

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

Episode #83: How to Avoid the Teen Rebellion Rut

Rebecca Gregoire Lindenbach Interview

**Cheri**

I was going just to assume that neither you nor I actually rebelled as teenagers but I don't know that that's actually true. I keep making assumptions about you, Amy Carroll, and finding out that they aren't necessarily true. So were you a rebellious teenager or not?

**Amy**

I was not a rebellious teenager; I looked like I followed the straight and narrow. I did have a friend that teased me. She said that I did have a Christian girl rebellion.

**Cheri**

And what did that look like?

**Amy**

Well, I grew up in the Methodist church, very, very traditional church. And when I went to college, I was in a charismatic, non-denominational church.

<Laughter>

**Cheri**

Okay there we go, big rebellion!

**Amy**

I would have described my parent's church as dead at that time. So that was my Christian girl rebellion. How about you? Did you rebel?

**Cheri**

I don't remember if I've told you the two big things I did right before heading off to college. I cut my hair super short, and I bought my first pair of clip-on earrings. Oh yeah. Yeah. I wasn't daring enough to pierce, so I went for clip-ons. They were hideous. And they hurt. They gave me...

**Amy**

How horrifying! Short hair and clip-on earrings! Wow, we were walking the edge, weren't we, Cheri Gregory! I changed from one denomination to another, and you wore clip-on earrings!

**Cheri**

Well, here's the worst part. Here I am enjoying the glory of my rebellion. They gave me a headache. I had to take 'em off.

<Laughter>

**Amy**

Well, at least you didn't break out in a rash.

**Cheri**

Well, that's true. That's true. I didn't even get to enjoy my rebellion.

**Amy**

Oh gracious!

We've been on both sides now. We've been teenagers, and we've been mothers of teenagers. And one of our listeners said, "I'm the mom of two daughters, one 12, one 13. I have an awesome, supportive husband, who can't understand my constant self-berating for my imperfect behaviors. I just want to be who God wants me to be but I feel that I constantly fail Him as well. I definitely don't want my daughters to grow up feeling like this."

**Cheri**

I just want to say kudos for listening and recognizing this! It is awesome that she wants to change for the sake of her girls and have a healthier family.

**Amy**

Absolutely. When were hard on ourselves, I think our kids, they tend toward rebellion, because they want to break out of those constraints.

**Cheri**

Well, I'm 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 equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

**Amy**

Today we're talking to Rebecca Gregiore Lindenbach, author of *Why I Didn't Rebel: A 22 Year-Old Explains Why She Stayed On The Straight and Narrow and How Your Kids Can To*.

**Cheri**

Rebecca has a unique perspective on parenting teens, because not that long ago, she was a teenager herself. In her book, she shares her own family story. She cites various case studies, and she talks about a lot of practical examples that challenge the prevailing belief that teenage rebellion is normal.

**Amy**

Rebecca, we are so excited to have you with us today, primarily because you are the first woman in her twenties that we've interviewed. Welcome!

**Rebecca**

Wow, that's such an honor!

**Amy**

Now, we've interviewed your mom, Sheila Gregoire, and now we're excited to have you on. Now, I hear you were sort of coerced to write this book, that your mom wanted you to write it, but you didn't want to at all. So give us the skinny.

**Rebecca**

Ha ha, yeah! So my mom has a really big blog called *To Love, Honor, and Vacuum*, and she had been writing about how to help your kids make decisions. A very vocal minority of her readers kept saying again and again, "There's just nothing you can do; kids will rebel. So you really shouldn't even try." And my mom has never been one to take, "You might as well not even try" as a final answer, so she calls me up and says, "Okay, Becca, listen. You were a good kid. You didn't rebel. My readers don't think you exist. I need you to write me a post and just show them that there's hope." And I was in the middle of my second year of university, so I said, "No, I don't have time." And I didn't really want to do it at the time. Then I was sitting in an extremely boring stats class, like, we are talking truly mind numbing. And I realized that I had been watching videos of corgis on treadmills for the last 5 minutes. And I figured, you know what, I might as well write the post. So I wrote it up in 20 minutes, sent it to her, she posted it, slapped a couple pictures on it, and it went viral. It was completely out of our hands. We didn't do anything to try. This is what people just wanted to talk about. And she said, "You know what? You should write a book on this." I said, "No, I don't have time!"

**Cheri**

So that part of you not wanting to was about time more than it was, "No, I'm the wrong person. No I.."

