

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

Episode #45: Developing a Friend Network—  
Healthy Friendships for All Seasons of Life  
*with Mary Snyder*

**Amy**

Hey, Cheri? I saw a meme about a true friend the other day that said: “I can’t be your friend if you can’t handle my weirdness, sarcasm, stupid jokes, and my tendency to laugh at almost everything.” I thought was so funny — you know that last one is definitely me! Will you still be my friend?

**Cheri**

Of course! I LOVE your laugh!!!

**Amy**

I hope so. My laughing at almost everything is a good to have in a co-host you know!

**Cheri**

Your laugh is infectious in the best possible way.

And one of our listeners Emailed us about her longing for a friend to laugh with. She said,

*I wish there were friends who really wanted me, to spend time with, to feel valued. And who wanted the love, joy, and friendship I have to give back! Covenant type friends sent from God.*

**Amy**

Oh, me too! That kind of friend waters my soul.

**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**

Our guest today is Mary Snyder, author of *Authentic Girlfriends: Real Women Finding Real Faith*. Mary describes her self as slightly frazzled, but seriously blessed. She is a speaker relations director for Compassion International, the wife of one, mom of two, and lives in North Central Alabama.

**Cheri**

"Lord, Send Me Girlfriends." So *clearly* you understand our listeners who are looking for friends. Why are girlfriends so important?

**Mary**

I think for me, girlfriends kind of round out my life. I have a husband, I have children. But there's something about that 1 on 1 — or 1 on many, because you know I have a few — that those female relationships that kind of get the things that the guys don't get or your children don't want to get.

You know, she laughs when hairs start growing out of your chin...you know? That's not what you want to talk to your man about, but that's something your girlfriends totally get. And beyond that it's also ... in those hard seasons when you have littles that are pulling at you and men that while they love us they just don't quite understand why *if one more person touches me, I'm taking them out today*.

**Amy**

Oh yes.

**Mary**

They totally get that. And they can commiserate and laugh with you. And it just makes it a little bit easier to walk that path, whatever the path is that you're currently in.

**Amy**

Well there are so many roadblocks to friendship, it seems like in our culture right now, and especially for perfectionists. So why do you think perfectionists might have a hard time developing close friendships?

**Mary**

Well I think, not that I am one because Lord, I gave that up years ago. But perfectionists...I think they're looking for **the perfect opportunity**.

Everything's got to be perfect; everything's got to be smooth. *My kids have to be settled...you know my man has to be settled before I can ever take a moment for myself.*

Well sweetheart, if you're waiting for that...you're gonna be alone as far as girlfriends go. You have to kind of set that aside and make it a priority.

So to all the perfectionists out there: understand that you are not perfect, nor will you ever be, much like me, and there are women out there who are just like you struggling in that perfection and they would love to link arms with somebody and walk through this season in this life together.

**Amy**

So what kinds of practical tips would you have? I know for me in my perfectionism, one of the ways that it manifested is that I kind of...I had a hard time being authentic because I was trying to be perfect. So what kind of tips do you have for us to get over that and to really break through and have deep, close relationships?

**Mary**

Well, while I'm not a perfectionist, I totally get what you're saying Amy because I was the girl who wanted to **look** like she had it all together.

**Amy**

Yes.

**Mary**

I wore all the appropriate clothes; I said the appropriate church language; I knew the right things to say and how to say them.

All the time I was melting and dying inside because I truly needed relationships beyond those that were in my home.

**Amy**

Yes.

**Mary**

I'll tell you what the Lord showed me, it's that she doesn't have to look like me. And when I say look like me, I don't mean physically look like me: I mean she doesn't have to be in my life space. She...I have girlfriends that the absolute only thing we have in common is Jesus.

**Amy**

Mmm. I love that.

**Mary**

She loved bluegrass; I tolerate bluegrass. She's a blue jeans, tennis shoes, no make-up, Burt's Bees on her lips, way to go. I'm a little bit more high maintenance. You know I have my nails done, my lashes done, my hair done. So we have nothing in common. But we absolutely have the best time together, and we both love Jesus.

