

**Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules**  
***Episode 57: I Quit — How to Stop the Exhausting Pursuit***  
***of Perfection***

Interview with Mary DeMuth

**Cheri**

So, Amy, I saw this quote on Facebook.

**Amy**

Half the conversations in our house start that way.

**Cheri**

I'm constantly grabbing funny things from Facebook, and I literally drag and drop them onto the text message thing to Annemarie so that we can both die laughing together. But this one actually surprised me. I was busy laughing at all these other funny things on Facebook and suddenly I was in tear because I read this thing and it said, "You will never hear God say you're more trouble than you're worth."

**Amy**

Oh, my goodness, that one pierces right to your heart. Doesn't it?

**Cheri**

I didn't even know until I was reaching for Kleenex because of a Facebook quote, of all things, I didn't really know how afraid I am of being more trouble than I'm worth.

**Amy**

Oh! I think we all wonder if He does feel that way about us sometimes. And that fear reaches into the relationships with those around us, too.

Here's what one of our listeners said, "I struggle the most with deep insecurity and fear that if I don't keep the peace constantly in the relationships closest to me that they will emotionally abandon me at the first moment I make a mistake with them.

Whew! I can't wait to talk ourselves off the ledge on this one.

**Cheri**

[Music Intro] Well, this is Cheri Gregory—

Episode 57: I Quit — How to Stop the Exhausting Pursuit of Perfection

**Amy**

And I'm Amy Carroll.

**Cheri**

—and you're listening to Grit 'N' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

**Amy**

Today we're talking with Mary DeMuth, author of *Worth Living: How God's Wild Love for You Makes You Worthy*. Mary DeMuth is an international speaker and podcaster and the author of over 30 books. She loves to help people restory their lives. She lives in Texas with her husband of twenty-five years and is the mom to three adult children.

**Cheri**

So if you sometimes wonder about being more trouble than you're worth, Mary is here to help us restory our hearts.

**Amy**

So, Mary, I love your gorgeous website. In the title of it is Restory the old is gone the new awaits. There's so much hope in that. Tell us what you mean by Restory.

**Mary**

Well, that was kind of a long time in coming. I've kind of worked through different brandings throughout my career and just kind of started off with a funny little phrase called Relevant Pros, which seems really stuck up. But then it was Turning Trials into Triumph and I didn't like that either, because I didn't like the word triumph. It sounded kind of triumphalism and trials didn't quite get it. And then after that it was Live Uncaged, which worked for me for a really long time. But as I was living under those words I realized there was more to being set free than just being let out of a cage. There was a *so what* to the story so that's when Restory came to mind as I was just praying and asking and seeking and asking mentors what to do next. And so, the idea of Restory is that you are changed by the Lord. You are given a new story. He has restoried you and restored you so that you can be an agent of restoration in the world. So, there's this *so what* element to your story. You might be suffering today, you might be frustrated, you might be at the end of your rope but there is a *so what* to your story. And someday, it might be just some little tiny thing or it might be some big thing but in the future God is going to use that trauma and that trial for His glory to advance His Kingdom.

**Amy**

That's so beautiful.

**Cheri**

What I love is the sense of growth that what you just described illustrates because for so many of our listeners — and Amy and I talked about this so much, we're all or nothing. We think we've arrived or we're going nowhere. So I love the idea that we grow and we change and what was

completely working for you for a season, then you outgrew it and God took you to another place. I think that's so important.

Well, I was rereading your book, *Worth Living*, in preparation for our time together here and you share a particularly touching story about a piano teacher who taught you something important about making mistakes. Can you just, kind of, share that little scene with our listeners?

**Mary**

Yeah, so I am a very bad piano player. In fact, we just got rid of our piano probably because of that.

<Laughter>

But I've always loved it. And I would listen to it forever. I love piano music. And when I was in college I never had the opportunity to take piano, which explains why I'm not good, and so I had this opportunity in college to take piano class from this old Jewish man. And he was amazing. And what I learned through that situation was that I was always really tense at the keyboard, because I was trying so hard to make everything just perfectly and never make a mistake. And he would come alongside me and sit next to me and pat me on the back and just tell me to calm down.

But finally, I perfected a very easy piece, and I perfected it. And he said that I had kind of perfected the life out of it because it was so perfect. And he reminded me that there's more to life than doing everything exactly right. And I am kind of revisiting that in my life these days. The Lord is just bringing this back to me in my mind of how even yesterday, I was at the AT&T store and things didn't go well, and I was crabby and I am still sad about how I reacted. I'm just so human and very sad.

