

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #161: Why It's a Good Thing to Be Lost First

Cheri: After last week's episode, we invited our fabulous interns to share examples of recognizing, retroactively, how God equipped them in the past to be ready to trust His call and serve the Body of Christ now. Here's a wonderful variety of responses from several of our current Grit 'n' Grace interns, starting with Jennifer Hockman. As you listen to their stories, pray-cess how God has equipped YOU in YOUR past to be ready to trust His call and serve the Body of Christ right NOW:

Jennifer: 15 years ago, I was pregnant with my twin sons. I became very ill, and we lost the boys. It was a very dark time in my life, and learning to live with the constant void was daunting. A few years later, my pastor asked me to be a part of a funeral team. I was able to take my loss and sit with mourning people and love on them from a real place of understanding. God used my pain to be a light in the darkness for others. It brings me joy to know that their lives and my pain had a purpose.

Jeanette: Hi, this is Jeanette Hanscome from Jeanettehanscome.com. In high school, I fell in love with acting and thought I wanted to pursue that as my career. God made it pretty clear that that wasn't His path for me, but recently I realized that He used all that performance training to equip me with the confidence I needed to feel comfortable in front of an audience for when I became a speaker and started teaching and serving at writers conferences, and for podcast interviews, and even for moments like this.

Iris: Hi, I'm Iris Bryant of Irispbryant.com.

During my teenage years, and even my young adult years, I wrestled with feelings of rejection. I often felt alone even if I was surrounded by a crowd. I could have never imagined God would use those years as a foundational element of a women's Ministry and Bible study I currently lead. Because of the freedom I now embrace, I'm able to walk alongside other women in their journey to wholeness and healing.

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Lori: Hi, my name is Lori Young of loriyoungspeaker.com. Several years ago, I was given an opportunity to work for a nonprofit whose mission I was deeply committed to. I started by just doing administrative tasks, but then I quickly found myself in the role of development director where I was coordinating fundraising events, I was the spokesperson. I wrote all the content for our marketing and social media and PR efforts. I even helped our nonprofit start a new business. Now, I can see how God was preparing me to be a writer and a speaker as the owner of my own business.

Tenneil: Hello. This is Tenneil Register of R7Reclaimed.com. As a child, I knew I wanted a big family, and I thought that would come through adoption, but as life turned out as a grown up, not only would it not happen through adoption, but I also would not have many babies of my own. What I can see now is that that longing for children and that heart for adoption is what really equipped me to be a stepmom of four bonus kids who I would get the choice to choose to love. So, while it doesn't come in a pretty package of adoption or naturally having a big family, God used those longings to prepare my heart for the dedication it takes to make our big, blended family of seven work.

Vicki: Hello, this is Vicki Stone of ProofingForPros.com. Thinking about my experiences as a virtual assistant and proofreader, I realized that God has provided online work for me, and the opportunity to meet people from all over the country. I love making friends with talented creators of content, and assisting them and identifying errors that interrupt the flow of their message.

Cheri: Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy: And I'm Amy Carroll.

Cheri: 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: You asked me to talk about loving my humanity, and I started laughing when I read that, because I thought, "I haven't so much loved my humanity, as I've tried to hide it." Really, that is what perfectionists do. Even the question made me think about our interview with Michelle Cushatt way back when. I'm so excited we'll have another one coming up with her soon. Do you remember the moment where she talked about accepting that she's human? I cried. I mean, she said it, and I had this visceral reaction. I'm like, "Accepting you're human, what? Huh?" This is so foreign.

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Then it also made me think about some of these wonderful interviews, but also books, and *Simply Tuesday* by Emily P. Freeman. She has this section that I have highlighted, underlined, starred. She talks about how shocked we can be by our own sin, and how shocking that it is to be shocked by our own sin. It's like that we're surprised by it every time. I think maybe accepting our humanity is stopping the habit of being shocked that we need a savior.

Cheri: Ooh, I like that.

Amy: It's not the pain over our sin, but just the surprise of it. The right kind of love of our humanity, and we're not talking about love of our sinful fallen nature but the right kind of love over our humanity is recognizing I need a savior because I'm human.

Cheri: I love that. Well, yeah. Just to make sure we are all on the same page, I'm thinking back to an article a few years ago about ... it was a Christian author who was kind of putting out a plea into the internet for bloggers to discern the difference between vulnerability and vomit. Their sense and their concern was that there had been too much focus on humanity to the point of celebrating and elaborating, and not enough focus on God's transforming power, I mean, it kind of reminded me.

I'm sure we've all been to an event like this; but years ago, I went to a women's retreat. The woman who was the speaker, she spent two and a half hours talking about her life before Jesus, and then there was a couple minutes about it and then she met Jesus, and then there was closing prayer. It was like, wow, that was a lot of time spent on the humanity part of things. So just want to be clear here. But I love, I love, love, love... the right kind of love of our humanity is recognizing our need of a savior. It's not celebrating our fallenness or-

Amy: Right.

Cheri: ... wallowing in our weakness. It's the focus is on Jesus.

