

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules
Episode #94: Releasing Your Life to the Author of Your Story

Cheri

Well, let's start out! Aside from a nice deep control cleansing breath after technology joys.

Amy

Mercy.

Cheri

Let's talk about a time that we tried to help someone. Quote, unquote, "help someone." And they did not appreciate our efforts on their behalf. Do you have any stories like that, Amy?

Amy

Well, I tried to, like, for full disclosure, think of something recent, but I think it's a lack of self-awareness probably that I couldn't think of something recent. If I polled my friends and family, I'm sure they could think of something recent. But the one that I came up with is kind of old. Barry and I had moved into our first house, and it was so cute. It had this sort of taupe colored siding on it; white trim. But it had the most boring white front door.

Cheri

Oh no.

Amy

And, yeah, quel horreur, right?

Cheri

Oh, you are moving to France soon, aren't you?

Amy

I'm practicing my French now. And I was just convinced that door would look so much better red, but Barry was not convinced. But one day when I was home alone...

Cheri

Uh oh.

Amy

I began to think if he just saw the door red, he would love the door.

Cheri

So, you were just trying to cast a vision for him.

Amy

I'll paint it back white if he doesn't like it is what I thought.

Cheri

Oh, I'm with you. That's sounds — that's a great strategy, Amy. How did it work out?

Amy

Let's just say when he drove up into the driveway to the red door, which there's more to the story, because I didn't know that much about paint back then. So, I bought oil-based paint. We had no glass front door. We only had the one front door, which could not be closed at nighttime, because it was still wet. So, this out of control situation came back and bit me in quite a few ways, because my husband was also not in love with the red door as I was convinced he would be. So, how about you?

Cheri

Well, you know my example goes back almost twenty-seven years. As if there hasn't been some...

Amy

We don't have any current events.

Cheri

No, we've been completely transformed. But, this was probably just one of the times that it was so clear and obvious. We had brought Anne Marie home from the hospital; a little tiny baby. Everything went well with delivery, and so it was probably the second day after she was born. And, I go into the nursery, and Daniel is changing her diaper and rather than being thrilled that I have a hands-on husband. I immediately start telling him that he is doing it wrong and trying to correct him. And I'll never forget he kept on doing what he was doing with his hands, and he didn't even look up, he just said, "So exactly how much longer have you been a parent than I have?"

<Laughter>

And my mouth, which was wide open to keep talking, went shut, and I walked out the door because how on earth do you respond to that?

Amy

Well, it's funny these are both husband stories. But I think even for our listeners that aren't married, we try to control the people closest to us, because they are the only ones that might put up with that once in a while.

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. The podcast that equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy

Today, we are processing what we learned from our interview with Shannon Popkin, author of *Control Girl*.

Cheri

So, are your toes still hurting as much as mine are from that interview?

Amy

Gosh. There were so many one-liners that keep sticking in my brain and popping back up as I try... Hey, it's funny that I tell the red door story, 'cause we're now in the middle of doing some renovations on our house. And, oh, the control issues. The fights that have happened in the car. Oh, it's just...yeah. Especially when it comes to feathering my nest, you know. I'm controlling. So, wow!

Cheri

So, it sounds like we feel like there are certain areas in which we should have control, like, other people shouldn't be allowed to have as much say as we do.

Amy

Well, yeah. Your word for the year this year is so fascinating. And it's just...I hear you applying it to so many areas including this area of control. So, tell us about that.

Cheri

Yeah. I hadn't thought of it until this interview, and I realized that, actually, the word that God impressed on me for this year really is an anti-control word. It really is meant to help me with this whole releasing of control. And the word is authority. And, it really breaks down into three different meanings. The first one is that God has all authority. I have to constantly remind myself that unlike our, you know, decorating the house in which we might, you know, get to share a little bit, God has complete authority over my life. He has the right to say what happens. And then to realize, He is an authority on me. Like, He knows me better than I know myself. He is more of an expert on Cheri Gregory than even Cheri Gregory herself. So, when I keep trying to explain to Him what I need and what I want and the way I work, it's like, no. He knows that because He created me. And then the last one, and probably the most important one is the root word Author. That He is the Author of my story, and He is the author and the finisher of my faith. And that I don't have to control or even attempt to control everything that happens in the

future, because He's got that taken care of. So, for me, that word authority encapsulates all three of those, and when I remember that then I'm able to step back and release my white-knuckled grip on control a little bit better.