<Laughter>

**Cheri**

Hang on a second. You're sad about being human, aren't you?

<Laughter>

**Mary**

Why can't I be perfect? But that's the phraseology that is running through my head. And ultimately that gets out the *Worth* book of why I wrote that book because I believe wrongly, and still I think in my praxis or my every day living, believe that my worth is tied to my performance and my perfection. And so, when I fall short of that goal, I freeze up or I do what I did with the piano teacher and I tried over and over and over and over and exhaust myself until it's perfect and then I've exhausted the life out of it.

**Amy**

So you sort of mentioned this idea of performing for love, and you talk about that in *Worth Living*, so what did performing for love look like beyond the piano bench for you in your real life?

**Mary**

I think the weird part about all of that is growing up in the home that I did, I don't know why I was a performer because it didn't work for me. I was on a treadmill that went nowhere and even when I was a valedictorian of my high school, it didn't merit what I was looking for. And the only thing that actually would merit what I was looking for was perfecting the way I looked. So I think one of the more performance things that worked as a woman was working on how I appeared and that has chased me for the rest of my life.

I still struggle with it today, of well, if I can't get attention by performing, well then, I can at least get attention other ways. We just have to be so careful about where we find our worth because if we find it in something that we do, ultimately people can ignore what we do, be jealous of what we do, or just be so self-occupied, like everybody, that they don't even really notice or care. I might freak out – this is something I thought about recently – I might freak out as I walk out of the house and go running, and I look down and my legs look like the Sasquatch, because I haven't shaved and, I'm like really keyed up about it thinking the whole world is noticing my long hair on my legs and not one soul will notice that because they're self absorbed, just like me. So, girls, the point of this whole podcast is, go outside with your long hairy legs and it will be fine. Nobody cares!

<Laughter>

**Amy**

Man, I love permission to do that!

**Mary**

You have permission not even just in no shave November; you can do it any month of the year!

But, anyway, at the point of all of that is that all of those things are the treadmill that ends nowhere. They are exhausting to your soul and ultimately will not satisfy you because the only satisfaction comes from, "*Well done my good and faithful servant.*" It only comes from the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ and the grace and the power of the cross and what he did on your behalf. That cannot be taken away from you. If your security is based on something that can be taken away from you: which could be health, it could be looks, it could be performance, it could be your brain; you know, whatever, then you're constantly going to be living on a false edge of security.

**Amy**

That's so good! Well, one of the things that we've discussed with some of our other guests on the podcast is this line between wanting to do well, which is a good thing, and perfectionism. So how do you know when you've crossed the line?

**Mary**

Just look at the time of day. And it's that time, I've probably crossed the line!

<Laughter>

**Amy**

We might resemble that remark.

**Cheri**

Hang on. Do you mean 8 a.m. by any chance?

<Laughter>

**Mary**

This moment! I kind of get this thing in my spirit of just this, like, anxious-ey, running-ey feeling in my heart of un-peace. I realized that I'm doing it again. I realize that I'm not settled. So this last weekend I was working in the yard and I love to do that. But my problem is I've got this addiction to finishing 7,000 tasks at once.

So I finished the whole vegetable garden. I had weeded the entire thing, which was not an easy thing. And then I look over to another bed and I'm, "Oh, I need to go do that bed, too." And then I looked over at another one and I needed to do that one and it was this tyranny of I can't just be happy with one thing done. And that's when I know that things are wonky. And during that time when I was weeding that the Lord just kind of kept affirming me, and I just sensed him saying, "I love you, I love you, and I am for you. You do not need to do this. You can stop at this task. You do not need to look around, in motion constantly, because of the tasks that you see." And that was very helpful to me.

**Cheri**

In your book you suggest something other than a to do list. Tell us about the to love list.

**Mary**

Well, as a task person, as someone who loves checking things off and it gives me some sort of crazy high. So my tendency has been to neglect the relationships in my life for the sake of getting a task done. So, if instead, I should shift my focus to loving others and looking at the things that are more worthy to accomplish in the long run and in eternity, is those people I love. And so to have a to love list helps me to reorient my heart and keep it in the right place.

**Amy**

Well, we are all about grit here, and we're doing a whole series on grit. How do you develop the grit to stop performing?

**Mary**

You get sick, and you're stuck in bed so you can't.

<Laughter>

Can I just be honest?

**Amy**

God will do it if we don't do it! Yes.

