

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #68: How to Serve with a Heartfelt Smile

Amy:

Cheri, last week we talked with Karen Ehman about ways to give kindness. Have you ever been on the receiving end of an act of kindness?

Cheri:

Well, let me tell you my favorite act of kindness. My favorite act of kindness, in case any of my students are listening, is leaving me a square of chocolate. Now let me be really specific... not that you could use as a brown crayon, but the kind that begins with "G"... Godiva or Ghirardelli.

Amy:

Well, I have a couple of friends in my women's class who send me cards occasionally "just because." They're always specific. They tell me one thing that they love about me. And that card invariably arrives on a day that I need it so much. I'm just so thankful that they listen to the Lord, and I want to be that kind of woman, too!

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 reflecting on what we learned from our conversation with Karen Ehman, author of ***Listen, Love, Repeat: Other-Centered Living in a Self-Centered World.***

Amy:

What's the difference between people pleasing, which we want to avoid, and truly serving others?

Cheri:

As people pleasers, we see needs and opportunities everywhere, and so we can convince ourselves it's serving. So figuring out the difference for me...I think when I'm people pleasing my primary motivation is meeting my own needs. Like everything I'm doing to quote "help" other people, it might actually be helping them, but the motive is so they'll approve of me, they'll like me, or as Lynn said when we had our interview with her, "At least don't be mad at me."

Amy:

That was a big aha for me.

Cheri:

That was huge! Huge motivation for me right there. So it looks like I'm giving, but the whole thing is still all about me.

Amy:

Oh, yeah.

Cheri:

And so, I think that's the key difference, with serving, it's not about me. But while I'm serving, I am 100% me, if that makes sense. It's not about me, but I am being me.

Amy:

Ahhh!

Cheri:

I'm focused on the other person's needs rather than my own needs — at least to the best of my ability to figure out what their needs are and instead of being hypervigilant about how they're reacting to me, I'm doing the best I can for how God is leading me. How about you? What do you think is the difference between the two?

Amy:

Oh! I love that. Well, what you said about motive I think is exactly right on. I think about so many times that I have served to — it's a sort of a self-gratifying thing. It makes me feel better about myself, it makes me look good to other people, all kinds of nastiness can be...

Cheri:

There's actually a psychological word for it. They call it the warm glow.

Amy:

Oh, the warm glow or the worm glow? Okay, Warm.

<Laughter>

Cheri:

It's called the warm glow. And it's one of the reasons people are altruistic. It's one reason people donate money or go on mission trips or that sort of thing — the warm glow.

Amy:

Oh I love that. Well it is kinda of like a hit of heroin. I guess. I hear. That it can be like a drug. That it's a self-gratification thing and, absolutely, I have been in that place. So what I think about is what are the indicators of that versus doing it really because I'm being loving, and I want to serve other people. And one of them I realized was the key that Karen gave us, which is listening. How much listening am I doing versus how much talking am I doing? The other indicator for me is how much do I want people to know about what I'm doing. Gah! That's nasty, isn't it? So can you think of a story that illustrates what you were saying when your motives were in the right place and you were — I love that the idea of being 100% you, not making it 100% about you.

Cheri:

You know there is one time, although now I've got to be careful, am I telling this story, because I want everyone to hear about it or...?

Amy:

No. I asked you. You're allowed.

Cheri:

