

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #164: Building a Team That Makes a Difference

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 talking to Amanda Davison! Amanda lives in a small town in Minnesota with her husband and three children. She's the founder of A Wife Like Me, co-author of *Dear Wife*, a speaker, and serves on staff at her local church where she and her husband led the marriage mentor team. A former psychology professor, Amanda is now sharing how her education and counseling and God's Word changed her life and marriage.

Cheri: Amanda, I think it's about two and a half years ago Amy and I got on the phone with you because you were considering becoming one of our very first interns, and, after the interview we confessed that we had no idea what we were doing.

And we wanted to be really candid so that if you wanted to join chaos, you could; and if you wanted to wait a year when we had a better idea of what we were doing, you could do that. And you kind of, like, were like, "Yeah, I'll join now and see what happens!"

[Laughter]

So it is such a privilege to be on the other side, now, where you've been an intern with us and then you let us know it was time to go because God was calling you to something else, and now we'd love to have you tell our listeners what is that 'something else' that God's been having you do.

Amanda: Mmm, yeah. [Laughs] God has been asking me and has asked me to open up a community, and start a community specifically for wives. And so, in 2018, I started A Wife Like Me, and it's a community where we are working to lower the divorce rate by strengthening existing marriages through the hearts of wives. And so, we provide engaging content online, authentic community on social media, and we provide a fun atmosphere for women to connect and grow together.

Cheri: Now, I remember during some coaching calls we had back when you were one of our interns, you already kind of had a curriculum and you were doing things – if I'm remembering correctly – at your local church. Fill us in on some of the backstory there.

Amanda: Part of my story is that I was in grad school for counseling, and I had the plan, my plan was that I was gonna be doing private practice for married couples, and I would be helping them – yet I wanted a divorce myself. So that was a problem. I surrendered my life to Christ when I was 29, and God just completely changed my life and my marriage at that point. At which point, too, I knew I couldn't be doing counseling in an office by myself, and knowing what I now knew through God's word, because I had never opened up my Bible before up until that point. At that point, really, at 29 working with wives one-on-one, speaking, writing, working within our church, not knowing that that would transform into something much, much bigger because God was actually calling me to reach all wives, not just some. To do that, we just – I could not do that on my own, nor did I want to do that on my own. So it really transformed into what is now A Wife Like Me.

Amy: That's beautiful. And there are so many – I mean, we know you well, Amanda, so we know that you bring a lot of gifts and talents and you've got story to all this, and your personality is just so fun, and so all of those things is what we're calling seeds in *Exhale* and in the seed-centered series. So from your point of view, what are the seeds

that God has put in your hands over the years that you're just letting the Holy Spirit use in A Wife Like Me?

Amanda: This question was actually really hard for me because it's a lot easier for me to talk about how messy I am [laughs] and just how much help I need, and so I really had to think about this. And what I found as I was thinking through this question was even just that I think we think of our strengths or gifts or these seeds that we maybe have within us as weaknesses, or at least the enemy wants us to believe that they are. So, really, I have worked and intentionally tried to lessen these gifts that God has planted in me, out of fear that they might be maybe too much for people. So one of those is on the Enneagram, I'm a 7, and I have, you know, I'm learning that I try to lessen the fun factor, because I just don't want to be too much for people, or I don't want to come across as being this blonde flighty woman that is not educated.

Amy: [Laughs]

Amanda: In that process though, really just reflecting on that is, you know, in order for me to really glorify God and who He's created me to be, and more effectively send seeds out to His people I can really accept and own that I do love to have some fun!

Amy: [Chuckles] And I don't think that's an awful thing. And the more I know Jesus, or the more I'm getting to know Him, the more I believe he might be a 7 as well!

Amy: Ahh!

Cheri: [Laughs]

Amy: Pause for just a second, Amanda, because for some of our listeners who might not know about the Enneagram tell us – give us a picture of a 7 and tell us how that manifests in A Wife Like Me in a good way.

Amanda: [Laughs] Ok, so I'll just give you a quick example. This last Sunday at church I was filling in for our executive pastor. He was gone and I had one job and it was to – we were doing like a volunteer surveying 'step up' kind of a Sunday, and one job was to just figure out how and manage the new volunteers. So Monday morning I come to the office and he says "Amanda, how did it go? How many volunteers did we get?" and I said "I don't know!" I said "But we had so much fun!"

Amy and Cheri: [Laugh]

Amy: Sevens are all about the fun and the adventure, yes!

Amanda: Yes. I'm like I don't know.

Cheri: Amanda, I have to ask: when you said that you are now giving yourself the freedom and recognizing that God is leading you to be yourself, because that's how He created you to be and that honors Him – maybe you didn't use those exact words, maybe I interpreted them —

Amy: [Chuckles]

Cheri: — but what Enneagram number did you try to be?

Amy: Ooooh.

Cheri: Like, which ones did you kinda like, try to conform to before you realized that the best thing you could do is be yourself?

Amanda: I wanted to be organized, and I wanted to be [laughs] a doer. What number is that, a 2 or 3?

Cheri: 3.

Amanda: And I do get a lot of stuff done; however, I want to be put together. I feel like that is the picture of the ideal person that I should be. And I'm just not. I'm not at all. [Laughs] So I'm becoming, you know, more accepting of just that. But – yeah, I wanted to be more put together.

Cheri: I love – I love that recognizing that being messy, what you interpreted as kind of a weakness, and recognizing how much help you need, that you're actually turning that into a strength. How many women are on the A Wife Like Me team?

Amanda: Right now we have 18 contributors. Regular contributors.