And I think sometimes we're waiting for the right person or we've identified the right person...and we miss the one the Lord is putting directly in front of you so...my prayer as I was building a girlfriend network...and also that waxes and wanes as we move through life. But my prayer is **"Lord let me see the one who I've got standing in front of me, not the one I want to be friends with."**

**Amy**

That is incredibly wise.

**Cheri**

Now I was always a BFF. We didn't have that expression when I was younger but I was a best friends kind of gal, so I would latch onto someone and not let them go until they were pretty much drained dry. And so you just used a phrase that I'm intrigued by: ***girlfriend network***.

What do you mean by that?

**Mary**

Because there are girls that I love to go eat Mexican food with; then there's girls that totally get me talking about my nail issues. Then there are girls that are Bible teachers and we get together and we really dig into that. There's a network.

And I'm a BFF girl too. But I have a couple of really, really close friends — they have heard some stuff. And then I have girlfriends that I do different things with.

So I think there's a benefit in the network because, Cheri, like you, I would hold on until the bitter end. And I will tell you until the Lord pried literally my hands off of that relationship... but for a season I knew *Lord this is unhealthy. I know its unhealthy- but I'm committed to this relationship.*

Sometimes I wish we as women would commit to our spouses than we do to our girlfriends. You know I've seen some women that were way overcommitted and that's not healthy. So definitely have a network. And that network will bless and benefit you through the differences of life. You maybe it's a friend who has kids the same age or a girlfriend that works in the same place as you do.

### **Cheri**

It sounds like the network allows you to spread your needs over a wider number of people, rather than to take a whole bunch of neediness—which is why I burned through BFFs ... I would place all of my unmet needs on this one person and for a period of time it would be great, and then of course it would burn out. What I'm hearing from you is less expectations on any one person.

### **Mary**

Absolutely. Absolutely. It allows you—and I love that you say “spread your neediness” because I'm a mess of a neediness—we *all* are, we have to know that. When just one person is all you've got—and I've been the one person that was receiving, and I've been the one person who was pouring out. I've been on both sides of that. So that network does truly...and I've never really thought about it like that, Cheri...but it spreads my neediness.

### **Amy**

And you used a word that has caused a lot of angst in my life. You said something about “seasons of friendship.” And in my head there's this perfect way that you do friendship, and it's from your childhood until you die. And yet what I've been learning about is seasons. But tell us a little bit about your perspective on that.

### **Mary**

Well that comes from 50 years of living girlfriends out. And I'm the same way. I was so envious of people that met when they were in kindergarten and they had their children together. That is just not my story. But it's some people's story. My story is much more

seasonal. Now I have girlfriends I've known since high school; we're not still running around together but we connect (thank you Facebook).

**Cheri**

Exactly.

**Amy**

Oh yeah.

**Mary**

Otherwise we would not- we would send Christmas cards. But seasons of friendship... there's a group of women that I did life with for about 10 years. We were in Bible study together, raising our kids together...different variations of that.

But as the kids grew up and spread, it kind of was like, we kind of, you know, dissipated. BUT it doesn't mean we're not still friends; it just means we're not in active season of friendship.

There are some women I'm close to because I'm in church with them. There are some people I'm very close to because I work with them and they're in my network of what I do. But that waxes and wanes, and I think we have to give ourselves permission to be okay with that.

**Amy**

Yes. Well that's what I was going to ask you is how do you get over- if you're the one who feels disappointed by that or feels even a little bitter because the season is over, how do you get over that? You kind of just said, but do you have anything to add to that?

**Mary**

Well I've been there. I've been in that bitter place where I'm just like, "Well she broke up with me..." But that's when I really, truly have to step back and say, "Okay Lord, I know when you remove something it's because something else is coming."

And I'm not saying I haven't cried a few tears over it and not been upset, but I'm very much —and I'm not confrontational, but I will confront a situation—and I'll just pick up a phone and say, "Darling, I love you. Is there something I did to hurt you, or are we just in a new season?"

