

## **Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules**

### **Episode #181: How to Find the Gift in "Wobbly"**

**Amy:**

So, Cheri, Christmas is coming. How's it going?

**Cheri:**

All right. Well, the good news in the Gregory household is that Daniel put up our trees. We had two trees in our bay window the day before Thanksgiving... and I had them fully decorated before Thanksgiving dinner. And that is a win in this household. I did not play the Grinch. The house is decorated and looks beautiful. So we are, there are no gifts, like no gifts, but, you know, that will come. How about you?

**Amy:**

Same at our house. Yeah. And I'm looking, I'm like, really two weeks till Christmas. Um, but Barry, travels for his job and he was going to West Virginia this week, and he really wanted me to go and it's so rare for him to really want me to go. So I thought, well, I should go, and hey, bonus today we're supposed to get snow. So I'm excited about that. And I'm thinking, well, this is where I'm supposed to be, but I'm working on a book proposal, so I'm doing all things not Christmas this week.

**Cheri:**

You know, could we just give our loved ones the gift of our presence this year, you know, we're always talking about being present. Do you think that would fly? (Laughs)

**Amy:**

I wonder how they would respond. "I'm here! Ta da!"

(Both laugh)

Can you imagine their faces? Like "...what?"

**Cheri:**

I want to do it, I want to do it.

**Amy:**

I hear that stores are still open Christmas Eve. We're good.

**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 processing what we learned from our conversation with Tracy Steel, author of *A Redesigned Life: Uncovering God's Purpose When Life Doesn't Go As Planned*.

**Cheri:**

Well, when we talked to Tracy, she quipped, “‘cause I'd really like to be God, I'd like to be in control.” And I just loved her honesty. So how have you subtly or not so subtly tried to play God, my Enneagram 1 friend?

<Laughter>

**Amy:**

Yeah, this might hit a little close to home. You know, for years and years I joked about having a five year plan, but it wasn't really a joke at all.

<Laughter>

I think the way that I have tried to play God in my own life is really by controlling the schedule of my own life. Really super tight fist with the schedule. And as an Enneagram 1, you know, I have this picture of perfect in my head and part of that is the schedule and how everything is supposed to go.

So I would say that that is a big area that I'm learning to release control of – like this impromptu trip! In fact, there have been two impromptu trips in the last month, and I'm just telling you, usually that would tear me out of the frame. And I'm change resistant, so I, you know, because that wasn't what was in my head. It was initially, like, this battle of whether I was going to give up control or not.

And in giving up control, I have to tell you, I've had just some of the best times the last few weeks, so. It's positively reinforcing when you give up control and find out it's actually lovely.

<Laughter>

**Cheri:**

Okay. Our listeners cannot see my face. Our listeners cannot see me looking at you going, “Is this Amy or do I need to schedule an emergency DNA test? And make sure that she has not been taken over by some alien life force.”

<Laughter>

**Amy:**

Exactly! Right? I mean, hey, this is growth baby. I'm excited.

**Cheri:**

Oh no, I love it.

Well, okay. So probably the best story I can share about trying to play God – and there's no subtlety to it whatsoever – goes back years ago when I was a teenager, and my parents insisted on having this dumb thing called family worship together.

And I was in a funk and a mood, which I realized, kind of describes all of teenagehood, but I was in an especially foul mood this one evening. And so, trying to draw me in to the family fold, because I had clearly placed myself icily on the outside, you know.

My dad asked me to read scripture, and it was something in the Old Testament. And I'm just like, you know, in rote, just kind of reading through it, and I suddenly become aware that the room has gone, like deathly silent. Now, nobody had been talking while I was reading the Bible, but it just like seemed supernaturally silent. Like something had gone wrong.

And so, I pause and there's like shocked expressions on everybody's faces as if they're trying not to react to something. And so, I almost say, “What did I just say?” But instead I rewind my brain, and I was supposed to have read something like, “And God said to the children of Israel,” and what I'd actually said was, “And Cheri said to the children of Israel.”

