

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

*Episode 44: Husband and Friend — Strengthening Marriage by Bringing Our Best*

**Cheri**

When we first started this podcast, we weren't sure if anyone would even listen.

**Amy**

...but you're listening!! And writing to us. You can't imagine how emails like this make our day. One of our listeners said,

*"I love listening and having those 'Aha' moments as I continue to practice surrendering everything to God. Keep doing what you're doing—you're inspiring and appreciated!"*

**Cheri**

Awww ... that makes my heart happy! I am such a words of affirmation kind of gal! But there's one word in there ...

**Amy**

Mhm. The "s" word. It's got more than 4 letters, but it still feels like a bad word sometimes... SURRENDER.

**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.

**Amy**

Today we're processing together what we learned from our interview with Jill Savage about curing the "perfection infection" in our marriages.

**Cheri**

So much of what I'm dealing with right now, I'm realizing it's just overall depletion. And depletion leads to lowest maturity possible. Part of me is like why am I here again and its like, "well that's what happens when I get tired and I've not been doing some of the things that I

know I need to do. I listened to a Ted Talk, of all things; it's a woman who left the Westboro Baptist church. And she's talking about what helped her change her mindset.

**Amy**

Wow, oh I want the link to that!

**Cheri**

You'll love it. I found these four things to be so valuable for my marriage and it made me feel kind of bad. Advice about how to treat an enemy is something that I'm finding valuable to my marriage. Wow. That alone is convicting.

Number one: Don't assume bad intent, Number two: ask questions, Number three: stay calm, and number four: make your argument. Why do I treat my marriage as if it's this completely different relationship that should run according to exclusive rules that only I know and understand? I mean what she lists here is basic relational advice, how to get along with another human being. And I know where I struggle is the stay calm part, especially when I'm tired. It comes down to basic relational skills once again.

**Amy**

It really does. I remember when I first got married I had a friend, a mentor that invited me over and our first year of marriage, Barry says he thinks it was blissful, but I thought it was really, really hard. My friend said to me that she had been reading an article about stress and the main stressors in life. And she said "Amy, I realize that you done seven of the 10 this year."

**Cheri**

Oh wow, what were they?

**Amy**

It was things like getting married, moving, buying a house, changing jobs, all of those big life experiences and all of mine had been compressed into a year. And she said how are you doing and I said not really well at all. And then she talked to me about, she talked to me that day about so many helpful things and you can tell, this is 26 years ago and I still remember the conversation. But one of the things she said, she was talking about how to get along with a mother-in-law, not my specific mother-in-law, but she said if your best friend came over to babysit your kids and when you got home and she had cleaned your kitchen and maybe rearranged your silverware drawer to be more convenient, you would thank her. If your mother-in-law came over and did the same thing, you're going to be mad. Now, think about that, she said, because your mother-in-law should just be another friend, just another person. And what you just said about our marriages is true too. Why is it that we think the rules that apply to our friendships and the way we would treat a friend and perceive a friend - you know, assume the best - that we shouldn't apply that to our husbands? That's such a great insight, Cheri.

**Cheri**

Okay, I'm going to find this...here we go, here we go. Here's what she said, "I thought my rightness justified my rudeness."

**Amy**

Ohhhh!

**Cheri**

Ugh! I like cringed when I heard her say that. For me, I'm realizing, the more tired I am, the more careful I need to be. The more intentional I need to be about making sure that if nothing else civility, basics, like you just said – how I would treat a friend, I tend to excuse myself under those circumstances. And especially when I'm feeling right, when I'm feeling like my rightness is not being recognized, for how amazingly right it is, then I justify being rude.

**Amy**

Well part of the overlap that I heard in what you just read and from Jill Savage too is that one of her steps that you mentioned is to ask questions. I think the part of our interview with Jill that struck me the most is how little I listen. Jill talked about that as a key to turning around her marriage. And she talked quite a bit about just letting him having the floor, not responding immediately, and that step of asking questions and as you said, you always say being curious instead of furious, that is such a great step. And I think that's the one that I need the most in my marriage. This year has been interesting because Berry has gone through some really hard things professionally, and we've had an upswing so that's awesome but it's been a really, really hard year professionally and I realized for the first time that I felt compassion for my husband. And I thought why in 26 years have I never felt compassion before? And I think it's because I haven't listened well and I haven't put myself in his shoes very well at all.