Amy

Well, that's beautiful. Even as you were saying that I thought that's such place to rest. And control, I mean as Shannon said, is so exhausting. And I mean, it exhausts us physically and emotionally and spiritually. When we are trying to God's job, that's spiritually exhausting. And so, this idea of Him being the author, because that is the root word of authority, that's freedom right there.

Cheri

Well, I'll tell you what I had hoped the word would mean. I hoped when it first came, I thought, "Oh good, I get to have authority over everybody else." Turns out that's not the direction He was going with it.

Amy

Oh, shoot.

Cheri

But, you know, one of the things Shannon brought up was that as recovering perfectionists we really resist the idea of having limits, and we resist the idea of being needy. And the way she talked about Eve, if there were limits even in the Garden of Eden why am I fighting against them now? If that was part of His original plan. And just, we've talked about this before, and it's one of those things that when I remind myself I do better and that is that neediness is normal. Why fight it? It is a part of the human condition. And, when I realize, yes, I'm needy. You're needy. We all have needs. It's okay. I do so much better than when I try to pretend that I don't.

Amy

And I would even extend that from neediness is normal, which is one of those phrases that is sticking in my mind now, to neediness is good. Because God called us to be dependent on Him. That was the whole thing. Her phrase about how Eve wanted the self-improvement fruit.

Cheri

Oh, my goodness.

Amy

I was like, just say, I mean here we're authors of nonfiction, Christian Nonfiction, which is the spiritual term for self-improvement.

Cheri

Oh, yeah, I saw your eyebrows shoot up when she said that. I did.

Amy

Oh, goodness, that was a big ouch for me. But it's something that God has continuously been pouring into me. One of the scriptures that just has captivated and captured and pricked my heart is 2 Corinthians 12:9. Where it says, but He said to me, Paul's talking, and this is in red, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." You know, I mean, as a reforming perfectionist I have to always remind myself that people do not need my perfection. What they need is God's power. And that so, so really, embracing my weakness is what brings God's power into my life. That is so counterintuitive for those kind of pull-yourself-up by your bootstraps type personalities that you and I have and so many of our listeners have. I've actually coined a term "Him-perfection" which is God's power coupled with our weakness, that's what really brings fruit into our lives and the people around us.

Cheri

And, I can just feel myself relaxing with the idea of God's power plus my weakness. 'Cause my weakness. I don't have to do anything; it's right here. It takes no effort for my weakness to show up.

Amy

Exactly.

Cheri

And to realize it's not about us. And, so we can quit working so hard. We can quit trying to hide the weaknesses, trying to, trying to hide our neediness, or what happens to a lot of us, quit trying to numb our neediness. Whether it's a substance or an experience or a relationship we try to numb that neediness. Rather than, I like what you said, it's not just normal, it's good, because it makes us dependent on God.

Amy

That's so hard to embrace, and what you said is funny. The list that you just gave is so much about the control of ourselves. But I have such an issue with trying to control my surroundings and the people around me. So, this decorating thing that I love, I do think it's a creative part of my personality. But I have to be really, really careful, because I step over the line of just trying to control my surroundings so easily, and then, and also controlling the people around us, that if we rest in our weakness then we don't need to manage everything that's going on externally.

Cheri

Which then leads me to another thing she said that just boom... like I was bruised at that end of that interview. I think we knew, I think we knew we were in for a beating when we went... and she was so nice. She was just the sweetest person. None of it was personal. But when she said, that people-pleasers make themselves slaves to other people and their opinions. I was like... like the wind got sucked out of my lungs or something. I'd never thought of it as a form of slavery, and yet that's what it feels like. I mean it feels like bondage. You know that 2:37 in the morning going, you know, through what you said, what you didn't say. What they said, what they didn't say. Trying to figure out a new way to approach it. It's exhausting! It's exhausting. And it's a method of trying to control people. It seems so humble. It seems so nice that all we want is...,

but no, all we want is for them to think what we want them to think and feel what we want them to feel, so that we can feel the way we want to feel. And so, ultimately, it comes down to being a form of manipulation.