This happened a few years ago when I was at a conference center, and I was speaking for the retreat, and I had come in the night before. And it was like an hour from the nearest town — it was really a remote location. And so I hadn't brought food, and I realized, "Oops I'm starving." And so, they told me to go down to the cafeteria, and one of the gals there would make me a sandwich for lunch. As she was making the sandwich, I noticed photos on the wall. And I started asking her about them, and it was all of her kitchen crews year in and year out. They had all the dates, and it was all the way up, but that year was missing. And I said, "Oh, I see you've got every year except this year." And she said, "Yeah, I haven't had the heart to do it." And I think I can now recognize that was a *heart drop*. And I said, "Oh, did something happen?" And she said, "Yes, one of my kitchen workers was my daughter, and she died four months ago." And so suddenly, instead of just playful chitchat banter, trying to notice something to pass the time while my sandwich is being made, I'm now in a situation with a woman who's obviously still in the throes of grief. And so, I just asked her some questions, and she got to talking about her daughter. And she mentioned that, in her perception, the people around her expected her to be over it by now. And we had just recently, on our boarding school campus, had lost a beloved teacher who'd been here for 25 years, and so I knew a tiny, little bit about grief. And one of the resources I had found for our students was a book called *Tear Soup*, and it was about how everybody grieves differently. So the way we make our tear soup, our grief — everybody's recipe is different. As I was talking to her, listening to her really, just asking small questions and keeping her talking, the idea came to my mind, actually to my heart, get her a copy of *Tear Soup*. And I started to think, "That's stupid, why would I ever do that?" And I literally, by the time she got me my sandwich, I could tell she kind of wound down with her talking and other people were coming, so it was a natural break. I ran back to my room, got on the Internet. They actually had a list of people who lived there. I was able to figure out her name, and I saw the mailing address. And before I could change my mind — before I could convince myself of all the

reasons it would be stupid, inappropriate, possibly offensive for me to send this stranger a copy of a book, I ordered it on Amazon, and I clicked order. Well, this was an event where it was the same retreat two weekends, back to back, because it had grown so large. The next weekend I came having totally forgotten I had done it. And I think that's actually one of the advantages of obedience, when we don't spend forever wondering if it's the right thing to do. If they'll react the way we want. It was done. And so, I was in the cafeteria line waiting for my food, and she comes out from the kitchen, and she wrapped her arms around me and just clung to me. And just whispered, "Thank you. Thank you!" And then she handed me an envelope. She typed me a 5-page letter. The one thing that stuck out to me was she said, the thing that she and her daughter had loved to cook together...you wanna guess what it was?

Amy:

Oh I'm guessing soup.

Cheri:

Their favorite thing to make together was soup. She said what this book had done for her, and me giving it to her, had given her permission to really grieve and to really process her loss. And I was so stunned, because I didn't do it for a reaction. You know so much of my life I have done things for reaction. That one I honestly didn't. I was just awed. I was just completely awed, because I really was probably one of the only people in the world who could have crossed paths with her at that time. I have the spiritual gift of "book bestowing." It's a thing I do.

Amy:

100% you!

Cheri:

And I knew the right book that she needed, and it was one of those truly — I was about to say magical — but it was one of those miraculous moments where I knew I had done exactly what God had led me to do. And I know that I won't normally or typically get the reinforcement. I won't see what the end result is, but it taught me to trust. It taught me to trust that when I get that sense, that idea to move forward, to not question, to not worry about the outcome, but to move forward. And sorry, that was a little bit of a long story.

Amy:

Oh, I absolutely love it though. And it's such a beautiful picture of what obedience looks like. You know, one of the things that struck me as Karen talked about the ways people have reached out to her after her **Tyese** died was just this book. My mother has been involved, actually, in end-of-life care for almost as long as I can remember. She's volunteered at hospice and palliative care and some things. So it's her gift, and my mother is so incredibly gifted at hearing heart drops and responding to them, and I am so incredibly not gifted. In fact sometimes, I really have had some angst over it, especially recently. I'm like, what is wrong with me that I like... the social cues are beyond me I totally miss them. I — you know, but I took heart at Karen's interview because this is something I can grow. This is something I should pray

to grow in. Some people, I do think, like you made the point in the interview, have a natural gift for it. My mother so does, but I think we can grow in this. So one of the things that my mom talks about a lot in some of the books she's handed on to me in trying to mentor me...

<Laughter>

Cheri:

Hint hint!