**Amy**

Mmm. That's really good.

**Mary:**

It could be, "I'm busy at work...I've got this..." and maybe it's just that "you're too needy and I don't want to deal with you." But she didn't say that so...

But you know we have to own our own mess sometimes. We have to own our mess. And there's nothing wrong with new friendships because with that comes new experience.

**Cheri**

Yeah. One of the things I'm thinking because this podcast is for reforming perfectionists and people-pleasers, and I'm thinking that in that season shift can be when it's really dangerous to start people-pleasing. And when you feel a friend being distant, to start calling more often and these days we can text them more often.

Any tips for when you realize a friendship has actually run a natural course, and nobody did anything wrong, but its going to move from active status to maybe Facebook status?

**Mary**

I think that for me—and I've walked that on both sides of that coin—just to know that the more you text somebody the more you reach out, it almost becomes the needy girl. And I've been the needy girl, so I totally get that. And I am a people-pleaser from way back; I want everybody to love me, and then once you love me I'll kick you to the curb but as long as you love me, you know?!

**Amy**

Well you're so loveable Mary! Our audience already knows this.

**Mary**

If you love me too much you're out of here! BUT I've learned that I have to pull back. I have to say, "You know what, it is a natural course." Free myself up.

Am I going to miss it? Definitely. I've had relationships that we were so close, we did everything together, and then all of a sudden it's over. Now *that* is painful, and I'm not even going to tell you that's not going to hurt. Because it is.

How do you walk through that? You grieve the relationship. Give yourself permission to grieve the relationship.

And another thing that I think every woman needs to hear is that sometimes there are unhealthy relationships that you need to separate yourself from, but you need to grieve the relationship you *thought* it was.

**Cheri**

Oh, that's so good. And of course for the perfectionist, we have to grieve the ideal perfect relationship that Amy was talking about in our head.

**Mary**

Because oftentimes that ideal perfection *is* in our heads. We set people on pedestals, and then when they fall off we have to grieve. I made a comment the other day...someone asked me about a very sticky relationship and they said, "Well do you miss her?" and I said, "I miss the friendship I thought I had."

**Cheri**

Oh, that's so good.

**Mary**

And I think we have to be wise and keep our eyes open. But yeah, grieve the relationship, know that it hurts, and be honest with the other person and say, "I miss hanging out with you. I know our season is ending, or I know we're busy, or we're moving in different directions, but I miss hanging out with you."

**Amy**

That's a sweet way to deal with that.

**Cheri**

Again from the perfectionist standpoint, perfectionists usually don't know how to grieve well. If there's pain involved, that means we did something wrong so we want to avoid it. So I really appreciate you acknowledging that friendships do come to an end, that's a normal thing, at least on this planet, and that there is grief involved in it. And it's important to honor that. We don't need to wallow in it, but to pretend it doesn't exist means we're missing an important part of the friendship cycle.



**Amy**

One question I have: its interesting that here I am, I'm 49 and I realized that until I was about 40, I didn't evaluate my friendships going in. I just kind of...whoever was in front of me, that's who I spent time with and I made some...I probably invested a lot of time and energy into some friendships that I shouldn't have. So how do you evaluate whether it's time to kind of separate a little bit or even, in going in, what's worth investing and what's not?

**Mary**

I think you have to take stock. And I think, Amy, much like you I was moving into my 40s when this started becoming a realization in my life, before I really realized "okay this is an investment. Its an emotional investment."

And I think I pull back and I look at something. First of all: Do we have the same values? We don't have to like the same things but we have to have similar value sets. Now we can have different political leanings, we can even have different ... she may not be biblically sound; she may not be a Christian, but I can still be friends with her.

When I say values I mean values of life, integrity; is she robbing banks for a living? Because I'm probably not going to run with her. But when I say values, I mean somebody who I respect. Do I respect the way they do life? I may not agree with it, it may not be my cup of tea, but do I resect the way that they handle themselves. So that's the first thing.

