

# Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Good Rules

## *Episode #150: The Joys and Perils of the Immeasurably More Life*

Cheri: I like this. Okie dokie. Well, Wendy talked about the uns of life, the unanswered prayers, the unfulfilled dreams and unmet expectations. So Amy, which one of these has tripped you up the most and why?

Amy: Well, there's a hands-down winner on this one for me. It is unmet expectations. When I think back to really the root of my perfectionism is unmet expectations for myself primarily. I mean primarily for myself, I call it the pictures of perfect. In my head I have these pictures of perfection for every situation that I walk into. I joke but it's only really a sad little, not so funny joke that as a bossy little girl I wasn't only going to try to be perfect myself, I would help you to be perfect too.

Cheri: So generous of you.

Amy: I know. I know. I'm just so misunderstood/disliked. Yeah. But yeah, it's those unmet expectations that have really, really tripped me up. It really became glaring. This is a couple years ago probably, so it was even after Breaking Up With Perfect came out. I was having this conversation with Barry. I was like, "What kind of expectations did you have when we got married?" Cheri, I mean the man looked genuinely puzzled.

Cheri: Oh no.

Amy: He's like, "Well, what do you mean?" I was like, "You know. Did you expect me to cook dinner every night? Or did you expect me to be quiet during the football game?" I'm thinking about probably all his unmet expectations. He seriously said, "Well, I just expected you to love me for the rest of our lives." I was like, "That's it? Because could I just list mine?" Poor thing. I think I've shared this here before. It was in that flash of insight that wow, he really doesn't have expectations of me or not a long list, that I thought, his greatest gift to me is to let me be.

I mean I feel that every day that I don't feel like I disappoint him and all the negative things that go with unmet expectations. So that's become my new goal is to let Barry be, to let my friends be, to let my kids be, and to let go of those unrealistic expectations that I've carried around for so long. How about you?

Cheri: Well, okay. So first of all, you stole my answer.

Amy: Shocker that we would both choose one, isn't it?

Cheri: But I expected you to, so at least that's one less unmet expectation in my life.

Amy: Boo.

Cheri: Since you already took my number one answer, I'll go ahead with the second place answer. It is a distant second, but it is an important one. I'll go with unfulfilled dreams because I have been known to make my own dreams come true. Thank you very much. As I was thinking about this, I thought back to almost two decades ago when I was heavily involved in a direct sales company. I was on track to earn the incentive trip to the Bahamas. Of course, Dan and I had never been to the Bahamas. On a teacher's salary, we were never going to go to the Bahamas. But as the year was wrapping up, I could see that I wasn't going to hit it. I was going to be really close, but by really close I mean a few thousands dollars in sales.

I don't mean two digits or even three digits. I mean a comma. Instead of doing what a healthy, recovered perfectionist would do, which is say, "You know what? I came close. I'm going to be gritty. I'm going to be resilient. I'm going to celebrate what I did do." I was still so all or nothing. I was like it's the dream or death. There's no-

Amy: No second prize for me, baby.

Cheri: That's right. No, no. Second place is the first loser.

Amy: I have never heard that. That's amazing. Okay.

Cheri: Yeah. You can probably guess what I did. I pulled out the credit card and I bought a boatload of inventory. Of course, the story I told myself was I'm going to sell it all next year. But the logic of it was so terrible. I'm having a hard time selling anything now, but if I buy things that I want, they will somehow easily sell in January. So I wasn't thinking it through. I didn't seek godly counsel. I just did this thing. Here's the thing, it was an amazing trip. I mean we had a wonderful time. It was total luxury.

But from the time I placed those orders, I could not sleep or enjoy myself because I had that weight, that anxiety, that weight on my chest of all of that debt that I had accrued. I mean I'd really maxed us out. So on this trip, if we had forgotten something at home, we couldn't afford to even buy a replacement. Here we are at this luxurious resort, supposed to be having fun, and we did, but it wasn't worth it. I thought the worse thing in the world would be to miss the dream and what I learned was, no, it's even worse to force the dream.

Amy: That's so clear. I mean that makes things so clear. Unmet expectations are really usually unrealistic expectations. Unmet dreams are often forced dreams, not always, but often. It's worth some examining to look, why are these things unmet? Maybe that's a whole different show.