**Mary**

Oh, it's happened me so many times, and I don't know how many times he's going to have to do that to me before I get it. But one of the things that has really helped me has been reading the book *The Rest of God* by Mark Buchanan every year. And it is about Sabbath rest, and interestingly enough, if you think of the title *The Rest of God*, you think of it in terms of the Sabbath of God or whatever, but actually, the premise of the book is when you have rest and when you have Sabbath, you get the rest of God or the remaining part of God that you're missing when you're not resting. And so that's what the rest of God means. That book has really helped me to realize that it's not about doing 7,000 things. It's about spending time alone. It's about honoring who you are and how God made you, and, as I'm kind of a hybrid of an extroverted introvert or an introverted extrovert. I'm kind of both of those things, so I need both and in full supply. So if I'm too much with people then I need to get alone, and if I'm too much alone then I need to get with people. Knowing those things and being okay with them and being able to look at yourself in the mirror and say this is how I was made and if I don't eat right, or if I don't exercise, or if I don't do this, I'm not going to be at my optimal. So, I'm going to do a little self-care, not because I'm selfish, but because I want to be optimal to have that to love list and to have the energy I need for my children, grandchildren, the significant relationships, the mentoring that I'm doing in my life.

**Amy**

Fantastic!

**Cheri**

So in your chapter on insecurity this is a direct quote you say, "Security depends on attachment." That really jumped out at me, because I've been doing a lot of reading about adult attachment theory lately and I won't go into all the details but some of us tend to be more of the anxious attachment and some tend to be more of the avoidant attachment, and it's been explaining a lot of things in my life. So, the goal, of course, is secure attachment, which is why I'm doing all the research. I'd really like to know what that looks like.

But I suspect that it has something to do with what you talk about in the book, which is attaching to Jesus. First of all, why is that so important? With all of the people that we try to attach ourselves to, I'm especially thinking about the people pleasers or the highly sensitive people in our audience; why is it so important that that be our primary attachment? And then what does that look like in practical terms to attach to Jesus?

**Mary**

Yeah, seems kind of vague, doesn't it? I think for me, in looking at him, and in thinking about the fact that he is the rock, he is the foundation, and he is the unchanging one that that makes sense that we would attach to him because he is a secure attachment. And even he, when he was walking on the earth, he knew what was in man and didn't trust anyone. Not that we shouldn't trust but He knew that He shouldn't entrust himself to man. He ultimately entrusted himself to his faithful creator. And so, we need to follow that example that ultimately our deepest trust will go and our deepest attachment should go to the Lord. How that looks in real life, I think it's muddy and it's not easy to explain, but for me, it goes back to a book I read 1 million years ago by an Argentinian pastor named Juan Carlos Ortiz. The book was called *Disciple* and it changed my life back in the '80s, way back then. And he talked about walking in the Spirit. And he said walking in the Spirit is being continually conscious of the Holy Spirit within you. And to me that's kind of this kind of conversant relationship with God throughout the day where you are connected to him and you can be in AT&T store and go, "*Oh Lord, I'm really blowing it right now, why am I being mean to this person,*" and all of that. And he comes alongside and loves me anyway, and we have this connection. And that's attachment; it looks like a continual conversation.

**Cheri**

First of all, the '80s was not that long ago. Let's just be really clear on that.

<Laughter>

**Amy**

Oh, Cheri!

**Cheri**

Denial is a beautiful place. Second of all, I love that when we ask you questions the first thing that comes to mind is a book you've read. This is fabulous!

**Mary**

I must be an author.

**Amy**

Okay, so I want to delve into this, and I told Cheri ahead of time this was one of the reasons I was really excited to talk to you, is I had a really negative experience when I was in college with spiritual abuse. I knew it was bad, but I think I didn't understand what it was until I read your article years ago about 10 ways to spot spiritual abuse. I feel like perfectionists and people

pleasers get caught up in spiritual abuse very often because there's something attractive about, I was about say a strong leader, but it's actually an overbearing leader. There's something attractive to a perfectionist and people pleaser about that kind of leader because they tell us exactly how to do it, but then it runs off the tracks pretty fast. So talk to us about spiritual abuse and how perfectionists and people pleasers might be particularly vulnerable.

### **Mary**

I wrote it actually not for myself although I have experienced spiritual abuse but I kept running into friends who were having horrendous experiences in spiritual abuse. If you're a people pleaser or perfectionist what you want and what you I looking for is Nirvana and some sort of ideal world. But when you end up at a church where the pastor says something like, and I have been to church like this, where basically he says, "We have the corner on the market on Jesus, no one else is really following him the way we are." There's this exclusivity that happens and you think, well, I just want to love Jesus, and I want to be on the cutting edge of what it means to follow Christ and so you align yourself with this ministry and you kind of give yourself over in a bad way, so entrust yourself in a bad way, to someone who is maybe at the helm, who is an egomaniac, who just wants to build his own or her own kingdom. So I think that's why we're susceptible.