(Amy laughs)

**Cheri:**

I kid you not. Like, I replaced the name of God with my own name. I mean, you can't get worse than that. And, you know, this is as a teenager. So I've never had any illusions of humility. Like it's, just like, it is always been very clear that this is a problem.

And for our listeners who are like falling out or who are shutting things off in horror, I just want to say, I may have done it really obviously, but we all do it in our own ways, we all replace God with ourselves in our own ways.

And I'm going to pick on a Starbucks customer that was overheard last week, who was, I'm going to say badgering the barista, the person who was actually taking her money. She had handed over, whatever it was, the money, and the barista had opened up the cash register and then this person said, "Oh, I have a dime." And the barista said, "The till is open. I can't change anything." And this woman like, loses her cool, and she holds up the dime. She says, "I will give you this dime, and you will hand me a dollar bill."

**Amy:**

Holy cannoli!

**Cheri:**

And I'm like, "Well, excuse me! Who died and made you God?"

**Amy:**

Lady, refill your Valium prescription!

**Cheri:**

So just, you know, for all of us who are trying to still have some holiday cheer, when that urge to tell people what they will do. Now, notice I didn't tell this about myself or my family. For once, I'm picking on somebody else on the outside. But, you know, it shows up in so many ways. This subtle or not-so-subtle desire to play God.

**Amy:**

It's really true. You know, we were together recently when a mutual friend of ours said that she was having a discussion with her kids about what to dress up for, for Halloween. And her daughter said, "I'm going to be God for Halloween." And our friend who knows her daughter well said, "Of course, you are, honey." I think that's hilarious. But I'm like, how often do we dress up as God?

**Cheri:**

Ooh. Ooh. Did you have to ask it? Like, that story was so cute until you had to ask it like that.

Okay. Moving right along.

<Laughter>

I loved the six design principles and those who have art design background. I'm sure that was fun to hear that. Something familiar, for me, all of that is new cause I'm so non-visual, but which of the design principles that Tracy shared with us resonated with you the most?

**Amy:**

Well, I really loved the principle of balance and what Tracy said about that.

If there's something negative going on in any area of our life, God is going to allow us to feel wobbly inside so we can fix whatever's off. So we can restore balance or harmony in our relationships, not only with Him but with those around us.

I love that because as I just confessed, I am change averse. But God has given me the gift of imbalance, at times in my life, when He needed to create change in my life. And really, if it weren't for that wobbliness on the inside, I wouldn't budge. But that wobbliness is enough to get me to move forward.

And so, even though it doesn't feel good at the time, I'm thinking specifically before our move to Wake County area, the Raleigh area, we lived in an area and we were having some – we were on the verge of a move, but we also had several other personal things, church things, that were creating that wobbliness.

And it made me ready to move, whereas if God had moved us without that other external wobbliness, I would have been very upset about that. But He gave it to me as a gift. And I've experienced that over and over. How about you?

**Cheri:**

Well, first of all, I want to extend what you were just talking about, because when you say that it's a gift of wobbling, a gift of imbalance. My first thought is, "What have you been smoking or drinking there, my friend?"

But, of course, I did see our notes before we sat down to record this morning and that whole idea of inner wobbliness actually really helped me this morning, because Daniel and I had a little bit of a misunderstanding, shall I say. And my instinct is, "Fine, he can go off to work. I'm gonna stay here and stew."

And then I realized, no, I've got this wobbliness on the inside and I'd like to get back to some balance. If this is a gift of imbalance that's reminding me. And so, you know, I thought what's the simplest thing I can say without blowing – 'cause the excuse I make to myself is, "I'm not gonna say anything, 'cause if I say anything I'll make things worse."

And then I was, like, "Well, what if I could say something that wouldn't make things worse, but would actually make things better?"

I just said a couple of little things, and I dunno, it just like brought everything down. Things became far less wobbly. How shall I say?