The second thing is I have to watch and see if they're an emotional vampire. If you become her BFF literally upon meeting, and she is pouring out her life story to me before we've even got through what our middle names are. She doesn't even know the name of my dog or my kids, and I know her entire life story? **Big pause.**

I used to think that was because people loved me so much. I thought, "Oh well she just loves me a whole bunch because she's just telling me everything." No no no no no. She's doing that because she's going to...and I hate to say that, but that's a manipulation.

Be cautious. And also just watching. I like to make it really simple. Get to know them from kind of like, "Hey lets grab lunch together or let's do a coffee." You know a couple of quick phone calls we do something together here and there, and then kind of assess okay — and this sounds awful but, "Lord, is she worth the investment of time?"

**Amy**

I would have said 10 years ago, "That is awful." I don't say that anymore.

**Mary**

You have X number of hours in your day and in your life that you are going to spend with your people, literally your people. Your family, your spouse, your immediate family, and then you have a certain amount of time and energy you're going to expend on relationships. So how you do that? I think as we get older and more mature, we realize how valuable those are, and how precious they are. And we're much more cautious about making sure that this is someone that I want pouring into *me*.

**Cheri**

Good point.

**Mary**

Who do I want pouring into me? I want to rub up against this persona and do life with her.

**Cheri**

I love it. Now in your book, ***God Grace and Girlfriends: Adventures in Faith and Friendship***, you talk about possible trips, events, and adventures for you and your girlfriends to explore, which totally appeals to me because I'm not one of those who sits around and does nothing. I don't understand "*doing nothing*"; I'm much more of an action kind of person. So tells us what you mean by "trips, events, and adventures" because I don't really think of those and friendship going together, but I'm willing to learn.

**Mary**

Well one of my favorite adventures I've ever done with a girlfriend (and we've done tons together) but one of my favorites was we did twelve days on Route 66. Everybody can do that. And we still look back at that and go, "How in the world did we carve out 2 weeks to do this?" And I say that to say...yeah that's a tough one. But there are adventures that happen right in your very city. I have a group of girlfriends, and we don't do it as much as we did before, but we would literally just jump in the car and find something local like—and there's some funky stuff in your town, because everybody's got it.

**Cheri**

I live near Santa Cruz. There's plenty of funk.

**Mary**

Yeah they've got all kind of strange up in there. But we have a huntin' dog cemetery...I mean, you know its hilarious. We would go and do stuff like that ... there's a cave that was supposed to be a speakeasy back in the 20s. We've went and looked at that and just kind of climbed around. We go to antique shops just to find weird stuff.

You know just anything that is...instead of just sitting across the table and eating because first of all that makes me fat, and second of all, there's something so much more fun about linking arms and going and doing.

We've literally gone and looked at ghost signs. If you know what a ghost sign is, its literally a sign that was painted on a brick building back in the 20s and 30s like Coca Cola...and a lot of towns will have ghost signs in their allies. And we'll go and just look at them. And just have fun and try to, "I wonder what this was, I wonder what this looked like." Literally just doing life together and finding fun adventures.

Events: we've gone to Bible studies and conferences and all kind of things like that. Adventures: like I said can be from very small, very much a day trip, especially for the very young moms who are raising up their littles. There are state parks; hiking trails...I'm more of an indoorsy kind of girl. You know there's an outdoorsy kind, I'm an indoorsey. But I just found a glamping site that is indoors, so my life is now complete. Complete with campers INSIDE...

**Cheri**

Oh I love it. I was about to ask what it is and I get it now.

**Amy**

Fantastic!

**Mary**

It's in Warrington Texas, right where they have the big antique show every year or the yard sale or whatever they call that thing. But I'm trying to find a bunch of friends because I want us to rent the entire thing. Because I feel like we would just have a party every night around our pseudo campfire ... our faux campfire inside.

