

***Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules***  
Episode #163: Living Fully Alive in the Midst of Disaster

Cheri: Hey, this is Cheri Gregory ...

Amy: ... and I'm Amy Carroll ...

Cheri: ... and you're listening to Grit 'n' Grace: good girls breaking bad rules — The podcast that equips you to lose who you're NOT, love who you ARE, and live your ONE life well!

Amy: Today, we're so excited to have Jenn Hand on today as our first seed sender!

Jenn is the founder and Executive Director of Coming Alive Ministries. With a Master's degree in Trauma counseling, Jenn is blessed to travel the world ministering in post-disaster situations in third world countries.

We encourage you to listen for what "seeds" you have in common with Jenn and to think about how you might send them out into the needs around *you*.

Cheri: With so many different kinds of crisis all around us, we can learn to help right where we are!

Amy: Well, Jenn, we are so excited to have you here. Welcome to Grit 'n' Grace!

Jenn Hand: Thank you, friends! I cannot believe I'm actually with you guys, because I listen so much. This is so happy!

Amy: Well, Cheri is blessed to know you really well, but I'm super excited to learn more about your story today. We're going to leave that kind of open-ended here at the beginning. Tell us your story and how God is working through you to impact other people.

Jenn Hand: Well, I'm going to tell you, I love the title in your book Exhale of Chapter 15, "You're Meant To Be Fully Alive," and it says "Live and Animation." That fits so well with my passion and my heart. I love it!

I am so blessed to be living my God-sized dream, and that I had gone overseas and lived as a missionary, and thought I would live and die in one country, and they would name a missionary offering after me. That was my life's goal.

<Laughter>

That's going to be... someday, not the Lottie Moon but the Jenn Hand.

I had said yes to going overseas, went and lived in Nepal. Loved, loved, loved everything about it. Loved the people. Loved the calling, but about halfway through my time there since God saying, "I'm not calling you to just one place or one people." I had no idea what that would actually look like, but I felt a stirring that I was to come home in obedience, and so I did.

As I came home, I was traveling around looking at churches, speaking at churches, sharing my story of what had happened in the country I served in. I noticed something. The country I served in worshiped dead gods and idols all around me, and then I came back to the Church. I saw people that were just as dead inside but knew the living God.

Cheri: Mm-hm. (affirmative).

Jenn Hand: God began to birth in me a desire to one, for me to live so fully alive in Christ, other people want to know the God who's alive in me, and two, invite people all around to come alive in Christ. I have a ministry called Coming Alive, and every day that means something different. It could mean writing. It could mean counseling. I have a master's in trauma counseling. It could mean getting a call, "Can you come to Mozambique, Africa tomorrow?" and saying yes. Or it could be last week's giving the keynote speaking address at a conference for speakers and writers.

Every day a little different.

Amy: That's amazing.

Cheri: Let's say you get a phone call to someplace like that, and you say yes and hop on a plane. What does it look like when you get there?

Jenn Hand: Okay, I can say that really did, yes indeed, happen, last month, actually. So, they say natural disasters follow some people. I follow them. I'm not sure which. Sometimes, you never know, when I get there. What happens is, because I have this trauma debriefing skill, and I believe it is a calling to meet people in the holy ground of suffering. For example, I got a call, "Can you come to Mozambique in two days."

When I got there, I didn't know anyone. I had never been to Africa, but what I do is I meet the people on the ground, the leaders of the community wherever it is, whether it's a remote village in Africa, or I was on the ground within days after Hurricane Harvey as soon as the interstate was not underwater.

I meet with the local leaders, train, and debrief them. How do you process in the midst of this sacred suffering time? How do you find God? All the questions that come. Then help them so they can go do that with the people in their community. That can be anything from standing... In Texas, I stood door to door with people with all their belongings outside and just stood with them, and offered Emmanuel's God with us, His presence. Just being with people on the sacred ground of their suffering.