**Cheri**

What I'm discovering in my self when the time comes for me to listen, I'm finding myself irritated and inconvenienced, because the timing isn't always really great and the topic isn't always of prime interest to me. And I've had to literally sit there and have some self dialogue like I want him to listen to me for 15 to 20 minutes. Have I ever bothered to ask if what I'm saying is of great interest to him? I was struck by, what I put in my notes is that Jill modeled such a willingness to listen and learn. She didn't have the attitude that after all these years of marriage she already knew it all and that he just needed to shape up and get with the program. She went into learner mode and listening requires a lingering. It requires time.

**Amy**

Oh! Say that again.

**Cheri**

Listening requires a lingering.

**Amy**

So good!

**Cheri**

And it takes a relaxed willingness to hear whatever it is and you know sometimes, right now Daniel likes to analyze the news and he likes to analyze what all these things mean and sometimes he'll do it late at night. I can just feel myself getting anxious, like I don't want to talk about it, I don't want to hear this. And I think it's okay for me to say at 10 o'clock at night, there have been times where I have said, "Daniel if you want me to sleep tonight this is not the time to be having this conversation." But during another time of day if this is what he wants to process, then I need to breeze through it and relax through it and to listen and learn that this is what's going through his head and to ask questions. It occurred to me last night after he had talked about some things that were headline news I got away from the conversation and I didn't know what any of it meant to him. I was just biding my time until he was done talking. I wasn't doing the curious thing. And I'm going to go back to him today and say, "You know all those things you were talking about last night? Tell me what that meant to you."

**Amy**

Well that's a good heart question. And that really gets to the whole male and femaleness that men are more interested in information and we are more interested in the hearts. So how do we get to the heart?

Years ago I was having some hormonal problems and so my interest in physical intimacy in our marriage had dropped way off. I was talking to a friend of ours and we joke with her about her being our Christian Dr. Ruth. She was always the one trying to get us to get back in bed and I said to her, "I'm trying to be willing," and she said to me, "Willing?! Try enthusiastic!"

And I'm thinking about this even in context to listening. Because when you say that I want to be willing – but listen as you're talking I have had some of those same feelings recently where Barry wants to tell me in detail everything that was said in a conversation and I get impatient. But so much of that goes back to listening requires lingering. Oh Cheri that's my takeaway! You have to create margin in your life to be able to linger. And then when we can linger we're able to be enthusiastic listeners instead of just gritting our teeth and being willing listeners.

**Cheri**

Okay, I didn't say anything about grading my teeth, obviously you know me way too well!

**Cheri**

One of the things you said was a takeaway for you was something about the slow fades.

**Amy**

I was so struck with Jill's vulnerability, overall. What a difficult topic to talk about. But I was really stunned by how much Jill was willing to own. Yes, it was her husband who had the infidelity but she was willing to do the hard work to go back and see where did the breakdown

happen and that breakdown happened over slow fades. She said we were doing all the right things, and yet it still happened. I had a friend who had an affair years ago and her husband blamed the demise of the marriage entirely on her. Jill could have done that because her husband did the external thing that showed their marriage problems to the world. And she could have said, "it's him, I'm done I'm out." And I think there are times, I want to just say, I think it's appropriate to say this marriage is over. There is a biblical loophole for that, I guess is the way to say it. But Jill did not choose to do that. What she chose to do was say, "where did it breakdown?" And it was the slow fades - it was the not really listening, it was her husband not feeling validated or valued in the marriage - and she owned that part of it. It was heart wrenching to listen to her. And you know she said it so matter-of-factly. You can tell there's healing there. It really made me look at myself.

My husband has in his past, a critical voice, and when I listened to Jill talking about her husband, it made me realize that sometimes I get mad because Barry responds to me as the critical voice and I'm like, I'm not the critical voice. And I'm usually not. But I have to remember that is part of his past and that has become part of his filter. And so I just have to be aware and sensitive to that because if I allow him to perceive me as the critical voice, that could be one of our slow fades.

