhh!

So all this pain comes about because we're preserving these identities. And instead, what God calls us to is to scrap and fight and be aware of preserving our identities as dearly loved daughters of Christ. I mean; that's it. And then, all these other roles aren't identities. They're just roles. So they rest on us, but they are not us. It's so difficult. It is so difficult, because I can relate so well with what you were saying about the roles. I have so often fallen into letting my identity be confused with a role that I'm fulfilling, mother, wife, women's ministry director, a myriad of different things.

### **Cheri**

Well, and I think to some degree, I made a bargain with God. I don't think I knew it at the time, but it was like I'll do this, and you'll do that. I will be sure that I look like a good pastor's wife, and I don't embarrass my husband, because, of course, I've got that driver personality which is often frowned on in the church. And so, there were plenty of people who raised their eyebrow. Is Cheri a fitting wife for Daniel who's going to become a pastor? And so, I did my best not to embarrass him and seem like a bad pastor's wife. Well, but the bargain with God was that he had to then give us a good marriage. And then I was going to pour myself into this church school teaching, and my kids did attend the same school and so I spread myself thin, and I was tired and Jesus Cheri did not make it home most nights. But the bargain of that was God was going to take care of it.

Because if you're in the Lord's work 24/7 like this, surely he's going to figure out a way to make sure everything turns out the way it's supposed to, right? And I look at all that now and I'm like, wow, really? The only thing He ever wanted was for me to be close to Him and to make my highest priority my relationship with Him, whether we kept the job, whether people thought I was a good wife for Daniel or not, whether people liked my parenting style. I mean so much of

what I did during those years was as a reaction to other people and what I didn't want them to think. It's just an exhausting way to live.

**Amy**

Absolutely.

**Cheri**

None of that had anything to do with my identity in Christ and how he was leading me.

**Amy**

Yes. Yes. Melinda gave vulnerability as a key to relieving the pain that she was in both spiritual and physical. And so how have you experienced this as true with God and with people?

**Cheri**

I thought it was just so important how she said that she found that her need to be known by other people has diminished the more she's internalized how God knows her. And as I look back at those things that I've been telling you now about some of those early years, I realize that this really would have made such a difference for me. If I had really been able to say every single day, every single hour, my first priority is God. My first priority is knowing what He thinks of me and focusing on who He is, who He is in my life. Not, oh, He's this distant God that has made me a pastor's wife and a Christian church schoolteacher. That's where I focused. I didn't focus on Him. I focused on the roles. And because of that, then, what anybody thought about ... I was really vulnerable in the wrong way. I was vulnerable to attack. I was vulnerable to their opinions of me. I was vulnerable to be hurt by anybody who said I wasn't fulfilling my roles well.

Whereas, if I had started with the, okay, who does God say I am? Okay, got that. Let me learn more today about who He is. Then, I think I would have had so much more discernment having first been vulnerable in a healthy, authentic way with Him, because there's no wrong way to be vulnerable with God. It's all healthy. It's all good when it comes to God.

But when it comes to people, then we need some discernment. There's some people we can share a little bit with. There's people we can share a little bit more with. And then, I would have had the discernment to be able to do that over time, 'cause there were times when I was desperate. When I would find somebody and just dump on them, like, they did not know what hit them. And sometimes, they weren't even safe people. I hadn't vetted them at all. Cheri came unglued. They got the double barrels, and sometimes they were gossips and the word got around. And sometimes, they were discrete, and they just never wanted to be in my presence again, because they were afraid I might do it.

But I think that makes such a difference to focus first on being truly vulnerable with God who it's always safe to be vulnerable with, God in any way, shape, or form. And then, we can start slowly being vulnerable in incremental steps with people.

**Amy**

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Well, I just love how you flipped that word, because I hadn't thought about the word vulnerable having a positive and a negative to it. And so, what you're saying is when we are truly vulnerable with God, we strengthen ourselves against being vulnerable to the attacks of others or to the criticism of others or the judgment of others. Because it builds a strength in us, and that strength allows us in turn to be vulnerable with people. And it's funny because ... So last week I wrote a devotion about something painful I had gone through. And one of the comments that I got was, like, she goes, "Well, I'm really sick of you guys writing these devotions and hinting at what you're going through without really telling us. So if you're not going to tell us what it really is, then how about not writing about it?" That was the bottom line.

So first I laughed because I thought that was so human. But the second thing I wanted to say was sister, go watch reality TV. It's on 24/7. Go turn your TV on and see all the inside scoop you want. So that was my sassy Southern side. The Sherman tank slipped out from behind the pink panda. But you know, it's really true what she said. There are some safe people. There are some unsafe people, but we live in this nutty reality TV world where everybody thinks we're supposed to be privy to the intimate details of everybody else's lives. And it's just not true.