Cheri: And so what could have been perceived as a weakness – needing help – you've turned into a strength by saying "Hey, I'm gonna build a team." and I bet that team has a lot of fun with you as their leader.

Amanda: Yeah, we do have a lot of fun.

[All laugh]

Amy: That's why you have 18 women! 'Cause when I put together a team I've looked around I'm like "Where did everybody go?" Cause I'm a 1! And ones are not fun!

[All laugh]

Amanda: I don't think so. You're so fun.

Amy: I've had to work on it. I've been hanging around some sevens. They've rubbed off on me; it's good.

Amanda: [Laughs]

Amy: We talk about how women think a lot of times that we have to choose between our highest callings. So we define our highest calling as three things in ascending order: number one, that we want to live a fulfilling life; number two, we really wanna love and serve our people well; and number three – the most important – is we want to glorify God. But Cheri and I argue that we can do all three when we're living an examined life, and we're living the life of a seed-sender. How have you found all three of those things fulfilled in your life as you pursued this calling that God's given you?

Amanda: I feel like the more we understand what our role is, truly what God is asking of us, the easier it is that we can do that well. I feel like – well, my husband farms, first off, so I get to hear a lot of farm talk and how the seed – how just the transition from planting the seed in a ground that is ideal really transforms then into harvest and this crop that is bountiful and ready and prime for the harvest. And so, I love that. I love listening to all of the details that go into farming in spring: the weeds, I mean the plowing, and all of the things that it takes, the eyes on the land, all of that, there's so much work involved in getting a crop – a seed – into that harvest time, and yet, I think I've struggled with knowing my role as a seed-sender in the past and wondering, you know, wanting it to be my job and feeling like it should be my job to actually go in and pull their weeds for them —

Amy and Cheri: [Laughter]

Amanda: — and spray, like, “You need more growth here! So we need some fertilizer, we need the troops, we need the people to come in and help, and where are the people responding for this person?” And yet, that’s not our role, and that’s not our responsibility, and so I feel that the more we understand – and for myself at least – that my job is to send the seed. My job is to put it in the ground and then – not to wash my hands of it, but have freedom and find freedom in “I did my part, and now I get to trust, I get to sit back and watch and believe and pray that they’re going to now put forth the effort and the work it takes in cultivating and creating an environment for change.” But I’m not responsible for that. So I feel like when we can step into that space of knowing just that God has just given us that, in and of itself, to spread His good news and His truth and his encouragement, His word, and then to trust Him, there’s freedom in that and you feel fulfilled in doing that.

Amy: That is so beautiful. And it is so aligned with one of Jesus’ seed parables where He says that He’s the sower and then He says in the next one that *we’re* the sower that we’re the seed-sowers, but it says in that parable we don’t know how the seed grows. In other words, that’s God’s work, so that is so aligned and beautiful, Amanda.

Cheri: Yeah, Amy, it sounds like she has a really good grasp on not meddling.

Amy: Mmm.

Cheri: Not going in and being controlling. Wow.

Amy and Cheri: [Laughter]

Amy: She’s lost who she’s not. She’s not the fertilizer, she’s not the weed-puller...

Cheri: Oh my word Amanda, I desperately needed to hear this this morning, thank you so very much. I think I actually had my organic weed spray on my back —

Amanda: [Laughs]

Cheri: — and my nozzle in my hands ready to go to work after this interview. And I'm now — I am in contrition, taking them off, because that word: trust. Oh yeah — that's what I'm supposed to do, trust. Alright, thank you ladies. [Sighs] I needed this. Maybe one of our listeners did as well.

Amy: [Laughter] Our toes hurt, but we still love you, Amanda.

Cheri: Alright, so, Amanda, tell us one 'seize the yay' moment — one joy-filled God moment that you've had in the last month.

Amanda: So we had a launch party, 'cause again, a party is so fun.

[All laugh]

Amanda: So we just had a launch party for our nonprofit A Wife like Me in our community in Minnesota, and I legit thought nobody would show up. I knew my mom would be there, and I knew my mother-in-law would be there, and I knew our volunteers would be there, but I really thought, you know, no one's gonna come. And — but I thought, "Well, we'll still have fun!"

Amy and Cheri: [Laughter]

Amanda: The night had started and the room was filling with people, and there was a moment when I was about to get up and share to the crowd and just speak for a little bit. I looked out and I just saw all these eyes looking back at me, and I was so overwhelmed with God's goodness just in obedience, and thinking that you're working so hard at something, and you wonder, you know, is this making an impact? Whether it's in our homes, or in our workplace, or at the grocery store talking with a stranger, you know. You wonder: "Is this doing anything?" and "Does anyone care about what I care about?" and "Does this really matter to the world and to God?" so to look out and see those eyes that care too was so overwhelming and just such an encouragement, you know. So that was a really beautiful moment for me.

Amy: We've had such a theme in this seed-sender series of community and just the power of community and those eyes, those people around you that care.

Amanda: Yeah, it was beautiful.

Cheri: We hope you've enjoyed Episode 164 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Amy: Head on over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode164 ... there you'll find this week's transcript, our Digging Deeper Download — a printable resource that helps you to apply what you've learned in this episode — and a link to A Wife Like Me website.

Cheri: On August 28th we'll be hosting a Facebook Virtual Party to launch our *Exhale* Small Group curriculum materials.

Amy: We would love to have you to join us for encouragement, games, and prizes! Search for GritNGraceGirls to like our Facebook page. That's where the party will be happening.

Cheri: And if you head to 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: Next week's seed sender is Cary Heise, Founder of Designed for Joy, who has a whole new set of seeds that you might identify with.

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!**