

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #162: The One Thing You Were Created To Do

Cheri: Well, hey, you know, we're always talking about how much we have in common. I'm like, "Oh man." You're always saying that we share a brain, but it turns out there is something we do not have in common at all. Okay. So I hate gardening. Like hate, hate, hate double hate, loathe entirely.

Amy: What? How can this be possible?

Cheri: So, okay, what on earth do you actually like? What is there to even like about it? I mean it's a thing you can avoid doing. Why do you do it?

Amy: I don't know. I mean, the minute it starts getting warm my fingers start to itch. Like, almost literally, I am wanting to get them in the dirt. I want to put something in the ground. I have to wait until tax day. Tax Day here is the last freeze. So you have to wait.

Cheri: The Earth knows that it can only freeze up 'til April 15th and on the 16th it warms up?

Amy: Well it's here. You know, it's different places, it's different dates, different places. But here it just happens to be tax day. And so that makes it easy for me to remember.

Cheri: All right, well, okay. So do you have any tips for me to learn to like it? Like, okay, the number one thing I hate is getting my hands dirty, especially dirt under my fingernails. It's like the yuckiest thing in the world.

Amy: Well, I can't help you there because I just really love that. Okay, next.

Cheri: Okay. So I never remember to water my plants.

Amy: I have that -

Cheri: I'm like incapable of this.

Amy: I have that problem too. There's a fern on my front porch that's looking pretty sad right now.

Cheri: Well, okay. And then it just makes me so sad that everything I plant dies. I've come to understand that that's what's supposed to happen, you know? But my stuff dies way sooner than it should. And it just, I don't know, it's the guilt. It's the guilt.

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Amy: Yeah. Well, this year my deer did in my garden. I shouldn't say my deer, that deer. It hit my garden. I had this beautiful bumper crop of coneflowers and I come out one day and I'm like, "They're gone." It was just terrible. We have animal issues, Cheri Gregory, what is up with the zoos at our houses?

Cheri: I'm not sure which would be worse; for it to be my fault that the plants died or for me to actually have the plants live under my tender care and then for an outsider to come in and ruin it for me. Okay. You have not convinced me to garden. I'm sorry.

Amy: So we'll try again another day.

Cheri: Well, this is Cheri Gregory

Amy: And I'm Amy Carroll

Cheri: And you're listening to Grit and 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.

This week we are focusing entirely on chapter 15, which you wrote. And you know, you always say that you're a reluctant writer. And I do not understand this at all because you are such an amazing writer. I mean I know that speaking comes more easily to you. And I've loved all of your chapters, although I think I'd been complaining about them. I realized this morning I need to like lavish some praise on you, because I think thus far all I've done is say, "You're up in my business again. You're up in my business again. You're stepping on my toes. What are you doing?" And I'm like, that doesn't sound like gratitude. That doesn't actually sound like praise at all.

Amy: I actually love that kind of compliment. So it's okay. I've been receiving it and rubbing it in.

Cheri: Okay. Well, but in case any of our listeners is like, "Gee, Cheri doesn't really like Amy very much. Why is she always ragging on her?" So I just want to make sure for our listeners sake that I say I love your writing even though ... and I have this guilt for it. Like, I love something that seems to cause a little bit of pain for you to do. So I'm kind of sorry that I like it so much. I don't know.

Amy: It is interesting, because, as I'm a reluctant writer, but it's really the only way I think through things. Because I'm such a doer and a talker and all of that, writing makes me slow down and process.

Cheri: The slow down is the key part there. All right.

Amy: It is.

Cheri: Well, one of the things that you say in Chapter 15 is fruitfulness is the pinnacle of every life. And when I reread that, you know, just a side note, Annmarie was asking me what I was doing last night because I was sitting at the kitchen table. Daniel was working on curriculum for the upcoming school year and she was working on an art project. And I'm sitting there with my copy of *Exhale* and my set of eight highlighters because, of course, how can you read with any less? And she's like, "What are you doing mom?" Because she knows I'm reading *Exhale* and she knows that it's our book. And I'm like, "Oh I'm studying Amy's chapter." And she's like, "What are you doing that for?" So, and I was like, Oh I guess that could look a little unusual. I've just gotten very used to it. It's really been fun. It's been really fun to go through again and to focus on **your** chapters rather than to be so hyper-focused on mine.