**Rebecca**

No, I love this topic. But I was studying family and developmental psychology, so, like, this is right up my alley. So yeah, eventually I said yes to writing the book, as well, because my then boyfriend, now husband, was saying, "You know, you really should write a book, You want to write a book. This is the time to..." So...He has also been paying for this.

**Amy**

Well, it's great to have your generation's voice in this. So define a couple terms for us. Define "rebel" and define "straight and narrow."

**Rebecca**

Well, when I talk about rebellion, a lot of time we see a good kid... We're talking more about personality. We're talking about the one who is really friendly, who thinks to bring muffins to the potluck, the one who everyone likes who is always dressed nicely. And who everyone has a positive thing to say about, and no one has anything negative to say about. But that isn't actually about what you're doing to serve God. That's about personality. I have a very contrary personality to some people. You know, it's just the way God made me. I'm a little opinionated. I can be very loud, and I can be overwhelming to some of my introverted friends and that doesn't mean that I'm not following God; it just means that I'm a little quirky, right?

**Amy**

We love quirky here, so bring it...

**Rebecca**

That's it! I'm so glad. But when we talk about rebellion, it needs to be talked about as a pattern of acting out against what God wants for your life, more than about how your personality is. Because I mean, look at Jesus: you had him holding kids in his lap and you also had him turning over the moneychanger's tables. You know, it can't just be about one or the other. Sometimes God uses all these different kinds of situations to work His kingdom, so if we limit it to one thing, that's not helping the situation.

**Amy**

Terrific insight.

**Rebecca**

Yeah, which is kind of the flip side of that is what I mean by straight and narrow. The straight and narrow is about following what God wants for your life even when it's hard, even when people don't understand.

**Cheri**

That's helpful. In the book you talk about rocking the boat. Tell us what you mean by that. Give us an example, a story. I mean we've all heard the expression, but what do you mean by it?

**Rebecca**

When I was in high school, my youth group was a great place, but then somewhere along the line, everything kind of changed. I realized one day when I went downstairs and all the lights were dim. And there were girls dancing on the pool table, and there was a Lady Gaga music video playing on the screen in the back, I am not making this up, in our youth group. I realized something was wrong. And it had been building up for a while, but this was my breaking point. And I just had this moment where I was like, this is not how church is supposed to show what God is to my community. You know, it's not helping these kids, who are being allowed to dance on the pool table in short shorts. It was not a safe area anymore. And so what I did, at 15-years-old, I had just turned 15, is I called the youth leader. I called him and I said, "Listen, this isn't okay. I'm really concerned that there are a lot of seekers who are coming out, and we are creating a situation that is pretty much like a rave at our church. I had to actually confront this

grown adult who was completely respected in our church, and who IS a very good person. And who was honestly trying to reach kids who no one else wanted to try to reach. And when he didn't listen to me, I went to the associate pastor, when he didn't listen to me I went to the elder board, when they didn't listen to me, I went to the senior pastor, and by the end of 3 months I had the entire church from my age group calling me names, bullying me, saying, "Traitor, you're such a judgmental person," calling me goody two-shoes. But all the leadership just saw me as this nuisance, because I wouldn't go away. I saw something was wrong, and it wouldn't go away. And it would have been a lot easier to sweep it under the rug, but they didn't, thank God. But now, the youth group is actually a really safe place again. But it took a lot of overhauling, and it took a lot longer than it needed to because I was rocking the boat. And they didn't like that very much, because I wasn't being the nice kid. Quote, unquote.

### **Amy**

So help some parents a little bit here think about how kids receive what they have to say. So you had said, "Help teach us that our actions lead to consequences." Some of our listeners might be slightly overprotective parents. And so what have you seen with your friends whose moms have hovered and smothered? Those (who have) helicoptered parented too much.

### **Rebecca**

Well that's so hard, right? Because that's what I really learned with this book because I interviewed 25 young adults to get stories from kids who did and didn't rebel. And what really realized that no matter what the outcome is for the kids, the number one thing that tied it all together was that their parents loved them so incredibly much. And it doesn't matter if the outcome was good or bad or somewhere in between, it was all done out of love, right? And that's where we get this overprotectiveness a lot of the time, because you love your kids. You don't want to let go in case they get hurt. But the truth is, and this is kind of the unpopular truth about parenting, is that some day your kids are going to leave. You can't hold onto them forever, because that's not healthy, right? We want to grow up. We want to be responsible. We want to have our own lives. And so the teenage years is that time you need to kind of let go of that control you have during the childhood years and allow kids to make their own choices and to start feeling the consequences of their own decisions. So they can be trained. So when they're an adult, they don't suddenly freak out about this huge amount of freedom they've never had before. Because that's what we see when people go off to college a lot. And so when we're talking about this overprotectiveness, it's important to remember the difference of parenting out of fear and parenting out of faith. Right? When we have an overprotective parenting style, the interviews I did for my book, I found out that the overprotective parenting was often done out of fear. Fear that your kids would rebel. Fear that they won't follow God, and so, we try to control it. But really, our faith isn't about controlling; our faith is about surrender. And figuring out how to parent through that surrender to God and having 100% faith in Him can make a huge difference for your family.