One of the things that Wendy talks about though in the midst of those gaps that we're facing in our life is that God is immeasurably more. I've been processing this idea of immeasurably more, and I'm just wondering how does it strike you?

Cheri: Yeah. I'm not going to come out-

Amy: Okay, well-

Cheri: Go ahead.

Amy: Before, as I interrupt you. I ask you a question and interrupt you. Before we say that, let's just say that this is scriptural. So anyway, go ahead.

Cheri: Yes. Oh well, now I'm going to sound even worse because-

Amy: Well, no, I have some negative things to say.

Cheri: My problem is I'm skeptical about anything that I can't turn the package over and read the ingredients and the nutritional information for. So I struggle with this whole concept of immeasurably more because I want to measure it. I want to be able to count it. I want to be able to weigh it. I want to be able to reduce it to a checklist and then line it up next to my own plans, expectations. So all of this just ends up boiling down to having a hard time trusting God as if maybe I'm suspicious that He's going to hand me something and tell me that it's a delicious smoothie and then I take a sip and find out it's filled with kale. Sorry, it's just the truth.

Amy: You are full of the best pictures today. Second place is the first loser. I think I'm going to get a yummy smoothie, but it's kale. All right. These are really helpful. No, but you know what? As I listen to you say that, so the thing about the back of a package too is it spells it out exactly.

Cheri: Mm-hmm (affirmative). No surprises.

Amy: So you can count on it. It's kind of like the rules. I'm thinking one of my qualms with immeasurably more is that I'm always afraid that God's immeasurably more is defined so differently than mine. I believe His is right, but then what if I mess it up? Does that make sense?

Cheri: Aw, yeah.

Amy: The list of ingredients would be really helpful. I see that. It's funny because as I thought about this idea of immeasurably more I thought, well, on one hand I really struggle with that idea of immeasurably more. Now, don't get me wrong. I believe it for you. It's for me that I'm not quite sure it's all going to work out quite right. On the other hand, it's totally a thrilling idea. We're like, "Immeasurably more, that's what God has for me? That's incredible."

There have been times in my life that I have so clearly experienced God's immeasurably more. So it's thrilling. I've got this qualm with it and then I have this thrill that goes with it. And then is it okay if I have a third hand?

Cheri: Oh my gosh, yes. As long as I don't have to figure out where it's going to grow from your body.

Amy: Oh wow. My head. Let's just put it out of my head there. With that third hand, it also terrifies me, because immeasurably more or Wendy said super abundant, which is amazing, but it sounds amazing but also overwhelming. If I got it would I even be able to handle it? So anyway, these are my three arms or three hands that I was weighing all the immeasurably more with.

Cheri: That's a great question. Probably we all can relate to that question, would I even be able to handle it? The answer's no. We can't handle any of this on our own, but that's where the question comes from. Almost as if God is going to give this and then leave us to deal with it by ourselves. He's the great giver, but He's not going to be the supporter in the midst of it.

Amy: Yes. It kind of makes me think about ... How did somebody ask me? I was at a speaking event last weekend. They said, "Well, how did you get to this place?" This is so funny because everybody knows-

Cheri: You mean arriving? Because obviously you've arrived.

Amy: Right, right. Except we all know the ups and downs of our job. I did start thinking about how did I get to be a speaker? How did I get to write two books? You know what? It's just like anything else that becomes immeasurably more in our life, because I'm so grateful for those things, but is that you get them in little bits.

Cheri: So true.

Amy: I heard Lysa TerKeurst one day. She was being interviewed after Made to Crave and she had just hit The New York Times Bestseller List. Somebody said, "How

does it feel to be an overnight success?" That was kind of the way I got this question too. She said, "It feels like 15 years of hard work."

Cheri: Good for her. Good answer. Good answer.

Amy: Right. But that's how God equips us for immeasurably more too usually is we just get it a little bit at a time, one step of obedience as a time.

Cheri: I love that. I mean I also think I probably can recognize the immeasurably more in hindsight. It doesn't look scary at that point. It doesn't look overwhelming. I'm like, oh, that's what it looks like. It's trying to find it, see it, control it. There's the C word again. Figure out how I'm going to make it happen. Yeah, that's where I get into trouble.