Amy:

...is the ministry of presence, just what it means just to be there. And this one author talks about how when you're grieving that your bucket is full. People want to put things in your bucket. They want to put the right thing to say in your bucket. They want to put the right casserole dish in your bucket. They want to — whatever. And he's like...just crawl into the bucket. That was his thing. Crawl in. And he talked about the ministry of presence...and when I read that I book...I could tell long stories about my abject failures in this area. All the things that I didn't show up for, that I thought, "Eh, they won't care. They won't even know. There's a crowd there." You know, the things that I just — important things that I have missed. And I just have to confess that in front of God and our whole audience. BUT I'm learning and this was probably about 5 years ago... my childhood best friend and I, who I've talked about being reunited with, and again she is one of my close friends. She called me in January, and she told me that her sister Judy had been diagnosed with lung cancer. And then she called me again, I think at the end of March, and told me that Judy had died. So it was very fast. Her sister was younger than us — very tragic, left small children. It was just awful. And then I got an email from a mutual friend that told when the visitation and when the funeral was. Well Cheri, these things never happen at convenient times, right? And I looked at my calendar and was like, "Oh my gosh it's a long drive...this is not convenient..." and I was like, "No. I'm not doing this again. I'm not doing this epic fail again." So I got in my car, I did the long drive. I waited in the long line. I hugged my friend. I kissed her. I told her I loved her, and I got back in my car and drove home. And it was the right thing to do.

Cheri:

Good for you.

Amy:

You know, so God's redeeming me; he's teaching me. But these are the intentional things: it's to listen for the *heart drop* and then act like you did with that perfect book. It's wonderful.

Cheri:

One of the things Karen said that I almost wanted to contradict her, but I decided to not be rude, and I didn't. But she made some comment about how dropping a note to somebody only takes 3 minutes. And I thought, "Well, clearly she doesn't know my system," because I have no system. And one of the things I realized recently, is I don't even have the mailing addresses for

most of the people I care about. I've gotten so accustomed to texting them and emailing them. So if I were to want to send you a birthday card, it would probably take me 10 or 15 minutes just to even figure out how to come up with your mailing address, let alone find the card, the envelope, and then the stamp. I almost never have stamps around because I don't mail things very much anymore. And I know on the one hand it sounds like I'm making a bunch of excuses, but for the sake of our listeners who might be kind of like me, I also want to acknowledge that these are real issues. We can tell ourselves in our head, "Oh, I'm just going to write a quick note. It only takes 3 minutes." But then when we sit down to do it, we don't have what we need. So one of the things I'm just slowly chipping away at is making sure I have everybody's actual mailing address so that I have it before I need it. And the other thing I'm terrible at is I have never written a note in 3 minutes to save my life. I mean 3 minutes is a first part of staring at the blank card thinking, "What do I say? No, that sounds stupid. No, I can't say that." And another thing is writing it and hating my own handwriting and tearing it up and throwing it away in the trash — even at this stage in my life. And so, one of the things I've given myself permission to do, and you can laugh if you want, is I'll type it out on the computer. And then make it the right size, print it out and glue it or tape it inside the card so it's really easy to read. And I had the chance to revise it, rather than throw away 10 ruined cards, and it works for me. It works for me.

Amy:

Absolutely.

Cheri:

And the other thing is, I actually have several books. One of them is called *How To Say It* and another ones called *101 Ways To Say Thank You*. I resisted them for years thinking, "That is so lame. I must not be a very grateful person if I can't even think of what to say." And what I've found is when I open up one of these books and look at their samples, it gets the creative juices flowing, and I take something from that they recommend. I make it my own and the important thing happens: I write the note and then I mail it — as long as I have the address.

Amy:

Well I think that is genius. I don't think that's lame at all, and Cheri, I hear so much heart and effort in that. And so you're doing what I'm trying to do now, too, which is to learn to be better at this. And I think the more we do it, the more natural it becomes. It's just like anything. We have to have a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset, right?

Cheri:

Absolutely. Thank you, Carol Dweck (reference to interview with [Glynnis Whitwer](#)). That works for me!