### **Cheri**

Okay, you just brought Amy to tears. I can tell.

**Amy**

Yes, it's true. Faith is surrender. I love that. And actually, I'm learning and living that right now. So what's the difference between letting our kids feel consequences and allowing them to go into dangerous territory. Did you see any of that in your interviews?

**Rebecca**

This is a tricky question, because there's a big difference between a 13 year old who is going into dangerous territory and 17 and a half-year-old. It's all about releasing your control. You don't go from, "Okay, your bed time is 7:30, and you have to do your homework right now. And I'll make your snack for you tomorrow" to "Okay, you have complete freedom. Go do whatever you want!" It has to be a gradual thing, right? The problem, though, is that when kids do something that's really bad for them, they don't do it for no reason. This is what I think parents don't understand about my generation is that we may do things that seem completely ridiculous, and don't make any sense, and seem to not be thought through at all, but usually we have a really good reason for doing it. And it's usually from a place of brokenness, if it's a teenager who is trying drugs, or who is sleeping with their boyfriend or girlfriend, or doing other things that could really hurt them. But simply cracking down and forcing extra consequences is not going to deal with the root cause of the issue. The only way we can deal with the root cause of the issue is having a strong relationship with each other so that we can honestly talk and bring God into the equation in an authentic and real way. So it's a hard question, because there isn't really an answer that fits every situation. It always is about getting back to the relationship with your kid, but that might look different for a 13 vs. a 17 year old. So when we get into this conversation that happens over months and years, that's when you can really have those hard conversations like, "Hey, I know you tried drugs. This really scares me, and here's why," vs. snapping their phone in half and throwing it across the room, which one mom did in my book, actually, when she found out her daughter was doing drugs. There's the conversation vs. the consequences that often has a very big difference.

**Cheri**

So it sounds like intentionality is going to play a huge role here, and you said months and years. This is a conversation that has started long ago and is on-going and isn't a one and done, which is actually really inconvenient.

**Rebecca**

Totally! It would be so nice if I could give you 3 days to a perfect teenager! But that's not really what I'm trying to do with this book. I'm really just trying to get parents and teenagers to talk to each other again, because we forget how, right? We get scared, and we get busy. And we just forget to talk.

**Cheri**

Well, you talk a lot about family development and identity, and now I understand why with your background in your studies. So let's think about our listeners who have young children. What are the best things that they can do based on your experience in your family, and the interviews you did, and your scholastic background... what are the best things they can do when

their kids are young to get these conversations started and to have really good ongoing, natural communication with their kids?

### **Rebecca**

Just chat. I know it sounds really, really simple. But do you know how many parents just don't chat to their kids? It's like we always have to have conversations with things that are really big and important, but we forget to talk about the little things. You know like, "Oh my gosh, I got this little thing in my lunchbox today, and I loved it so much. And then, I showed Stacie, and she loved it so much." Like, when they're six-years-old talking about the little things. I remember my mom used to tell me stories a lot about when she was growing up and that was a huge way she taught me about our family identity. It was, you know, "When I was growing up, I didn't have this so it's really important for me that our family has this." Or my dad, for instance, would tell me stories about him and his brothers and how they used to fight all the time, but he always knew they had his back and he would say, "Gregoire's are loyal, and you are a Gregoire, so you will be loyal."

That's how we developed this family identity of being someone who follows God, someone who's loyal, someone who's trustworthy, because we talk about it. We need to chat about these things so that people can understand the reasons for why we should behave a certain way. Because that is how God teaches too, right? He teaches us, "This is why I want you to follow me, because I will give you every blessing, because I am God." That's what he says. He doesn't say – obviously, there's a time for obedience. But our God is a God who understands that we are logical creatures who like to have reasons, and it's the same thing with kids, too, right? And so when we talk to each other, it becomes so much easier to get that across.