All right. Well, Wendy also talked about living on autopilot in our spiritual lives. I thought that was such a great phrase. That's really stuck with me. What does living on autopilot look like in your spiritual life and how do you fight it?

Amy: Well, I mean I've already referenced earlier in this episode about how I'm a rule follower. I want to know what the contents are in the package. So I'll read the list. I tend towards that in my spiritual life too. If you give me a book on prayer and it tells me I do A, B, C, and D, then I do A, B, C, and D and maybe E also. And then if you tell me a formula for studying my Bible, I'm in all for the formula. Give me the rules. Give me the checklist. On one hand, there's nothing wrong with that. Spiritual disciplines are important. But God has really been trying to break me of some of this, I believe.

About a couple years ago, He started saying to me when I'd sit down with my Bible and my formula and my notebook and all that. I just felt like He was whispering, "Just follow me, Amy. Just follow me." That has been a sweet thing that, yes, I still have some of these spiritual disciplines in my life but I try to be sensitive to following God during my time with Him. That has really, it's kind of broken that spiritual stupor that I can get into when I'm just following the rules. And how about you?

Cheri: Well, moving on to the next question.

Amy: Cheri? We are not moving on to the next question, girlfriend.

Cheri: All right, fine. Fine. My problem is that for me autopilot means that it becomes ... For me autopilot means that it becomes normal for me to just keep adding more and more to my plate so that my quiet time, which is a form of rest time, we all know that rest is my year for the word. I'm very excited about it. Rah rah.

Amy: I can say we all know that rest is my word for the year. You said my year for the word.

Cheri: Outtake material right there.

We all know that rest is my word for the year, rah rah. Yay. Go, go, rest. So what ends up happening is that my quiet time and anything that resembles rest does start to fall off just during this particularly busy week. And then it turns into, well, it's just a busy month. And then it ends up being, well, this is a busy season of my life. Isn't that a great phrase that just gives me absolution? Well, it's a busy season. As if that's what-

Amy: It sounds very spiritual.

Cheri: I know. The problem is I don't tend to recognize that I've gone into this autopilot until a friend and I are talking and she's just really naturally sharing with me something that God has shown her in scripture. My number one response is to feel completely resentful and feel like she's feeling super spiritual. And then I realize, wow, I fell into this autopilot that just kind of squeezed out the time for quiet time or spending time with Jesus. Then the thing that I do that gets me out of this is to break the rules because I, for the longest time, have had it drilled into my head that if I don't start the day with Jesus, that's it.

It's like the anvil is going to fall from the sky, almost as if nothing else counts. So it's really easy for me. If I do check email right when I wake up, well, that's it. I can have quiet time. It's like the diet mentality. I'll start over again tomorrow. Or I'll start over again next week when I can do it perfectly. So for me, getting out of the autopilot of allowing myself to get overly busy, which then becomes the autopilot of, well, I can't spend time with Jesus because I can't do it right. To say, you know what? Right now, I'm dropping everything and I'm opening my Bible to the ... because I do keep my little marker. It's in Luke right now. It's been in Luke for too long. I'll just admit that.

But it's in Luke. I just said, you know what? I'm going to take five minutes right now. It could be 1:27 in the afternoon. I mean who's ever heard of studying the Bible at 1:27 in the afternoon? We know we're supposed to do it when we first wake up. But it never fails that something shows up in the scripture that is so sweet and so relevant for where I am in that moment that I am 100% clear that God was waiting for me and meets me there. That will snap me out of autopilot to realize, wow, even though I'm the one that was going like a crazy woman, He doesn't change and He's not withholding. He's not hiding from me. He's there ready and waiting. The blessing that I gained is totally worth it. I mean it always is. It never fails.

Amy: Well, I think actually Cheri that that ... because I'm looking at time, trying to keep us at 20 minutes.

Cheri: Okay.

Amy: I think that transitions right into the scripture. Do you want me to skip those questions? What do you think?

Cheri: Sure. Yep. Yep. Sounds good.

Amy: Okay. Well, that transitions perfectly into our scripture this week, which is Psalm 31:24, which says, "Be strong and take heart all you who hope in the Lord." We've talked about this before, but this idea of immeasurably more means that our hope is not in our circumstances. That's where we fall into the uns I think, or that's where I get is when I get over-focused on my circumstances, when my hope has been put on my circumstances rather than in the Lord. So if we have our hope in the Lord, then we can be strong and take heart.