Amy:

Yes, fantastic! You know, I'm a resource junkie, too. We both have the input strength. And so, one of the things that came across my path that I want to share with our listeners, and we'll put

the link on the website. There is a ministry called wisdom of the wounded, and they have a free e-book on their website called *122 Ways To Care Well*. Y'all, it's genius! I do that, too. Like, I spend all this time thinking, "Well what is the right thing to do" and "Oh my gosh, how do I get time to do that?" This book has little things and bigger things that we can do to show other people that we care. We'll put the link for that free e-book. And then, I found, when I was digging around for the e-book, that they have a blog. So they actually have weekly suggestions on how to care for people — genius! We love a resource!

Cheri:

Wonderful. And in my experience with stuff like that, as I'm going through it, the Holy Spirit says, "You can do this one. You don't have to do that one. You can try this one." Trying one thing for the next time that somebody needs something, not trying to overhaul everything all at once, imperfect progress.

Amy:

Yes, indeed. So much grace in that!

Cheri:

So what scripture did you match up with these episodes?

Amy:

Well this is one of my favorites, yet one that I find very challenging. Philippians 2:3-4 says "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility value others above yourself, not looking to your own interest, but each of you to the interests of others."

And I think that I do have that in me, so I just have to figure out how to express it better.

Cheri:

Hmm. Good one. So what do you think is the *grit* aspect of all this?

Amy:

Well for me, it's not using the, "I'm not good at this" as an excuse. The grace is that I believe that we can grow in this, and so, I need to be committed to that — gritty about, "I'm going to get better at this."

Cheri:

Even just saying it that way, "I'm not good at this." Boy, the "this" is huge, but if we can chop it down. And it sounds like the resources that you recommended help us chop it down and find a part of it that I can be good at. That I can either channel my strengths or natural God-given gifts. Or maybe, this is a time to grit my teeth and show up and learn. Sometimes that's how we grow. How about the *grace*? What would you say is the *grace* in all of this?

Amy:

Part of stepping into “I’m going to get better at this.” And I love what you just said, is to release myself from doing it perfectly. Because that’s what really shuts me down — is the — I joke about my cooking all the time. I’m actually not a horrible cook most of the time. But, it’s that thought of, “I can’t make dinner for somebody because it might not live up to their standards.” That’s crazy.

Cheri:

You know, I resonate with you, and what I allow to shut me down is all the rationalization. All of these excuses that are running around in my head, and that are all about me and not about the other person. And so having grace to release ourselves from doing it perfectly and realizing that. I think Karen even said that doing nothing and saying nothing really is the worst thing we can do. And I think for those of us that are recovering perfectionists, we tell ourselves that nothing is better is doing it less than perfectly, and that’s just not true. Something is better than nothing in this case. All right, how about the bad rule?

Amy:

The bad rule is: I have to meet everyone’s needs. Which is exactly what you just pointed out with, “I’m not good at this.” That this is overwhelming. All the needs of the world shut me down to think I just can’t do anything; I won’t do anything.

Cheri:

And so what’s the flipside? What’s the fact we can focus on instead?

Amy:

By listening and loving, I can meet the needs that I’m called to meet. Your story is just the perfect example of it, Cheri. It really, really is. You heard the *heart drop* and that God used your gift. He didn’t even ask you to do something that was outside of your gifting. He used your spiritual gift of book giving, and He used it. I love that. There’s *grit* and *grace* in that.

Cheri:

Head over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode68.

Amy:

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

Cheri:

Come join our private Facebook group where we’ll be doing a LIVE Q&A later this week! You’ll find us at www.facebook.com/groups/gritngracegirls.

Amy:

Be sure to join us next week, when we’ll be talking with Lisa Whittle, author of *Put Your Warrior Boots On: Walking Jesus Strong, Once and For All*.

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!!!

Outtake

Cheri:

There are four important words in this world that begin with G...that's Godiva, Ghirardelli, Gregory, and God. Coincidence? I think not!

Amy:

Absolutely!