Amy

Which is so hard to recognize. So, last week, I... here's an up-to-date example of control. I posted something on Facebook that had a political bent.

Cheri

You didn't.

Amy

Well, I should have known better. Good grief. You know.

Cheri

Amy, you are daring.

Amy

Although, at the time, it was based on news reports that I thought were irrefutable. I didn't know anybody would argue with them. I think it was ridiculous that people were arguing about them, but that's just my thing, and I won't go down that political thing here on the podcast anymore. But, anyway, so I posted something and, you know, I was getting all the good feels from all my people chiming in and agreeing with me until somebody didn't. And not only did she not agree with me. She accused me of being a tool of the devil.

<Laughter>

No joke. Well, let me just tell you I probably should have known from the trembling of my body that that was not a good time to respond. I mean I was so instantly furious. Furious. And I was like, oh, I'm setting her straight right now. I am Jesus in the temple turning over the tables. We are going in!

Cheri

So, you weren't trembling out of weakness. You were trembling from something else.

Amy

Oh, I was furious. It's one thing to have a difference of opinion; it's another thing to cast personal aspersions on people. But anyway. I might have cast a few back. I called her a bully. I felt so justified doing it until the next morning.

Cheri

Oh no! Oh, no.

Amy

Because I don't know how many of our listeners might have seen it. There was an interesting exchange on Twitter between Sarah Silverman and a hater. And for those of you that don't know who Sarah Silverman is I need to explain and also give a disclaimer. So, Sarah Silverman is a very funny, but profane woman. And, I'm not a huge fan, but what she did on Twitter was really amazing. There was a man that called her a horrible name on Twitter and instead of coming back at him and cutting him off at the knees, which she has the wit, the sharp wit to do. She could have sliced him and diced him, but she didn't. She responded to him and said, "Hey, I went and looked at your picture; you look like you're in a lot of pain." Instantly, he responded to her softly. So anyway, I started realizing that my reaction to this woman that had cast an aspersion at me was a control thing, because I don't see myself that way. And I don't want you to see me that way, so I was going to set her straight so she could come around to my point of view. Well, I doubt that the way I wrote it that she came around, you know. And I thought, here's this woman, Sarah, who I don't think would claim to be a believer who responded so much better than I did.

Cheri

She actually went, and she read the guy's profile and some of his previous comments to really get a feel for who he was and what might have brought him to post what he had posted. So, she sought to understand, before being understood. Ooooh!

Amy

She didn't need to control her own image. You see, I mean, and I realized. I had just commented positively like days before on the Sarah Silverman thing, but then I didn't respond well. It's 'cause I want to control my own image so much, and I want to be smart girl, and I want to be Christian girl. And don't mess with that. You know. Wow!

Cheri

You know Shannon said that we think that surrender is going to be our hands in the air and butterflies and songs. I thought afterwards, yeah, we think surrender is going to be like the Calgon commercial. Do you remember the Calgon commercial?

Amy

Oh yes.

Cheri

Calgon take me away. This idea of just kind of blissfully free falling into joyous rest. And, you know, she made a good point that it's bloody and it's hard and it's got sweat and tears and effort. And we think it's just something that we'll decide to do, and it'll be done forever. And it never shows up as control. I mean you were fighting for the right.

Amy

Well, yeah! But you know what I didn't do and what you just described is dying to self. Giving up control is a dying to self. The scripture that Shannon gave us for today is Luke 22:42 when Jesus is in the garden and He's facing His imminent death and He says, "Father, if you are willing take

this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.” That is the perfect picture of dying to self in the midst of almost bloody, we’re almost there, right. Really hard circumstances. So, it is not Calgon take me away. It’s a dying to self. It’s a taking up your cross kind of experience to give up control.

Cheri

You know what I’ve never noticed is that He does state what He wants. He does say this is what I’d rather happen. I love that reassurance. We can recognize that. Even as we surrender and say, not my will but yours.