**Amy:**

Ahh.

**Cheri:**

So anyways, so this – what you just shared has been a gift to me already today. So I wanted to say thank you for that.

**Amy:**

Oh, I'm glad.

**Cheri:**

So, for me, the design principle that resonated with me the most was repetition, but I will not claim it as a gift because I am not, I am just, I'm not at the stage of gratitude. Because, for me, the same old stinking relationship issues keep resurfacing. They just like keep coming back, and I'm very tired of them. But I suppose the gift in all of that is it gives me another chance to practice the B word: boundaries. And because in the past I didn't do them. It just means that those relationships are still not as healthy as they need to be.

And I suppose one of the gifts that is in this season of my life, especially with my adult children, is that some of the issues that they're dealing with I truly cannot fix the way I tried to fix them in the past. Like, I was able to put bandaids on them in the past. I was able to prevent the pain in the past. I was able to put a stopgap in place – and none of that was good, let's be clear about that. But we are now at a stage where I truly cannot even attempt to fix them. And I am having to face the fact that boundaries really are the gift.

I suppose, if anything, I am grateful for the chance to learn and not to just have failed and then have to walk away, and say, yup, I failed. So, I guess repetition is a gift. I guess.

<Laughter>

**Amy:**

Yeah, fine.

**Cheri:**

Fine.

**Amy:**

We'll take it.

<Laughter>

Okay. In another example of wobbliness, Tracy talked about having a focal point at Christmas and she said that if we focus on other people that we will inevitably wobble. But then if we focus on God, we become steadfast.

**Cheri:**

Hmm. I love that. Well, I'll have to confess that, um, when we were talking to her and you brought up this whole idea of the focal point of Christmas, my first thought was, "Oh, well, the focal point is the Christmas tree, right?"

<Laughter>

I'm like, "Well, Cheri, that's - no, the focal point is actually Jesus; the focal point of a decorated room, may be the Christmas tree." But the focal point of Christmas is of course, the birth of Jesus.

And yet, and this is where I guess, I guess I have to be grateful for God bringing me back around always to these boundary lessons I need to learn. I get distracted so easily. That's not just the shiny objects. And there are a lot more shiny objects at Christmas. I mean, 'cause of the lights and everything and all the decorations.

But, it is such an intense time for those of us who are very relational. It magnifies either the best parts of our relationships, but it also magnifies the painful parts and the hard parts. And it brings people together in combinations that may be balanced or may be imbalanced.

So when we're focusing on the people, and when the people pleaser parts in us come out, we're trying to play the whack-a-mole of keeping people happy. Which Kathi Lipp, for those of you who haven't listened to that episode, Kathi Lipp gave us full on permission to not make people happy, but to let them be disappointed. [Episode 171]

But if we're playing the whack-a-mole, we're going to be exhausted. If we are focusing on, the reason for the season, if we're focusing on God, then we are going to be steady. Even in the midst of a busy and - for someone like me - overwhelming season.

**Amy:**

Well, and because it is truly busy and overwhelming for everyone, I think, particularly some personalities, but for everyone - we have to be intentional. This is one of these times of year that we cannot just trust that we will just happen to focus on Jesus because we won't. There are a million shiny objects around us and expectations and scheduling and all of that layered on top of each other.

And one of the things I've bemoaned here before is the fact that the modern day church has seemed to have gotten rid of a lot of the kind of church calendar preparation that we used to have in churches that we've kind of thrown out the baby with the bath water and said, "Oh, all of that tradition, you know, yada, yada." Well, some of that tradition was intentional heart preparation for us.

So I've realized that being in a kind of a more contemporary driven church, that I have to create that for myself. It is not going to happen by accident. This year I'm extremely thankful, because I've been doing the first five app since it first came out and started at Genesis, and we're going to end this September having gone all the way through the Bible. But I'm particularly thankful we're in Isaiah, which seems like a very strange thing to say.