But anyways, so I read your chapter 15 and one of the things that jumped out at me from that line, fruitfulness is the pinnacle of every life. It just totally reminded me of a sermon illustration I heard a number of years ago and the pastor was talking about this whole idea that you're talking about here of bearing fruit. And he used the metaphor of somebody ... and he acted like, "Oh this is so absurd. Nobody would ever do it." Like he only gave the illustration to make us laugh. Only I was the only person, I think, there not laughing. Because what he said is, he suggested that nobody would ever sneak out into their garden in the dark of night to hang plastic fruit on their trees to just create the appearance of fruitfulness. And I sat there in the pew thinking, how dare he call me out like this.

Amy: Yeah, we do that all the time. What? Why is everyone laughing?

Cheri: And it reminded me of this scripture, Second Timothy 3:5, that talks about having the appearance of Godliness but denying its power. And what I thought last night was perfectionists, we reforming perfectionists can be so hyper-focused on appearances that we forget or we maybe we just plain hate the fact that growth is a process. And so, it's a process to lose who we're not. It's a process to love who we are and ultimately we can't do any of this on our own. That's what the whole failure of the plastic fruit I think illustrates. Growth only happens by God's power.

Amy: So good. That is so good. And you know, I think that really is true that we try to create our own thing, but we don't want to go through the first two steps.

Cher: Nope.

Amy: We don't want to lose who we are. That's painful. We don't want to ... We don't want to lose who we're not because that's painful. We don't want to love who we are because that feels like pride or selfishness. And so we can never get to the live your one life well, which is the fruitfulness. And growth only happens by God's power. But the amazing thing is, it is what we were created for it. That fruitfulness is what we were created for. It's the proof that we are alive in Christ and it makes us feel the most alive.

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And that was kind of the point of the whole book. Like, when we get to this part, Cheri, you know I get really excited. And I was even praying before our recording time. I'm like, because it is funny that I have been noticing that the comments that we've been getting from people reading the book are all about losing who you aren't and loving who you are. And we're not getting a lot about the last part of the book. And I'm like, "Ah, but this is the point!"

Cheri: Well, and that's why we're going to spend a bunch of weeks on this last part. Because, like you said, that's the whole purpose of the book. So tell us, tell our listeners the story of how we came up with the term that you introduce in chapter 15 to refer to this whole point of the third part of the book.

Amy: Well, so, from the very beginning, you and I Cheri, you know, we were trying to coin a term, coin a phrase that would be catchy, that people would understand this concept of fruitfulness. And not only fruitfulness but sending your gifts into the world. And so we started with things like world changer. Well, I really hate that term. Because you know what? The truth is, none of us are going to change the world. We, I mean, it's just too big. It's too intimidating. So that wasn't it.

Cheri: Well, and can I just say, for those of us who are like true blue highly sensitive people, the world is a very big and scary place, you know? So that one makes me want to run and hide or just give up or just give up to begin with.

Amy: Yes, yes. I mean it's inspiring for about a second and then it just gets terrifying.

And so, then our friend, Lynn Cowell, used this term difference maker, which we loved. But we decided we couldn't rip it off from Lynn. So that was out. And, we literally, do you remember Cheri? We had pages and pages and pages of the lamest terms ever. We could not come up with anything. And just full disclosure, if you think authors are totally genius, we did not come up with the title of our book. Your literary agent came up with the title-

Cheri: Yes he did. Thank you, Steve.

Amy: We have, we have to give credit to Steve. Shout out Steve! Right here.

Cheri: Steve Laube.

Amy: And then, and we didn't come up with this term seed senders by ourselves. Because what happened was is we got a graphic of the cover of our book last summer. They gave it to us so early. And we're like "There it is! The dandelion, the seeds flying, seed sender!"

Cheri: Yes!

Amy: And so, this idea of the seed sender comes ... is really tied to the idea of fruitfulness. 'Cause that's what fruit is. The botanical definition of fruit is that there are seeds inside of it. So a carrot is not a fruit because no seeds. A spinach is not a fruit because no seeds. A tomato is a fruit, even though I think of it as a vegetable, because there are seeds there. So inherent in fruitfulness are seeds. And these seeds are scattered to make more tomatoes and oranges and apples and all of that. And that is what we want to inspire women to do with this book, is to send the seeds that God has given all of us, the gifts, the experiences, all of it that we have in our hands, and we just let the Holy Spirit blow those out into the world.