Cheri

So what’s the bad rule we’re breaking with these two episodes.

Amy

I control to make life better for me and everybody else.

Cheri

Oh my gosh, that sounds so good when you say it that way. I’m like, yes Amy, let’s do it; let’s do it.

Amy

Well, I wrote something else really stupid first, and then I went back, and I was like I wouldn’t say that. Say what you would really say. Say what you really think, ‘cause that’s the bad rule.

Cheri

But it’s sounds so good. If others would just get on board, you know? Alright, but what’s the truth? What’s the fact we need to focus on instead?

Amy

I surrender control to make life better for me and everyone else.

Cheri

Amy, this is so good.

Amy

And so hard.

Cheri

I think I need to make a plaque to put up on the wall. Alright, so what’s the grit in all this?

Amy

Well, the grit is I have to really recognize when I’m controlling. Because, like, the example with the Facebook thing, you know, I didn’t even recognize it in the moment. I was like, oh no, we’re going to set this straight right now. It wasn’t until the next morning when I had stopped shaking

and cooled down that I realized you're trying to manage and control your own image in the public sphere, and that's hard. So, I have to recognize it and then choose to let somebody else have their way. And you know sometimes, even as I wrote that, preparing for out time together, I thought, "Well, that sounds like being a doormat." And I was like, 'cause I do have that feisty, sassy side, you know, but that's not it. There are times I believe God is calling me to surrender control so I can die to self. You know, practice dying to self. That takes real grit for me.

Cheri

So, dying to self and being a doormat are not the same thing?

Amy

Dying to self is being more like Christ. And Christ didn't back down. He did overturn the tables in the Temple, but that's not what I was doing. He wasn't managing His image there; He was defending the glory of God. So, there's different. There are definitely times for that, but we have to recognize our own motivations behind it.

Cheri

That brings me to the grace, which for me, is to not give up, because so much of releasing control is about not doing things that come naturally to me. I'm a doer. And so, for God to constantly be saying I just want you to do nothing. I'm like, do nothing. It's the oxymoron. I don't know how to do nothing. I think it's so easy for us recovering control girls to focus on that scripture of Christ over turning the tables in the tabernacle, but how many times in his ministry did he do that?

Amy

Right. That was not the predominant.

Cheri

It's the one we go to. And I think anytime that I go straight to that story, well, Christ did it, so I get to. You know, be more like Jesus. Yes. I want to be more like that Jesus! You know, I think if I were to lay out all the stories of Jesus there's a lot of others that I could be led to in terms of what it means to die to self and be like Jesus in a situation where the overwhelming temptation is control. I find it so interesting that you were shaking. I wonder if that shaking out of anger, indignation, need for control. If we could start to recognize that as hang on, I'm shaking. I need to recognize this is a moment of weakness, because what we are trying to do is rise up in our own strength. And if we could see that as a physical trigger to go, I'm about to lean on my own strength. I need to die to self and really pray-cess what it really means to be more like Christ in this moment. I think we might live with a lot more grace.

Amy

Whoo! Selah.

Cheri

Head on over to gritnegracegirls.com/episode94.

Amy

There you'll find this week's transcript, our digging deeper download, and the bible verse art.

Cheri

We love being Amy and Cheri on the podcast, and we also have individual websites where you can get to know us better and sign up for our newsletters. Amy's is AmyCarroll.org, and mine is CheriGregory.com.

Amy

Make sure to join us next week when we'll have our friend, Kathi Lipp, author of *The Mom Project: 21 Ways to a More Connected Family*.

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 & Cheri

Break it!

Outtakes

Amy

I thought I was doing alright until I looked at the camera, and I was like, this is massive bedhead. 'Cause I'm a professional, and I was going to take a shower, but I watched House Hunters International instead.

Cheri

Oh, that makes me so happy.

Amy

Okay, maybe they won't care about bedhead when I move to France, 'cause that's what I watched this morning. Hey, we could do the podcast from France, right?

Cheri

Of course, I've heard the French women are very candid, so you'd fit right in.