**Cheri**

I love it! You know what I love here is the intentionality, Mary. And a word I'm going to throw in here that sounds like it fits is *celebration*. It sounds like you are finding intentional ways to have fun, to turn anything into an event, rather than "Oh whatchya

wanna do?” “I don’t know; what do you wanna do?” and just having a very mediocre, average...there’s a focal point to it.

And it also sounds like you could easily pull a group together around the event, and so it could be a really mixed group of people who were just happened to be interested in this one thing. And so nobody has to bond and become BFFS, the bond is you did this thing together.

**Mary**

Absolutely. We started going to paint ... we don’t sip wine because we’re southern Baptists but we do paint and sip water or soda or sweet tea, whatever you want to sip. (I mean if you want to sip wine I’m good with it. No joke. But I’m just putting that out there as a pre-cursor because somebody may hear this who I go to church with and they may think that’s inappropriate- no we don’t sip wine- well not with a church group anyway. Not telling you about the other groups.)

But we go to that, and it’s just the goofiest time because none of us can ... well there’s a couple of them that are really good and then there’s the rest of us.

And I- a couple of my girlfriends think I’m nuts, but I want to put together a bus trip on Route 66 where I take twelve to sixty of my closest friends and we just do Route 66 on a bus.

**Amy**

Well Cheri and I might want to be on that trip! Lets us know okay!

**Cheri**

Absolutely. Sign us up!

**Mary**

Wouldn’t that be fun?

**Amy**

Oh my word!

You know what this makes me think of? I’m so inspired! It makes me think of how we intentionally date our husbands and have date nights. I am going to start this with my friends. We’ll rotate and say it’s your month girlfriend; I planned something great last night so it’s on.

**Mary**

No pressure. No pressure.

There is intentionality with it. For me it came from having children and being a stay at home mom. Because that was the hardest job I ever did, absolutely the hardest job. And I knew I had to do something or else I was going to go bat-crap crazy. We started really putting things together.

**Amy**

Well, the three of us are "women of a certain age". We think it is a very fine age. But we have this really sweet, young intern. She's newly married, just out of college, in fact, she's one of my son's friends from college and now she's my friend too, which is the coolest.

But she has been so surprised at how difficult it has been to make friends now that she's out of college. And I remember college days, that was so much fun, you had so much time on your hands. So what advice would you give to young women coming out of college: how do you transition and make friends in that new phase of life?

**Mary**

I've walked this with my daughter. She married young and she was just out of college, and because everything shifts when you marry. You know, no body wants to ask you to go to the club anymore. Not that you should go to the club anyway, but nobody's asking you now.

I think you have to get intentional about it. You have to find women in your work place that are in your same life space. Maybe married. They don't have to be your age. You know, look at women who are older, and within your church group.

I highly recommend getting involved in a young marrieds class, small group. If you don't have one in your church then look for one in your community, because I guarantee there's one around. That's something else to do.

And be intentional. Literally picking up the phone or texting however you want to roll- "Hey! I would love to get together and have coffee. Can we grab coffee together?" Because nobody's going to come up to you and knock on your door and invite you to a party. That stopped when you left college.

**Amy**

Mhm.

**Mary**

You're not going to have those built-in friendships so for the first time in your life, you have to assess who you want to be friends with. So wow what a blessing that is. You get to pick and choose now. You get to make the selections.

Reconnect with old high school friends. Two of my best friends live away from me. And we stay connected through Skype; we visit 2 or 3 times a year, so it doesn't have to be somebody right in your space, young people. You definitely can stay in touch through Skype. Now you definitely need to have people that are right there in your space, because you can't spend your entire life via Skype.

Be intentional. Look for those relationships. And you know what? You have the opportunity. This is your chance to pick and choose who you want in your life and who you want to be doing life with.

**Cheri**

Head over to [GritNGraceGirls.com/episode45](http://GritNGraceGirls.com/episode45) to enter this week's drawing for a copy of Mary's book, *Authentic Girlfriends: Real Women Finding Real Faith*.

**Amy**

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

**Cheri**

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #45 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

**Amy**

Join us next week, for as we share what we learned from our conversation with Mary!

**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!