Amy: See, I love that so much because what we're trying to paint a picture of in this series, Jenn, is that we are called to fill a unique... Unique as in, you're the only one who can fill it, niche in this world. That is such a unique niche. I didn't even know people did that, and God's called you to do it. Amazing.

Jenn Hand: What's amazing about how God makes us is I believe the Lord has for some reason anointed me with an extra measure of joy.

It would seem strange that this gal would go into the hardest of the hard and offer hope, but I believe God has gifted me to bring that joy with me to them in the time when they might just need to eventually throw their head back and laugh, because sometimes you need that.

Then sometimes you just need someone to cry with you. I had no idea when I was born that the Lord was going to weave that into my story. He has His plans and His ways, and here I am. I travel after earthquakes, cyclones, floods, you name it.

Cheri: So basically what the rest of us are trying to avoid and run from and numb from, you're heading straight into. This leads beautifully into my next question. What seeds do you see that God has given you to create the impact that you're creating?

Jenn Hand: I just think it's so fun how the Lord uniquely makes us. For example, on the strength finder's test, if you ever taken it, I know you people at Grit 'n' Grace, you love your personality tests.

Amy: We love it.

Jenn Hand: On Strength Finders, my number one is positivity, adaptability, woo - all those things make for, "Okay, yes, I have no plan. No idea what I'm going to do when I get there. There may be no electricity, no water. I can do it. I can be positive. I can enjoy."

Cheri: Okay, I'm over here hyperventilating into a paper bag as you're talking. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but keep going. If I keel over-

Jenn Hand: I love it.

Cheri: ... just ignore me.

Jenn Hand: I loved your face and that expression you made there, Cheri.

Just having those gifts that maybe... just, God designed those because He knew the path He was going to take me on. Also, I love to teach His word. I believe I'm very gifted in taking His word and making it come alive. Not because of me, but because He's revealed it to me and then allows what He put in my personality to make it come alive in a way that... I love taking that to places to encourage and lift up.

I'm going to be honest. I think God has given me a gift a humor. I love to bring joy and humor into a situation that sometimes you just need a little a light to break through the darkness.

Amy: Beautiful. Well, Cheri and I believe that we can fulfill all three of the big longings of a Jesus girl's soul by glorifying God, loving others well, and satisfying our own soul. How have you found that you've been able to do that as a seed sender in what God's called you to do?

Jenn Hand: I feel like, first of all, I am living the best dream of a lifetime, because to get the chance to, through what I do, invite people to know the God that has loved me back to life. Then use the unique ways He's made me. What's fun about me is... that sounds very boastful when I start it off that way. I'm not being boastful. You'll get it when I say.

What's fun is I have an identical twin sister. One would think we would have the exact... we have the same DNA, same everything... the same... except for we don't have the same callings and gifts-

Amy: Wow.

Jenn Hand: ... because God so uniquely made us. My sister, she says that, I don't if she'll say this, you can edit it out if you want, but just the thought of being in an airport gives her diarrhea.

Amy: Oh no, we're leaving that in for...

Cheri: Oh yeah.

Jenn Hand: She says, "I could never live the life that God has called you to do, to go alone by yourself, find your way, do the things."

Meanwhile, she is keeping four humans alive, plus a husband and is a pastor's wife. When I go and give them all the donuts, like last night, I gave my nephew chocolate ice cream. He was up all night. He's a baby. That's what's fun.

I'm like, "If I tried to live your life, that's not what God has uniquely made me to do." I feel that I am living my God-sized dream, not anyone else's.

Cheri: I love it. Now, when I first met you, the cynical part of me was like, "Well, goody-goody gumdrops for her. She's had this wonderful, easy life and she's so filled with joy and..." to the point that I was a little nauseated. At one point we were having a conversation and I had tuned out. We were having a group convo and I had tuned out. I gave you some critical feedback that it turns out, I was wrong on, because I hadn't listened well enough to the whole story.

Could you share with our listeners who might be cynical, tend towards cynicism like me, who are like, "Well, isn't that nice that God wired her to be perfectly positive and gave her an easy life so she can just step in and do these things." Has your life been so perfect? Is that why you're so joyous?