Take heart, it implies that there's something negative going on, doesn't it?

Cheri: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amy: You wouldn't have to take heart if everything was all good. So He's saying, "Be strong. Take heart all you who hope in the Lord." It's like a little reminder. Remember, that's where your focus is supposed to be.

Cheri: So good. What's the bad rule that we're breaking in these episodes?

Amy: My circumstances are my reality. I think that's where all the uns are rooted.

Cheri: Yeah. That's so hard. What's the truth? What's our fact for focus?

Amy: My reality rests on hope. Our hope should be in Christ alone.

Cheri: So true. Where do you see the grit coming into all of this?

Amy: Well, I mean I'm still a girl who really struggles with getting mired in my circumstances. Last Thursday and Friday I had this little thing going on. It was precipitated by some stuff I was seeing on social media that really kind of shook me. I tossed something out and got an answer back that didn't sit quite well with me. It was just a set or a ... my brain. It was a series of circumstances that really started to undo me a little bit. I was sitting in the airport getting ready to go to an event, a place where I needed to be focused on the Lord. I could feel this downward spiral.

It was from being a little shaken to being misunderstood. Suddenly, I was spiraling, Cheri, into this shame. I've realized, we've talked about body stuff, I get a tingling on my scalp with shame. I was having this major tingling. I seriously I was even thinking about my marriage and going, "Oh my gosh, poor Barry." I mean it was just I had spiraled down to, "Nobody loves me, everybody hates me. I'm going to eat some worms." It was just crazy. I have this tendency to do that and spiral. I'm trying to take some steps to really break that. That's the grit for me when I start to feel the tingle on my scalp. Isn't that weird? That's so weird.

Cheri: Hey. No, but it's great that you've noticed it.

Amy: Or when I start to get this one negative thought after the other, that I need to do something intentional to break it. A couple Fridays ago, I was also in a spiral. What is it about Fridays? Anyway, I started to realize it. You know what I did?

Cheri: What did you do?

Amy: I said, "Alexia, play '80s dance music." Let me tell you, I just turned it up really loud and I started singing and dancing. When Barry came home he was a little, "What is happening here?" I was like, "Hey, I wanted you to have a happy wife this afternoon. You gotta do what you gotta do."

Cheri: Okay. I want a video of you dancing to '80s music. We should promise this to our Patreon supporters. I think they would love it.

Amy: I think we should promise not to send it to them.

Cheri: That is hysterical.

Amy: Any grace in all this?

Cheri: Well, okay. I'm going to hop on a quick soapbox and I hope I can make this come out right. I saw a meme the other day that really made me cringe. It said something to the effect that if I don't sense God blessing me, maybe it's because I'm making my circumstances all about me and He won't choose to bless me until I make my reality all about Him. Here's the problem. I can't make my life all about Him, no matter how hard I try. So the day I saw that and started getting ... I think I probably had a shame reaction to it. For me, it's a wrinkly feeling right between my eyes. Yeah, that's probably what was happening.

It was one of those days where I was like ... It was probably 4:00 in the afternoon that I opened to Luke. I was reading a commentary on ... Oh shoot. I'm going to have to pause and remember what the story was. I was reading a commentary on the centurion, that Jesus healed his servant. I'm just going to paraphrase this

commentary. But they said our only claim on God's grace is our great need, not our own perfection, not our own performance, not our own ability to make our reality all about Him, but our great need of Him. So all of our un circumstances remind us of the reality of, and this is another quote, "Our utterly helpless condition without Him and that our hope is in Him."

For me, that whole picture that it is my need, my neediness, that actually is my claim to God's grace. I had to stop and read it five times and go, "What? This is so counter-cultural." And then to get to that phrase, "My utterly helpless condition." Compared to that meme I saw, which I know was well-intentioned, but when I saw it my heart sunk because I was like, but I can't do that. I cannot make my life all about God without God. So to realize the grace that we live in and the hope we have because of that grace, as needy as we are, as completely helpless as we are, we are in Christ and we have hope because of who he is and what he's done for us. Nothing that we do ourselves.

Amy: That's a perfect ending.

Cheri: Okay. It'll take that to-

Amy: Period. The end. Angels singing.