### **Cheri**

Raw is not the new real.

### **Amy**

Oh girl. That'll preach right there. I wish I had had that to respond last week. I just let that one sit there, just left that one alone.

<Laughter>

But one of the things that I think she really turns our attention to is how can we be a safe person? We've talked about that on the show some.

And I know you tried to research this at one point and really nail it down. How can we be helpful to people in pain? How'd that go?

### **Cheri**

When I was helping Michele Cushatt with the Undone Discussion Guide for her book, *Undone*, we did a survey of the kinds of things people say when they're trying to help somebody who's hurting. And we came up with this long list, and then I asked the group members to vote on which ones they would find most helpful personally. And I was so positive that we were going to get a top three list of here's the three things that you do say when someone's hurting. And here's the long list of things you never, ever say. And of course, I thought what was going to be in the top three are the ones I want to hear. And on the list of thing never to say were going to be the things that make me really mad.

What was so fascinating is that when the votes came out, everybody had completely different opinions. What really slays me is actually truly helpful for someone else. And so, the thing that I

realized from all of that was that I need to know what words help me and hurt me, but I need to figure that out ahead of time, and I need to tell people in my life ahead of time. When the time comes, when I'm in a situation where I'm hurting and in pain, here's the top three things that would be helpful to say to me, and here's the long list of things please don't say to me. Because expecting others to just naturally know and then being offended when they do it wrong is just completely unrealistic. And that was a huge aha for me.

**Amy**

That is really interesting, and don't we as perfectionists, just give me the top three, and I'll just memorize them and say them. That is such a perfectionist thing, and I'm the same way. But I have a terrible memory, Cheri, so if you could put those in a document and email those things to me, that would be so helpful. I'll save it on my desktop.

**Cheri**

I will make a list, and we will make that available with the show notes, 'cause, yeah. It just makes sense that we're all different so of course we would have different words and phrases that speak to our hearts. Once I saw it, I was like, ah, it makes perfect sense. But until then, I just wanted the list, and I wanted it to be mine.

**Amy**

Totally makes sense. Back to the whole there will be trouble thing. I mean, God understands better than anybody, better than us, that we live in a broken world, and people that live in a broken world have broken hearts. And so, in Psalm 34:18, he says, "The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." That's good news right there.

**Cheri**

That is a beautiful promise to keep in mind. So what's the bad rule that you see out of these two episodes?

**Amy**

I have to suffer in silence. And I think that applies to the physical pain that Melinda talked about but also the mental, the spiritual, the emotional pain that we've also talked about.

**Cheri**

Absolutely. So what's the truth, the fact we can focus on instead?

**Amy**

I can pour my heart out to God. And this is ... I have to tell you. I wrote that one down, and I had a hard time writing it, because this is super, super hard for me. I really just have ingrained in my thoughts and in my heart that I need to bring my best to God, and I need to be cheerful for God, and so, pouring out my heart is counterintuitive. It's very hard for me. But David gave us a great example in all the Psalms of that.

**Cheri**

So is that going to be the grit for you?

**Amy**

I think that is the grit for me. End this with some grace, Cheri. Give us some grace.

<Laughter>

**Cheri**

So for you, it's going to be grit to actually do this, to actually pour your heart out to God. The grace here is I want you to think about your boys. Would you want them to suffer in silence?

**Amy**

Oh my goodness. Even the question makes me tear up. No, of course not. Great question, Cheri Gregory.

**Cheri:**

So the grace here is for you to recognize that God feels the same way about you. He wants you to pour out your heart to Him the way you want to be there for your boys and for those that you love.

We hope you've enjoyed Episode 140 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

**Amy**

Make sure to head on over to [gritngracegirls.com/episode140](http://gritngracegirls.com/episode140). There, you'll find our digging deeper download, a printable resource that helps you to apply what you learned in this episode, the show notes, and our transcript.

**Cheri**

Have you received your Grit 'n' Grace permission slips to remind you to break bad rules? If not, just go to [gritngracegirls.com/join](http://gritngracegirls.com/join). They're our special gift to every new subscriber.

**Amy**

Join us next week when we'll be talking to Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith, author of *Sacred Rest*.

**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!

**Outtake**

**Amy**

And I know you tried to research this at one point.

**Cheri**

Did I really?

<Laughter>

**Amy**

You had this really cool thing you wrote out from Michele.

**Cheri**

Yes, okay. Ask it again.

**Amy**

And I know you tried to research this at one point and really nail it down. How can we be helpful to people in pain. How'd that go?

**Cheri**

Well, you know, Michele Cushatt had the...

Michele Cushatt has the best excl-

I have no words. I have no words today. I'm glad we're not going to a communicator conference this next week.