

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #180: What to Do with the Life You Didn't Design

Cheri:

So Amy, what is your approach to interior design?

Amy:

Well, I used to love antiques, anything old and with a lack of veneer and polish. I loved it.

But now, I kind of do a mix of um, old things and new things and a corner of my heart belongs to HGTV. But I have gotten, so instead of going out shopping for, you know, adding one more piece of clutter to my house that I shot the house. So I'll go up in the attic or I'll move things around instead of buying new things. How about you?

Cheri:

Well, my favorite design book is also my only design book. It's literally a big book and it's called *Books Do Furnish a Room*. And I'm not joking when I say my approach to interior design is books. You've been to my house so you know this is true.

The living room is filled with bookshelves, and they're filled with books. And they aren't even necessarily like at your house. You've got them grouped by color and you've got some that are wrapped in white with the spines going back, you know. And so that the pages are out. I'm, like, I just have bookshelves filled with books. That's it.

Amy:

And it's beautiful.

Cheri:

And, of course, if you go up to the bedroom, I actually believe that books can turn into furniture. If you stack them tall enough, they work as end tables really well. So piles of books.

Amy:

Fabulous!

Cheri:

They're a little unstable. They wobble a little bit, but.

Amy:

I'm still fairly sure we could Pinterest that.

Cheri:

Oh. Oh my goodness.

Amy:

What a cool idea.

Cheri:

You can make nightstands out of books. Amy, we should start a site. Okay. We're desperately off topic here.

Amy:

Well, I think we both deal with excess whether it's new accessories or books. And it turns out we are not the only one.

One of our listeners said this, "My biggest struggle is knowing when enough is enough. Where is the balance of putting enough work or effort into something not exceeding the line of perfectionism?"

Well, balance, that sounds awesome, but what does that word even mean during the holidays?

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:

Today we're talking to Tracy Steel, author of *A Redesigned Life: Uncovering God's Purpose When Life Doesn't Go as Planned*. Tracy Steel graduated from Kansas State University with a BS in interior design and later earned a master's degree in biblical and theological studies from Phoenix Seminary. She's a military wife and mother of two who loves writing and enjoys speaking at various women's ministry events.

Cheri:

So if you're struggling to understand or accept some aspect of your life that isn't going as planned, Tracy has words of hard won wisdom for you today.

Amy:

So Tracy, you're an interior designer by trade, but also a theologian. So tell us how you began to realize that the two are woven together.

Tracy:

Well, sure. Yeah. I always thought I was going to grow up and be this big time interior designer. So I'm from Kansas.

Amy:

Me too! Remember?

Tracy:

That's right!

I'm from the Midwest. So I've been in three tornadoes. Everybody always asks me if I've met Dorothy and Toto. I have not, but I have been in three tornado, so there you go. Uh, but I always thought I'd move to New York city, you know, own my own design firm, make millions of dollars, none of which have happened because I met Jesus. Amen?

And He changed everything. But eventually He did call me into a different kind of interior design, which looked a whole lot like youth and women's ministry. And so, as I started talking to women though, I started noticing this, this pattern, if you will, and all of us are living this life that we did not design.

And so, I started thinking about, "Okay, I've got this design degree, and we always are saying that God is our master designer. He's our master architect.

Is there this parallel between these design principles that I used to use as I was designing these homes and these offices between what God is doing as he's redesigning us in our lives? Does he use patterns? Does he use contrast? Does he use repetition? All these different things?" He sure does, ladies. So that is what I have built this book on is the same principles that I use as interior designer God uses as he's redesigning us.

Cheri:

Okay. I have chills. I am the most non-design-y person you could possibly meet. So I'm so excited about what we're going to be learning together here.

So, Tracy, in your book, you write, "All of us are living a life we did not design." First of all, how dare you say that? I mean, did you really have to actually go there?

Tracy:

Yes!

<Laughter>

Cheri:

This really is not music to the ears of recovering perfectionists or, you know, Amy, I'm going to use the C-word, control freaks.

So I'm going to take some deep breaths here, and we're just going to ask how has this been true for you? This whole thing of living a life that you did not design it. It really sounds so unfair.

Tracy:

I know. It is unfair, isn't it? 'Cause I would like to be God, and I'd like to be in control. Of every single thing. I am a control freak. That's why I love you guys. You guys are my people. I get it! I get it, girls.

But there are so many examples. I already shared one. So I was gonna make millions of dollars. I thought I had my career path all figured out. I actually thought I was never going to get married.

So here's the funny thing. I ended up marrying a military guy. So now I've lived in six different places over the last eleven years of marriage, all of which I never swore I would never live in any of those places, right. Far away from family, friends, everybody I've ever known, ever loved. So that's - has been some surprises.

Never thought I would be a mom. And now I'm a mom to two fantastic kiddos. Never thought I would homeschool. So yeah, I've done that too. We even owned an RV, so I think - that's a whole 'nother podcast, y'all, like.