I don't, you know, my buddy that I do this with she said, "Oh, I'm so excited. Isaiah is my favorite book of the Bible."

And I was like, "Oh, really? How nice."

<Laughter>

I do not feel that way about Isaiah. However, we have gotten to the messianic prophecies just in time for Christmas. And I'm like, thank you Jesus. Like, I wasn't as intentional as I should have been, yet you provided for me anyway.

So I just want to say it's not too late, even now, to pick up a devotional, to go read some of the messianic prophecies. Whatever it takes for you to get your heart ready. Do it.

Refocus today. It's not too late!

**Cheri:**

Hmm. I love that so much.

One verse that Tracy brought up is one that I'm sure I've encountered, but it just really felt new to me and it was Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things of the Lord belong to Him." And she encouraged us to live as engaged surrender daughters even as life continues to shock and surprise us.

How did you react to that?

**Amy:**

You know, that was such a beautiful part of the interview I thought.

And one of the things that was interesting, you know, we talk a lot about our flaws and foibles here, but one of the gifts that I feel like God has given me is that I have always been, I would say, pretty comfortable with the mystery of God. I'm not a skeptic by nature. I think that I'm fairly smart, but I'm not an extreme intellectual that picks everything apart. And so, there's something that God has woven into my soul that I kind of love the mystery of God.

And I'm comfortable with it. I don't have to know if it was a 24-hour day, seven day week, that creation happened in. I just know God did it. It was a mystery. It's amazing that He did it with the power of His words.

I don't have to know all the ins and outs of that. Please don't write me emails about that. *Please don't write me emails.*

<Laughter>

But I'm comfortable with the mystery. So I'm thankful for that. And though, and I thought about it as I was preparing the notes, that I have tried to control God, for sure, but I don't think I've ever been under the illusion that I am God.

<Laughter>

I'm thankful for those little gifts that God has given me.

**Cheri:**

Well, this is definitely something that we have in common, because when I talk to people who have these deep existential crises and really seem to feel like God owes them an answer for everything, and if he would just explain and answer the big "Why?" questions. I mean, that's valid.

I've just personally never gone through that kind of dark night of the soul experience. Not because of anything to do with me. But, like you said, I think it's probably kind of in my DNA.

I remember years ago, I don't remember what book I read it in, somebody was talking about questioning God and how much He can or can't explain to us. And, they talked about a seven-year-old little boy whose much older sister had just gotten married, and she came back from her honeymoon and he had been dying to ask her a question. And so the first question he asked was, "Is sex better than an ice cream sundae?"

<Amy laughs>

And she answered "Yes." And that's all he needed to know. And that illustration may seem really simplistic, and so that right there shows you I'm okay with a fairly simplistic answer because if you think about it, if she had tried to give him a more detailed answer, it wouldn't have helped in any way, shape, or form. It would have actually made the situation worse.

He asked the question, she gave the answer that he could comprehend and the rest would take maturity on his part. And I'm, as much as I wrestle with control, I'm pretty much okay with the fact that I am still very immature and compared to God, I'm

incredibly immature. And, thus, there's things that there's just no way that my brain can handle. That's it.

**Amy:**

Absolutely. So true.

<Laughter>

And so, we're okay with the yes of God with less explanation.

That's, not a bad thing. That's something to be really thankful for.

**Cheri:**

Absolutely. Yeah.

**Amy:**

So this was one of my favorite quotes from Tracy, "It's up to us whether we live on adrenaline or on God's assurances." And I was like, "Oh." Because, so, I'm comfortable with the mystery, but having said that, I still struggle with trusting God. What's up with that?

<Laughter>

**I don't know!** It's just, it's the craziest thing. I've heard the quote, "My part is trusting God. His part is everything else." And I'm like, "Well, God, you got it." I am that person in the new Testament that says, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." I am that person.

