

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #79: What Happens When You Choose Your Focus

Cheri:
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 helps you lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy:
We are delighted that you've joined us for another installment of our retrospect series as we get intentional about living examined lives, together!

Recently my friend, Susie Eller, who is a friend and a mentor, said to me that is she working to make her work worship. What would that look like in your world to do that?

Cheri:
Wow, what a concept, because I associate the word "work" with duty, and nose to the grindstone, and something ... Boy, it's really split for me, because on the one hand, my personality naturally lends itself to being more of a human doing than a human being, and so I do like to work, but, wow, I've spent so much of my life getting my value from my work. Okay, so I'll tell you what I think. This is just off the top of my head. I think work is always worship; it's just a matter of who or what we're worshipping.

Amy:
Yeah, pretty sure! So I'll back up and say that that was exactly where my brain went, too, because what you and I do is... our product is words.

Cheri:
Yes.

Amy:
Really, our machinery for the words is what goes on in our heads, and one of the things that I have struggled with since I was a little girl is loving what goes on in my own head. I came from a really academic family. My dad's a professor, and my mom's a nurse. I grew up in a university town, and it's, kind of, thought is king there, you know. For me, the work that I do is a lot of thinking, pouring it out onto my computer screen, or sitting on a computer screen across from you and talking about what's going on in my head, so my work can become worship of myself and my own thoughts and what goes on in my head, for sure. I think that's what Susie was shooting for, and what she was trying to

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encourage me with is, "Hey, let's transfer our energies to finding out God's thoughts, and His ways that are higher than our thoughts and our ways."

Cheri:

Wow. Okay. In my home growing up, and to a large degree in the home we've established, intelligence was the number one thing. It was all-important. So now I'm thinking, "Human intelligence compared to God's intelligence is nothing." And yet, we've elevated it and focused on it so, so much. I know years ago I read a blog post on worship and realized it was about what was worth our time and attention. So this statement, "I make my work worship" is one of the next statements on your personal manifesto. So what is this looking like for you, and what do you want it to look like for you?

Amy:

As you were talking, I was like, "You know, intelligence is a gift that God has given us if it's used in the right context," and work is a gift that God has given us if it's in the right context. A lot of times, people talk about work as a product of the "fall," but if you look at Genesis, that is not true. Adam was assigned work by God.

I love it because I have work that I love. I mean, I really enjoy my work, but ... you kind of hinted at this earlier ... in this past year, I think I have stepped over some lines into work as an idol, because I have overworked, overscheduled. So whenever I do that, I have to go, "Hmm." I need to go back in this next year ... When my book came out, a book launch is just a tremendous amount of work.

Cheri:

Yeah.

Amy:

One of the things that I prayed, I want to reenergize this prayer and reimplement it in my life next year is, "God, help me to do everything that you're calling me to do, and not one bit more." So, like, if we put our work in the context of it's a gift, but it's not to be our god, then we should be able to make work worship.

Cheri:

I love the intentionality about it, and I love the fact that at some point, you're looking to have limitations, and part of those intentional limitations are recognition that you have limitations. God does not. We as humans do. What we're kind of looking at in this particular conversation, retrospect conversation, is being intentional about our focus. And so your personal manifesto statement, "I make my work worship." The one that I'm looking at is, "I am the curator of my very own ever-expanding gratitude gallery."

This is something that's been an ongoing theme for me for over 10 years now, because my brain can naturally go towards being picky, being negative, being critical of other people. Also of myself, but I can tend to get so fixated on how my life isn't progressing the way it ought to or how my work isn't progressing the way it ought to because of other people. You use the word "idol." I tend to be an idealist, and so I have these ... you call them pictures of perfection in my head of how things should work, how they would work if only the people would cooperate, and that's the rabbit hole I then fall down when I get so critical about other people.

For me, really making it an intentional practice to focus on what is going well, on what God has given me, on what He is bringing into my life, whether it's my work or any other aspect, but work is a large part of my life. Rather than constantly living without margin in hopes that if I just work harder, I will get more of what I think I want and saying, "No, what God brings me is enough, what God gives me is enough," and really focusing not on all the things I perceive I don't have or that I wish I had, but really shifting that focus on here's what I do have, here's the joy that I do have.

We've talked about before that things cannot be perfect, but I can still be satisfied. Things cannot be going exactly the way I wish, and I can still have joy. That's hard. Learning to wrestle that out is difficult. I see that also in yours, which is making everything about worship, making everything about what God is doing, not just about what we're doing.

Amy:

Well, it really does tie into our verse for today that says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." I think, you know, "not for men" includes not for yourself, Amy Carroll. We do it as to the Lord. One of my favorite verses is, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." I just think if we do godly work, then there are boundaries on it, and then we don't feel like we always are longing for the next thing, that there's a contentment to it. That doesn't mean it's easy. It was so funny; a friend of mine one day, he asked me about my job. This is a long time ago when I had a different job. I said, "Well, I do like it. I don't love it every day." He goes, "Well, if you loved it every day, it'd be your hobby, not your job."

Cheri:

That's a good distinction. Well, and to be able to look at the things, the parts of our work that aren't our favorite and still also approach them with an attitude of gratitude.

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

I know that I sometimes allow those areas to really grate on me, and then they grow out of proportion. To be able to look and say, "Hey, if I love most of it and then there's these

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other things that aren't my favorite things, those are generally the areas in which God is building my character through them. If those were to be taken away, then I wouldn't be growing the way He wants me to be growing."

Amy:

Or it could be an area where we get a chance to invite someone else to be part of our team that we've talked about in the past, so that they can use their gifting. So, I mean, I think there's both.

Cheri:

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Amy:

There you'll find the transcript, and a free download that you can use as you pray-cess today's episode for yourself.

Cheri:

Come on over and find our Facebook group also. We'll be doing some fun Facebook lives. Just go on Facebook and search for Grit N Grace Girls. You'll find our page and our group as well.

Amy:

Join us next week for another retrospect conversation, because an examined life is a better life.

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!!!