Cheri: I love that. I love that picture so much. And I have always loved the organic way that came together. Like, we couldn't come up with that on our own. It came because of the cover. It's another illustration of how we work together as a body, and that we don't do any of this in isolation. So let's talk about some of the seed senders in our life. I love in chapter 15 you go through very specifically. You start with a description of one of your earliest ones and then you list some others.

Amy: Yeah, and I have a long list and I could keep listing. I thought about more this morning, but just I wanted to talk about two that were so instrumental in shaping my life. And here's the beauty of these two names is you will not know these names. And so, these aren't people that are on screens, it's not people with books on shelves. These are everyday women just like us, just like you who are listening. To be a seed sender doesn't mean that you're doing things that make you known. But you are doing things that are sending God's seeds out and creating fields of harvest.

And so, the first one was Misses Warren, my third-grade teacher, who was literally ... I cannot think of a better teacher in the whole wide world than Misses Warren. And she planted these seeds in my heart of this lifelong love of learning. She was just one of those teachers that you just loved being in her classroom every day. And she planted seeds that made me want to teach. And so, even today I'm not teaching in classrooms anymore, the kind of teaching that I'm doing is different. But that love of teaching came from her as well.

And then the second person I was thinking of was a young woman named Lane who literally came and lived in the travel trailer in my backyard, in my parent's backyard, when I was 16 years old. And she changed the course of my life. Because she was building a house, didn't have a place to live. My parents, who were not the people that opened up their house to every stray teenager, I had friends who had parents like that. That wasn't ... That's not who my parents were. But they opened up their travel trailer to Lane. And because this young woman, fresh out of college, I think she was 22, 23 years old, lived in my backyard and showed me what Godliness looked like in a young

woman. I wanted it to be just like her. And it was life-changing. How about you? Who are some of the seeds sender in your life?

Cheri: I brainstormed a list this morning. And I want to just share two family members. You've chosen a couple of people that you're not related to. And so, you know, for our listeners, one of the things we would love for you to do is be thinking about who the seed senders might be in your own life. And we'd love to hear from you some descriptions of them. But for me, I was thinking of my grandmother, Grandma Pudleiner, that was my mother's mother. And she loved doing fancy work. That's the term that she had for embroidery or cross-stitch or crochet. And she also loved learning. In fact, I remembered the phrase when she would tell me about her eighth-grade graduation, it was, "Oh, how I cry at my eighth-grade graduation," because that was the end of the line for her.

She wanted so desperately to go on in schooling, but she ... there was no opportunities for her. She had to go to work. And she revered teachers. I mean like it was okay to be a doctor or a lawyer or... but if you were a teacher, like, teacher was just one step below God, if that, kind of thing in her mind.

And then my Nana Elder, that was my father's mother. She started what they fondly referred to as Morristown Barnyard Academy because the local church schoolteacher evidently got drunk one night, and they decided that she couldn't teach anymore.

And so my grandfather cleaned out a chicken coop and so my grandma started teaching some of the kids in the area. And I think about how scrappy she was to do that, you know? And then she went on after my aunt and my father went off to college. She went off and got her master's degree at a time that many women weren't even going to college.

And then, I remember hearing stories of how she tutored children who struggled in math after she had retired from being a mathematics professor. I don't know that either one of them knew the impression they made on me. Or knew that I was watching or listening the way I was. I got these seeds planted from both sides of the family, both the love of learning and the love of teaching.

Amy: Well, the thing I really just adore about our list that we just made is the picture that we're trying to paint. I think so many of us think well I can't be an influencer, or a seed sender, or a world changer, or a difference-maker, or fruitful, or whatever you want to call it. They're all the same biblical concept by a different name. But I can't be that because I'm not educated enough. I don't have a big enough budget. I don't, you know, all the things that we think we don't have to be a seed sender. And yet, the women that we just listed, they took what God had given them and used it for influence. And that's what we want, 'cause that's the life that brings us fully alive.

Cheri: Absolutely. And we've been naming page numbers over the last few episodes. And one of the page numbers that I highlighted so much it practically glows in the dark last night was page 174. And, you know, you were an elementary school teacher. So I'm guessing you read aloud to your students every now and then.

Amy: Every day.

Cheri: And I love hearing authors read passages from their book. And you know, I thought, well we could talk about this. And then I read and highlighted. I'm like, "Amy has just got to read this herself, because you wrote it so beautifully." And so we'd love to hear from you. Would you read from page 174?