These kinds of ministries and churches, and it has not just been in churches, but in ministries. I've been in ministries where it's been this way before, where there is a demanding respect instead of earning respect. There's a demanding of it, and there's a demanding of proof of allegiance and a culture of fear and shame where ultimately you start off in that group, and you're like, oh yeah, we're just doing it and we're just kicking it for Jesus. And then, suddenly, there's 25 rules and you're not making them, and you're shunned for not doing them or you are praised for doing it. It can be a big, huge hairdo of a mess. And ultimately spiritual abuse will mess with; will mar the body of Christ. And that is why – because I love the body of Christ – that is why I wrote that post.

### **Amy**

So how do we get out of it?

### **Mary**

Well, obviously, you know, the Sunday school answer is Jesus, but I think part of it is to entrust yourself to a wide variety of relationships in your life so that you can go outside of that situation and ask them, hey, is this normal? I was in a relationship that broke up last year that, oh, even today, I was thinking, man, that was abusive. She was really doing some terrible things. And I was just following behind her as a friend, and I had to have friends outside of her, and I knew something niggling at me was wrong so I went to my exterior friends of that relationship and said is this normal? Sometimes my friend-picker is bad, and I tend to gravitate towards narcissists, can you tell me if this is happening again? "Yes, Mary, it's happening again," and we had this break up and it was terrible. But now I'm free, and I'm so happy. So I do think that finding someone outside the situation to give you a proper perspective is really, really helpful. And then just to be sensitive to the Lord, and what he's telling you. But sometimes in

the midst of that situation you can't see the forest through the trees, so you have to be willing to listen to people who are naysayers, outside of the movement that you're in, and really be willing to listen to them.

**Amy**

Very wise! Because that is one of the typical patterns of spiritual abusers is [that] they isolate you from anyone on the outside, so that is great advice.

**Cheri**

What closing words do you have for our listeners? And again they're those that battle perfectionism, people pleasing, and they're trying to understand their highly sensitive hearts. What would you close us with?

**Mary**

Get to a place where, and even today, go somewhere alone and maybe it's a picnic bench, maybe it's hiding away in your closet from your yelling children, maybe it's just taking a walk and just pray this prayer; Lord, would you show me that you love me in a tangible way, in a measurable way this week. And I know that he loves to answer that prayer because ultimately that's the answer to your problem and your issue is just to know that you're wildly loved by God.

And not in a spectacular way, you don't need rainbow ponies and all of that, but just in some sort of way that you know that he loves you. For instance, I was sort of battling this with my AT&T thing that went on and, this is my confessional, the whole fiasco end up costing me about \$45 so I get home, and I'm lamenting to my husband. *"Oh, I just cost us money,"* and he was like just give yourself grace. He was being kind and everything. But the Lord was just so sweet. In the mail that day someone sent me, out of the blue, three \$20s. She just said, "I just want to sow into your ministry. Use this however you want. I just want you to know that God loves you." And there's something really beautiful about cash.

<Laughter>

But it was just so sweet. It was like the Lord knew what was going to happen that day, and I needed to know that he loved me, and he made sure the mail happened on that particular day that made me realize that nothing I do is too much, and he's going to cut me off and say well my cross didn't cover the AT&T store, sorry, and so just those little things. Dare to go out and ask the Lord to show you that he loves you.

**Cheri**

Head over to [GritNGraceGirls.com/episode57](http://GritNGraceGirls.com/episode57).

**Amy**

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

**Cheri**

Episode 57: I Quit — How to Stop the Exhausting Pursuit of Perfection

If you've enjoyed Episode #57 of Grit 'n' Grace Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules, would you leave us a review on iTunes? You'll find a link on the webpage for this episode.

**Amy**

Be sure to join us next week, when we'll be processing together what we learned from our time 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!!!**

**Outtakes**

**Cheri**

What Amy and I do after an interview is that we'll do a separate episode where we it debrief, and I keep wanting to jump in with conversation but I'm like, save it for Amy, save it for Amy!

**Mary**

It's okay. I was just having a hot flash. So it's all good.

<Laughter>

**Amy**

You'll be sorry you said that because Cheri is going to put that in the outtakes now!

<Laughter>

**Mary**

Oh, menopause, the gift that keeps on giving!

**Cheri**

Real women don't have hot flashes we have power surges! Either that or personal summer moments.

<Laughter>

**Mary**

Yeah, and since I live in Texas, those personal summer moments are 105 degrees.