Jenn Hand: Oh, I've been asked that many times. "Do you have that joy? It must be false, or..." I have to say, no. It is a gift, and I have walked through dark years. For example, 2013, my dad went through his second round of rare leukemia, and was in the hospital for 31 days at the same time that my sister and her whole family was in an accident where a deer went through their mini-van window. All four out of five of my family members were in different wings of the hospital.

What I can tell you I learned during that time and on the good days, the bad days, the in-between days, is this. Faith is believing in the darkness what God shows you in the light. What I do know is I can have joy if I look for God in the light, so that in the dark days that same light I can believe in. Yes, I do have joy, but it comes from knowing His truth.

It's only in His truth, and that He doesn't change on those days. He doesn't change when, let me tell you, you walk to Nepal where you lived and worked and love those people, and you see a village completely ruined by an eight point one earthquake that hit, and they ask you to come bring hope.

I remember standing in front of that village. There were still bodies piled up, bodies buried inside. They'd been having church when the earthquake hit, and people were buried still alive in there. I knelt down on that sacred ground of suffering, and I've never seen anything like it. Just complete horror. I said, "Lord, I have no hope to give here. There's no hope to give here." Then I looked up, and I saw amongst all that rubble, the only thing that still remained that you could still tell what it was was the cross that had been on the top of the church. It still stood among the rubble, and the Lord told me, "Jenn, there is always hope beneath any rubble." That's what I've had to live by.

Amy: Okay. We're doing teary praise hands over here. Wow, that is so powerful.

Cheri: Well, and let me just go ahead and tell our listeners that we're going to be inviting Jenn back when we do a full series on suffering. Jenn, you're going to have to say yes because I've announced you now.

Jenn Hand: No pressure. No pressure. I would be so honored. I would love it.

Amy: Wrap us up here, Jenn. Tell us one seize the yay, or joy-filled moment that you had with God in the last month.

Jenn Hand: In the last month. I'm going to tell you, it happened this weekend. Eight years ago, I went to a conference for speakers and writers feeling, "Lord, what am I doing here? I do not belong here." Feeling inadequate, overwhelmed, all those things that the enemy tells you. You may not be a speaker or writer, but you may be a mom. You may be a high-powered executive. Whatever you're doing, you have those moments when you're like, "Lord, what am I doing here?"

I was in that training. All I know is the Lord told me, "Put your yes on the table and watch what I do." I did that eight years ago, and just this past weekend was asked to come and be the keynote speaker at that conference, which, by the way, is super intimidating because the people that are the best trainers and speakers and writers are in there, and then a bunch of people who want to be speakers.

I asked the Lord, "Help me to go in your confidence, not my own, and walk out there in your calling, the giftings you've given me to be Jenn Hand, not insert the speaker's name that was leading the conference," because that's a temptation. I went out there. I snorted on stage, which is not professional, but I cracked myself up. I felt the Lord's pleasure like never before, because he said, "Eight years ago, you said yes. Now, look at what I can do."

I just want to encourage you to be you in your calling as you sow your seeds, and live fully alive in it!

Cheri: We hope you've enjoyed Episode 163 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Amy: Head on over to [GritNGraceGirls.com/episode163](https://GritNGraceGirls.com/episode163) ... there you'll find this week's transcript, our Digging Deeper Download — which is a printable resource that helps you to apply what you've learned in this episode — and a link to Jenn Hand's website and resources.

Cheri: Mark your calendar for August 28<sup>th</sup> when we'll be hosting a Facebook Virtual Party to launch our *Exhale* Small Group curriculum materials. We'd love to have you to join us for encouragement, games, and prizes! If you head to [exhalebook.com/study](https://exhalebook.com/study) and share your email, you'll be entered to win a prize pack, which includes a leader's guide, a study guide, and 10 copies of Exhale!

Amy: Be sure to join us next week when our sweet friend, Amanda Davison, will be joining for the next episode in the seed sender series.

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!**