Amy: I will. I'm going to start on page 173, because I think it kind of leads us in.

Cheri: Perfect.

Amy: You don't do that work to lose who you're not simply to stop trying to be everything for everyone, although Cheri and I dream that you have. It isn't just so that you can feel better about yourself, although we pray that you do. It isn't only so that you can have more margins in your schedule, although we hope that you might. It isn't even so that you give mental assent to you're valuable calling. Cheri and I want you to lose who you're not so that the weeds that have been choking out your faithfulness are uprooted and thrown into the compost pile. We want you to love who you are so that you see yourself worthy in God's eyes. Ultimately though, we want to inspire you to become something, not something other than who you are, but fully animated in who you've always been designed to be. We want you to be a seed sender.

This is the part where my throat clenches with emotion, and my eyes fill with tears of longing. This is the moment when I want you and me to be consumed with the life created for us. I want us to be swallowed up with the desire to be a seed sender. The good news? Being a seed sender both powerfully glorifies God and deeply fulfills us. I picture us as a field of women standing almost shoulder-to-shoulder with flowers filling our hands. The flowers are in full bloom bursting with seeds. Suddenly, the wind begins to blow. It's gentle at first, but just as God always does, the wind of the Spirit grows in power. As the wind strengthens, we lift our hands as one, offering our flowers to its force and the seeds begin to blow and we lift our faces to watch.

We don't know where the seeds are going exactly. We're just the seed senders. We're not the seed grower, but we know Him. So we trust and wait with expectation, dreaming of a field on the horizon until the fruit appears. And then ... and then raising our arms with joy, we rejoice together. As Cheri knows, I cry every time I read it. And it's because this is my heart that went into this book, because I want us to be that field of women.

Cheri: What a picture. And what a contrast to the 2:37 tossing and turning and being spent and exhausted instead of spent and content. All right. Lead us into the scripture for this episode.

Amy: It's from John 15, which is where this chapter was sort of rooted. "This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." And you know, even as I read that this morning, I thought for so long, that chapter, that whole chapter, but particularly that verse was guilt inducing for me. Because I never felt like I was doing enough to be considered fruitful. But it has this picture in that chapter of abiding in the vine. And I just think that abiding always leads to fruitfulness. And seeds are an automatic part of that equation.

Cheri: So what's the bad rule that we're breaking with this episode?

Amy: I must work hard to produce fruit and seeds or fake it, like you said at the beginning.

<Laughter>

Cheri: Oh, and so what's the truth? What's the fact we can focus on instead?

Amy: God made me to be a seed sender who grows His kingdom.

Cheri: Oh. Wow.

Amy: What's the grit for you and all of that, Cheri?

Cheri: Oh. Wow. You know, it just, it takes me grit to admit to all the plastic fruit I have stashed in my pockets and ready to whip out because of that guilt. It's like I want to be, I want to produce, and I over-focus on the production and not enough on the process. So for a reforming perfectionist and a reforming people pleaser, it takes grit to not. We talked about this before, to not do all the things, and instead to trust God to be the one who does the growing within us. How about you? What's the grace?

Amy: Well, it's tied right into what you said, "It's all related." But the abiding part of the verse is the grace for me. And this morning as I went through this, I came up with another term that I don't know that it will be catchy or anything like that, but I thought it's restful naturalness. Now I know that's a weird kind of term, but I was like, abiding isn't striving. It isn't working. It's just living there. Right? And so it's this natural state of being that we enter into when we're in touch with God's Spirit that brings rest.

Cheri: That sounds like such freedom.

Amy: It does. We're getting there, girl.

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Cheri: We hope you've enjoyed episode 162 of Grit and Grace. Good girls breaking bad rules.

Amy: Make sure to stop at the website today. GritnGraceGirls.com/episode162. There you'll find the transcript, and this week's digging deeper download.

Cheri: If you're not yet a member of our Facebook group, we would love to have you join us and continue the conversation. Just search for Grit N Grace girls, and you'll find us.

Amy: And coming soon, the audiobook!

Cheri: Woohoo!

Amy: As I read today, I thought about all the hours you and I have spent, Cheri, reading the book out loud. We wanted you to get to hear it in our voices and it will be available, we hope, in August. We'll let you know.

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 ...

Cheri: & Amy: Break it!