### **Cheri**

I can remember when my kids were little, and they loved chit chatting with me. My son would tell me about the *Rock Raider Lego* set, and he would talk for four hours. But then, I also remember when they got into their teenage years, and they would go and close their door. And there are actually studies about Generation M, and parents seeing their kids using technology and backing away from them. And I was one of those parents. Like, my daughter would be on her computer and cell phone, and I would leave her alone, which I now recognize to be a big mistake. So do you have any ideas on what a parent, who may have had those good conversations and that chatting, (can do)? I love that term, just chat with them. So good! But it seems harder when they're teenagers. Their arms are crossed, and their head is down. And you know if you take away the cell phone, they're not going to talk. Because they're going to be angry at you, or at least, what I feared. So do you have any insight on how to get that natural, comfortable chitchat happening with these scary, scary teenagers?

### **Rebecca**

Yeah, well you're right. They do stop talking as much, and that's just a normal part of development. Their peer group becomes so important. But the number one thing, I think, is just to have very natural ways to communicate and think outside the box for that. Like with my family, we used to go for walks. And then we always new you don't text when we're on a walk, because we just chatted when we went out for a walk. For some people in my book, it was the

grocery store, it was when they were grocery shopping. It doesn't need to be this, "Okay, we're going to go get coffee at 10:30, and we're gonna sit and talk about everything that's on your heart, because I love you so much. I just want to know what's going on. "No, that's going to terrify a teenager!" But if we say something like, "Let's just go for a walk. There are some frogs in the marsh down the road; let's go look at some frogs." You know what happens when you look at frogs? You just start chatting. And it just naturally happens, and the same thing happens driving to the grocery store, picking up bananas... going to pick up the little ones from soccer. Anything that's just a natural place to spend time together, where you just talk about something silly like what that new song on the radio was... that can become a place where conversation happens on a regular basis.

### **Amy**

So help us out just a little bit. For that mom who is the perfectionist mom, and she's just terrified during that chat that she's just going to say something wrong; or that people-pleaser mom who just wants everybody to feel good and doesn't want them to feel bad, so they're kind of afraid of this chatting. How do they overcome that? Help them. Us!

<Laughter>

### **Rebecca**

The one thing I could tell that I think would be a big encouragement, so, again, I talked to 25 young adults for my book *Why I Didn't Rebel*, and the number one thing that every single kid who said they *did* rebel said they had regrets, but their number one regret was that they didn't have a better relationship with their parents. Kids WANT to know their parents and not just have their parents like them, not to just have their parents approve of them. They, of course, want that, too, but they want that REAL relationship. And so when we were talking about perfectionism and being scared to say the wrong thing or being a people pleaser and not wanting to hurt any one's feelings, we allow our fears to get in the way of having an authentic connection. Right? 'Cause what happens if you say that wrong thing? You say, "Oh, I said the wrong thing! I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you! What can I say in the future that's better? How can we talk about this in the future in a way that's going to be more effective?" You have just opened up a whole new conversation. I mean saying the wrong thing is not the end of the world! My parents said all sorts of things that they had to apologize for when I was growing up. We're all very, *speaking first think second*, but the thing that they did was they always apologized. So it isn't about not making mistakes, it's about how we handle mistakes. And it's always about speaking from the heart, speaking truth, not about outward perfectionism.

### **Cheri**

Oh my goodness, thank you so much, Rebecca. You have... I've been busy jotting notes, and I can tell by watching Amy that we have things to talk about on Thursday!

### **Rebecca**

I'm so glad!



**Cheri**

Head on over to [gritngracegirls.com/episode83](http://gritngracegirls.com/episode83).

**Amy**

There you'll find this week's transcript, the digging deeper download, bible verse art, and information about how to enter the giveaway for Rebecca's book.

**Cheri**

We'd also love for you to join our private Facebook group. Just go to Facebook and search for Grit n Grace Girls. You'll find our page and our private group.

**Amy**

Cheri and I are just bursting to process this episode. So join us next week where we'll have the recording for that conversation.

**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...

**Cheri & Amy**

Break it!

**Outtakes**

**Amy**

Wow! That was awesome.

**Cheri**

She was better than I expected.

**Amy**

That was great!

**Cheri**

I didn't expect it to be bad, but she's very articulate.

**Amy**

Yes, yes, yes.

**Cheri**

All right, so let's go ahead and do our intro. Look at us being unscripted and awkward, but hey.

**Amy**

We'll get better!

**Cheri**

Awkward is lovable.