And so, I do still tend to lean towards adrenaline instead of trusting God's assurances; His promises. And I, so, I'm in the throes of this, of wrestling with God about this, and trying to bring my heart into submission. I mean, this is my issue right now, that I want to learn to live in full trust, knowing His promises and trusting them.

**Cheri:**

You know, it sounds like we're okay with the abstract concept of God being all-knowing, but when it comes to walking out on a daily basis, we'd really, really like the script.

<Laughter>

**Amy:**

Yes, I think that's true.

**Cheri:**

Well, I'm reading the book *Atomic Habits*, and the author stresses the importance of focusing not on the end result of behavior change that we're trying to make. Like, don't

focus on, "I want to lose five pounds," but rather he says we should focus on our identity. You know, like, the person we want to become like, "Oh, I want to become a sad person who only has one dessert per day." I mean, "I want to become a person who cares for her body, which is God's temple." Okay.

So instead of the end result, it's the identity. And so, here's the parallel I see with adrenaline versus God's assurances. Trying to force outcomes is adrenaline work. So, you know, if I set this kind of a goal that I think God wants me to do, and I white knuckle it to the end, you know, I'm going to reach that goal, but I'm going to collapse from adrenal fatigue by the end because it was just outcome driven.

And the good news of the gospel that I'm really weaving, kind of, in myself as I'm reading this book, the good news of the gospel is that I'm not in charge of overhauling my own identity. I agree that I need to have an identity change, but I'm not the one to make that happen. I can focus on God's character and trust Him to transform me into who He says I am.

**Amy:**

Well, and that leads us right to today's scripture, which is 1 Corinthians 15:58 – "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters stand firm let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." It's such an expression of trust, isn't it? To give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord knowing that you're not really doing the work. He's doing it anyway.

**Cheri:**

Mmm. So, so good.

So what's the bad rule that we're breaking with these episodes?

**Amy:**

I'm in charge of the design of my life.

**Cheri:**

Ah! I like that rule.

<Laughter>

Except that rule has created a mess. So I guess it is a bad rule.

**Amy:**

Yes.

And then, the fact for focus is God designs a life for me beyond my imagination. So you know, He breaks all the design rules that I've created. And He creates something better

than what I imagined. It's amazing. So the grit for me is I know that God's process is the best. I do. I really do. (Laughs)

But I have to dig in to trust the process to get to the best. 'Cause it's the process part that I often struggle with and where my trust starts to crumble.

**Cheri:**

Mmm.

Well, and the grace for me is remembering, I don't have to be my own "God." I don't have to redeem myself. That the work of redemption, the work of transformation, the work of becoming who He designed us to be. That is His work, not ours.

We hope you've enjoyed episode 181 of Grit'n'Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

**Amy:**

Hop on over to our website, [gritngracegirls.com/epiosde181](http://gritngracegirls.com/epiosde181). There you'll find our transcript, this week's digging deeper devotional, and links to Tracy's book and other great resources.

**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:**

Join us next week when we'll be talking about the dangers of blind spots.

**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**

**Amy:**

We went to see the Mr. Rogers movie last night.

**Cheri:**

What you'd think?

**Amy:**

Oh my gosh. I could not stop crying at the end.

Episode #181: How to Find the Gift in "Wobbly"

**Cheri:**

So good.

**Amy:**

Did you watch it? Have you seen it?

**Cheri:**

Oh, yeah!

**Amy:**

Oh, yeah! So good.

**Cheri:**

Oh my goodness.

**Amy:**

So much to think about. That scene on the subway. Oh my gosh.

**<Laughter>**

But these are the kinds of things we're going to do in the new year, right? Have conversations around – I'd love to have a whole episode about the Mr. Rogers movie but it will be obsolete by then.

**Cheri:**

No, it won't. We're reflective thinkers. We get to do things whenever we want to. So there! I love it. No, that is such. Yeah. No. That fits.

We are kind of recording but not really. So, episode 181. Alright, you're on.

**Amy:**

So, Cheri, Christmas is coming. How's it going?