<Laughter>

We can't even continue that. Okay. So I've RV'ed for a couple seasons in my life. I've had friendships that have fallen apart. I've had other dreams that have died. My sweet mom, my biggest cheerleader on the face of this earth, is at home in heaven with Jesus. Okay. So I had to say goodbye to her before I was ready to say goodbye to her. So I could go on and on and on.

Three weeks ago we were in a car wreck, and I am still recovering from a concussion. So again, you know, here I'm supposed to be in a season where I've just released this book. I've worked two years on writing a book. I'm not a writer, but now somehow I've written this book, you know, and I've given Christmases to write this book; time away from my children.

I'm supposed to be out doing all of these things for Jesus, right? And three weeks ago, I couldn't even remember what six times seven was. And here I'm going, okay, now I've lost my health.

I think we all will find ourselves in these seasons, girls, where we are - we can't just say these Bible verses, we have to really come on our knees before God and say, "Okay, I don't like what is happening. And I know that you love me, God, but why?" You know. "Why when I have loved you and I have sacrificed for you? Why is this happening?"

And I think that's the grit part, right? That we all talk about a lot on this podcast that we say we love God, but do we love God when the rubber meets the road? And we've lost our memory, but we're right in the middle of serving him and loving him. So I could go on and on and on, but

my life has definitely not gone the way that I thought it was going to go or the way I had planned for it to go.

Amy:

What you're talking about, Tracy, is so relevant to the time of year that we're in because there are pictures of perfection all around us. I mean talk about Hallmark Christmas movies, right?

But, inevitably, we have things that are interrupting that time, just like your concussion is interrupting the time of life that you're in. So tell us the six design principles that you draw from throughout the book and just a little bit about each principle and how you see that reflected in God.

Tracy:

Sure, sure.

Each of these are going to parallel design principles that I really did use, in the real design world, with how God actually moves in a spiritual sense, in our life.

The first principle is that of movement. And movement happens whenever an edge of rejection or a curve of surprise catches our attention. And God is going to use movement to direct the eyes of our hearts back to Him, who is the intended focal point of our life.

The second principle is a principle of emphasis, and emphasis appears whenever we use our God-given unique pops of color, and I love to use this phrase "pops of color" throughout the book. And we're going to use our pops of color, girls, whenever we serve those around us and God uses the process then of sanctification. You ever heard that word before? You grow, stretch, and mature us to reveal then the unique aspect of our emphasis.

The next principle I talk about is that of pattern. And pattern then is displayed whenever God uses repetition in our lives to catch our attention, to teach us, or to help us remember who he is and what he desires for our lives.

The next principle that I talk about is that of contrast, and contrast occurs whenever God brings people or circumstances into our lives, the opposite of what we maybe thought we were going to have or maybe what we hoped for, in order to help us see ourselves or him more clearly.

The next principle I talk about is that of balance, and balance is actually one of my favorites in the book. And it's basically evident with everything in our heart or relationships looks and feels right. So if there's something negative, in other words, is going on in any area of our life, God is going to allow us to feel wobbly inside so that we can fix whatever is off. So we can restore balance or harmony in our relationships, not only with Him, but those around us.

And the last principle that I talk about in the book is that of space. This is one of the more serious ones that we kind of go into at the end, but space is present. Whenever loss or grief is

present, and loss or grief leaves a hole in our heart, God is gonna use space then to give us permission to pause, to reevaluate, and ultimately draw our attention back to what is positive. And that is God again, the intended focal point of our life, and the hope that we have in him. And, I think especially around the holidays, this is one of the most important principles that we can really pause and focus on.

Amy:

Well, and it's interesting you use that word focal point several times when you talked about these principles, and we know that Christmas – the focal point is supposed to be Jesus, but goodness knows, it is so hard to keep him as the focal point! So why is it important to consider and even prioritize what the focal point of our lives is?

Tracy:

Because if not aiming, we are going to wobble. And I don't know you guys, but, I mean, think about how many books and things that we have not only on our shelves but around our home, right? I mean we are just cluttered, I think, not only in our homes but in our hearts.

And I think isn't there a verse, excuse me 'cause this is the concussion talking right now, girls, but we have so much around us. But are we really growing in wisdom and knowledge when anxiety is skyrocketing?

When, you know, we have all of these issues, but we have more books than ever. We have more gadgets than ever because we are seeing all of the authors except for the author himself. So that's why I bring all of these principles in this book because we are focusing on each other instead of the intended focal point, which is God Himself.

So I'm arguing if we can go back to these principles, if we can remember every time we see patterns, every time we see contrast, every time we see space, every time we see emphasis, they are all there to go back to the intended focal point, which is God. And every time you go back to who He is, we will cease wobbling and become steadfast in our faith.

And again, the holidays is a perfect reminder as we are singing carols, as we are wrapping gifts, to remember why we are doing it in the first place.

Amy:

Oh, that'll preach, girl.

Cheri:

I'm over here taking copious notes for our conversation.

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

So Tracy, one of the next things I noticed that you said in your book is, "Let go of the need to control and understand." And my first thought was, "Well, girlfriend, I thought - I thought we were friends. So what are you trying to do to me here?"