### **Cheri**

That makes total sense. And that's a lot of self awareness on your part to realize there are times that the things you say or the way you say something kind of triggers where you end up getting somebody else's mail and rather than getting mad at him for reacting that way, it sounds like you're taking responsibility to be aware that this is something that happens in close relationships.

### **Amy**

I had coffee with the newlywed a couple of weeks ago. One of my son's friends actually wanted to have coffee with me! I was tickled to death. And she shared about one of their first newlywed arguments and I couldn't believe how mature she was Cheri I thought, "Good grief it's taken me 25 years to figure all this out. How did you know to do that?" But he really hurt her feelings, she didn't say anything about it when it happened and then she came back to it later when things had defused and she said, "Hey, what was that reaction about?" But before she started to talk to him about it, she looked at him and said, "You know I'm always on your team, right?" And I thought how insightful of this young woman to start a conversation with, "You know, I'm team Barry, right? Always. Forever." And starting the conversation with that common ground of I'm on your side and let's work this out. So amazing coming from a 23-year-old.

### **Cheri**

Wow. You know one of the things that I'm working on...I have such a bad habit of when I'm mad at somebody then I withhold what I know they want because they aren't giving me what I want. And I'm kind of conscious of doing it so it's pretty bratty behavior on my part. And one of the things that I know that Daniel loves is to fix things. But I don't want him fixing me, I don't

want him fixing my life. It's not what I want from him. But its what he brings to the world. It's what he brings to all of his relationships. So one of the things that I've been actively working on is looking for any and every way that he is fixing, improving, doing something beneficial for me and trying to say something about it and thank him specifically for it. And sometimes it's actually something that was broken that's being fixed or like last night he went out and grabbed some groceries so I wouldn't have to do it today and in the past I would've been like, "well I don't want to say anything about this because I didn't ask him to, he really didn't need to, I don't want to feel beholden to him, and he did what he thought I needed but I actually wanted this and why is he always doing what he thinks I need rather than what I actually..." and you know what, I can play all these mind games forever or I can learn to just say thank you because he's bringing himself to the relationship. He is being who he is. And after all of these years of chipping away and trying to get him to be who I think he ought to be I saw a real connection between our conversation with Jill and our conversation with Emily. I had a student who put something up on Facebook this week. Again, he's 23 years old so I guess that's what we need to do is find the 23-year-olds and listen to them. He said, "I cannot imagine how anyone who does not love their own self could hope to love another person." And what I think I'm really struggling with right now and working on is in my attempts to chip away at other people are just an avoidance tactic to keep me from having to work on myself. And so as I work on myself and being who God created me to be and welcoming myself and then – you know when Emily cast a vision for us to welcome other people to be themselves, that conversation was about women but why not apply that to my husband? Why not look at my fix-it husband and say, "There you are! I've been waiting for you!" And accept who he is and to put my efforts not into changing him but into tossing the list of who I think he ought to be. Because in my case it's been almost 30 years and if it was going to work it would've worked by now.

### **Amy**

Great insight. Well I think one of the things that brought me to tears as we talked to Jill was when she talked about how she has come...she used to be irritated by her husband's and her daughter's HSP wiring and now it has flipped and she sees how valuable it is. It really is, and you know I've been harping on Shaunti's book, but one of Shaunti's things is that you have to nix the negativity. And what I realize when I was doing the challenge was if I wasn't going to let it go out of my mouth then I had to stop it in my brain. So the minute I would start down that negative road of picking Barry apart or picking whoever, fill in the blank, apart in my head I would stop it. And after 30 days of doing that I have to say I feel like that habit has been broken, which is amazing because I'm almost 50 and that's been a habit in my mind- figuring out what's right, what's wrong, and wanting people to fit into that mold. It's amazing.

### **Cheri**

So you're feeling like the mental habits is broken, not just a verbal?

### **Amy**

Yes!

**Cheri**

Wow!

**Amy**

Well and I catch myself quicker. I'm not saying I never have a negative thought but I catch it quicker now and I just shut it down and just try to focus on something positive about that person. And it's amazing when you start doing that – I did it as part of a challenge and because I was leading a group so I had to set the example, but it's amazing when you start doing that your perspective of that person just changes almost overnight because usually there are really good things about her husbands, about our friends, about our children. Once Jill saw her husband's heightened perception in their household and the emotions of the people there as a gift, it just totally turned things around for her. That was powerful.