And to Amy, like this isn't fair to her either cause she's got this burning to correct injustices in the world. So how are we supposed to do what you say? How are we supposed to let go of the need to control and understand things like, are you suggesting we're supposed to become passive doormats?

Tracy:

No, no, no, no, not at all. I want you to not become passive doormats but engaged and surrendered daughters, not doormats, but engaged, surrendered daughters. And I use that word "daughter" because I think there's an intimacy there, again with God, not a doormat, but a daughter who is engaged yet surrendered.

And by engaged, I mean active. And I see within me because I'm a type A, Enneagram seven. I am ready to party, but I like to control the party.

<All laugh>

Okay. You know what I'm saying? Like, I know the type of napkin and the plate that I want to eat on, but we're all gonna party.

<Laughter>

I'm just saying it like it is. I have this desire though to want to control and to manipulate. Okay. And so that's what I'm trying to say in the book is that at some point, we're not going to know everything this side of heaven.

And I think one of the greatest verses that we can ever memorize in all of scripture is Deuteronomy 29:29. The secret things of the Lord belong to Him. And so, he's got His revealed will, which he tells us all throughout scripture. Here's the things that I have revealed to you, daughters.

Okay, here are the things that I want you to know that you will be accountable to know about me and what I desire for you to know. That is the things that we can hold onto.

Those are the things that he wants us to know about him and how we are to live, but there are secret things according to Deuteronomy 29:29 that we will not know this side of heaven, okay?

The things I cannot control, the things I cannot manipulate or figure out - and the quicker, girls, that we can grasp a hold of that and say, "Okay, Lord, I will surrender these things to you."

I will not ever know why my mom had to die the way she did or why certain things – the more we can release that and surrender that. The way we will live, I think in that surrender, and be able to live with the freedom and the peace and the joy and the kindness and all these other things that he desires for us to do. And I think that is a, that's an active, you know, obedience of faith that I think he wants us to have. And so, that's what I'm trying to say in this book because life is going to shock us, and it is going to surprise us and there is no way we are going to ever have everything answered for us this side of heaven. And so, that's what I'm trying to say is if we can live like that, ooh, we're going to be just fine.

Cheri:

Mmm. Mmm. Whew, hey.

You said it's up to us whether we live on our adrenaline or on God's assurances. So could you unpack this for Amy and for our listeners? [clearing throat]

<Laughter>

Amy:

I'm nervous again. Oh, I gotta say.

Tracy:

Again, it is up to us. Joshua 24, I believe it's verses 14 and 15, "Choose this day whom you will serve."

I think there's this tendency again in our culture to say, well, it's their fault or again, you know, I'm going to, you know, rely on my pastor or my mentor or my parents. And we kind of push the responsibility for things onto other people.

And I'm trying to say, "Oh no, no, it is our responsibility to take ownership for, our choices and our things." And I know, for me, I'm kind of sick, again, of relying on my adrenaline to get by, and I want to live on God's assurances in his words, to stand on, not just on my emotions or on my hormones that are kind of going crazy here. Let's just be honest, girls. I'm in my forties.

<Laughter>

And so, I'm trying to get women to take ownership to say, look, you know, this is your faith. This is your life. You cannot rely on an author. You cannot rely on, you know, another guru that's out there telling you to pull up your bootstraps. This is your life that God is redesigning and calling you to. So step it up.

We are the future of the church, amen? We do not need to go home. Yes, I said that, you know, like we are *it*. We are called to lead. This is our time. Did I say that? I did.

Do we need to edit that? No.

Episode #180: What to Do with the Life You Didn't Design

It's our time to stand up. We need to be women of the word and of the truth and we've got to live on the assurances of God.

Amy:

So good. And we will not be editing that.

(Tracy laughs)

Amy:

We are on board with you.

So, Tracy, what closing words of encouragement would you like to leave with our listeners?

Tracy:

One of the things I love to tell women is that God loves to take the things that the world rejects and discards and creates beautiful masterpieces with those things. That even though you may feel rejected and discarded by this world, that God sees you, that He is very present, that He is communicating through you, through his word, through nature, through whatever. He is present. Do not give up on Him, but He will see you through this life that He is redesigning for you.

Cheri:

We hope you've enjoyed episode number 180 of Grit and Grace.

Amy:

Hop on over to the website site for this episode: <https://gritngracegirls.com/episode180> There you'll find our transcript, this week's digging deeper devotional, and links to Tracy's book and website.

Cheri:

We'll be continuing this conversation over in our Facebook group. If you're not yet a member, just search Facebook for Grit N Grace girls, and you'll find us.

Amy:

Next week, we'll be processing together what we learned from Tracy.

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 'n' Cheri:

BREAK IT!

Outtakes

Cheri:

But I, you know, books are also, and I know we have this in common, have been my approach to interior design work on the inside when it comes to wanting to change my life.

That is what my really full shelves reveal is this penchant to look towards an outside expert, um, to, uh, fix things. And that's really completely off topic, so segue something and I will...

<Laughter>

I forgot all about the question. So I'll cut whatever needs to be cut.