**Cheri**

I don't know what it is about the marriage relationship for me but it's been the hardest one for me to quit trying to change people – to quit trying to change him. I think I eventually give up sooner in my other relationships, but this is the one where I keep saying I'm going to stop and then I stop from a certain angle and then I come at it from a different side.

**Amy**

It's really important for all of us to remember that we are the sum of everything that has happened to us in our past. And yet we don't want to be completely defined by those things but I think recognizing what those shaping factors are in our past is the first step to overcoming being defined by it.

**Cheri**

You had pulled a great scripture that you had felt tied in to this whole episode. Share that with us.

**Amy**

Well I kind of leaned towards the listening part of it, but the Scripture is Proverbs 1:5 and it says, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance." I thought that was really powerful for our marriages because this marriage thing is a lifetime of learning someone and getting to know them. It's amazing to me to be married for 26 years and to still be learning things about my husband, but I realize that will be true for the rest of our lives. So let the wise *listen* and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance. And guidance comes in all kinds of forms, we've had counselors in our lives, we've had friends, I have really faithful friends who know me and also know Barry, who will tell me when I'm wrong, which stinks you know because they're supposed to be on my side but they're not always. And those are the faithful kind of people I want to get guidance from.

**Cheri**

Absolutely. You have a great insight on the grit aspect of all of this. Share with our listeners.

**Amy**

I had written that it might literally make me grit my teeth not to speak and to give up the floor waiting for a time to respond at all. But that takes grit on my part and it has to be intentional. I like to talk.

**Cheri**

Really? You know, I learn something new about you every— just kidding!

**Amy**

Shocking, I know!

**Cheri**

And then I think the grace aspect needs to go both ways. I need to have grace for my husband, certainly, but I'm also discovering how much grace I need to have for myself because I feel like after all these years I should have arrived, I should've figured this out, I should be the perfect wife by now and I shouldn't have to work at it. It should just come easy and naturally. If I was a truly good wife, I would just naturally have all of these generous feelings, I would naturally be curious, it would just automatically, the enthusiasm would flow from me and, boy, I am listening to myself and wow how hard I'm being on myself. So having the grace to say that today is a new day and that I'm going to confess the struggles I'm having to God, I'm going to invite him to help me, and I can lower the unrealistic expectations I'm placing on both of us. I'm so hyper aware of the unrealistic expectations I placed on Daniel, maybe I need to become just as aware of the unrealistic expectations I place on myself. That this *should* be easier than this *should* come more naturally and that this is just another one of the areas that I need to surrender to God and realize it's something I can only do by His power. It's not something that comes naturally to *any* of us.

**Amy**

Beautiful!

**Cheri**

So you came up with a great bad rule for this episode, which I don't like. I'm just going to go on the record right now.

**Amy**

The bad rule is my way is the best way.

**Cheri**

And why is that a bad rule, Amy?

**Amy**

Yes indeed.

**Cheri**



It just feels so true. It feels so true. But it's not. And you know in marriage sometimes it ends up being our way is the best way and sometimes our way is his way, and sometimes our way is my way. But when I focus so much on my way, that's when I get in trouble. So what's the truth that we can focus on instead?

**Amy**

What we learned from Jill really is honoring my husband's differences helps me to grow and helps him to thrive.

Oh goodness, that's a good truth and I love what you just said about *our way*. You know that idea that my 23-year-old friend expressed, I actually have heard repeated several times in the past few years, "we are a team." It shouldn't be *my way* or *your way* it should be *our way*. That was beautiful, Cheri. Great statement! And when we honor our husbands they're more likely to honor us. That doesn't happen in every circumstance, but it's more likely to happen and then it's a team. It's a team.

**Cheri:**

Head over to [GritNGraceGirls.com/episode44](http://GritNGraceGirls.com/episode44)

**Amy:**

You'll find this week's Digging Deeper Download, Bible verse art, and transcript.

**Cheri:**

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #44 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

**Amy:**

Join us next week, when we'll be talking with Denise Hughes, author of the Word Writer inductive Bible study 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

**Amy 'n' Cheri:**

BREAK IT!