Well, you titled this episode Why It's a Good Thing to Be Lost First. We sing the song so easily, "I once was lost, but now I'm found." I wanted to ask you, and I'll answer first, give you a chance to think, how do you recognize that you're lost, or at least that you're kind of losing your way?

I realize it when I realize I've become so negative I can't even stand myself. I mean, my attitude and my acting out become like the smell of not having bathed in months. I'm like, "Wow, I can't stand myself. I'm sure the people around me are sick of me. Okay, I clearly have wandered." How can you tell when you're kind of lost?

Amy: I mean this is so convicting to say, because I continue to wrestle with insomnia. I think, "I'm going to blame some of it on my hormones." But anyway, but some of it is

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clearly not. Sometimes, my insomnia is really such a reflection of my lack of trust in God and my overdeveloped sense of responsibility thinking that I'm in charge of everything, and I have to make everything happen. Let's just call it what it is. It's sin, because I'm not trusting God.

So I would say, if I start having big bouts of insomnia, it's a big indicator to me that I need to do some internal work and turn to the Savior.

Cheri: I am so very sorry I asked you this question. I'd like to edit this out, because-

Amy: I hate it, too. I got to tell you.

Cheri: ... I didn't fall asleep till midnight last night, and I got up at 3:30, because I was awake worrying about things. So thank you.

Amy: I'm so sorry.

Cheri: Thank you very much.

Amy: I know, and listen, I wrote a devotion for Proverbs 31 about four years ago about how I've overcome it. Woo hoo! Well, not so much.

Cheri: All right. Well, all right, "I once was lost, I now am found." Let's move into the hopeful part of this.

So how do you experience the joy of being found, what I referred to as the One Club? Again, I'll go first, and I'll be honest. For me, the joy of being found, I've had to learn, comes with pain. I'm not a fan of pain, but it ends up being an okay kind of pain. I'm slowly learning to recognize the difference between the kind of pain that is just destructive and the kind of pain that's healing. Because when I'm rescued, when I'm back in the One Club, Christ has come and found me yet again, I'm finally seeing where I was wrong about something or the way I totally misunderstood someone, or I push my agenda too hard, and everything's all falling to pieces.

What I'm finding is that Godly sorrow, contrition, repentance. They all do hurt, but it's not the same as the pain of some random, meaningless injury. It's the pain of growth. It feels like strengthening. It feels like maturity like we talked about in a previous episode. So while it still hurts, it's like you always say, "It hurts so good." Like yeah, I can say that afterward.

Amy: Right.

Cheri: I'm not going to say that in the middle of it. But I still am starting to really recognize, this isn't the same as the pain of blame and shame and fear. It hurts, but it's a different form of pain that leads to joy.

Amy: That's great. Well, and I was thinking, that pain is linked to repentance. It's the sorrow over the sin. So being found is linked directly to repentance. But then I was thinking about, and you just mentioned, joy is a follow-up to that.

I would say, for me, immediately I thought just the flood of love that comes in any time that I've repented, that acceptance, that love of Christ that comes in. I've talked about it on the podcast before, but the most tangible experience with God that I've ever had was when I was in college, and I had been kind of wandering. I had been part of the 99. No, I was the one, but I hadn't been found yet. When I turned to God, thinking I was going to get the stick, instead I had this experience with him that I'll never forget. It was the tangible, almost reach-out-and-touch presence of love. Amazing!

Cheri: So as we wrap up part two of Exhale, Love Who You Are, I think the number one thing I want our listeners and readers to take away is that learning to love who you are does not mean becoming selfish. It actually means focusing on yourself less, because you're so focused on Christ.

Amy: Well, I've had so much fun going back and rereading and highlighting and things, too, to get ready for these episodes. One of the things that's amazing me the most in this read-through - How many times have we read this thing, Cheri? But how dovetailed our chapters are. We really, we studied and wrote separately, but some of the concepts are so overlapping. One of the concepts that we both talked about was that loving yourself is an act of worship to your Creator. That is so freeing because that really reflects a focus on Jesus that you just talked about. So I think if we can start seeing this healthy love of ourselves as an act of worship that it really flips things because it's not a self-focus. It is a focus on God.

It made me think back years ago: my best friend in college, Anna, and her brother. Her brother was a new Christian. Anna had been walking with the Lord for a while. He was kind of in this real legalistic situation, and he was questioning some things that his sister was doing. He was like, "Well, why do you think God loves you, Anna?" He wanted a response about the stuff she did. She said, "I think God loves me because when I get out of the shower in the morning, and I shake my head, my hair curls all over it." She just looked him right in the eyes. It really made me tear up then. It made me tear up to think about it again. God loves us not because of what we've done for him, but simply because he created us with curly hair or straight hair, because he's the one who made us.

Cheri: I love that.

So what's the scripture that you've paired with this episode?

Amy: Well, it's related to that, and it's John 15:9, where Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now, remain in my love." I just think that if we're loved with the same depth as the Father loves the Son, and we are, then who are we to do less than that? I would go a step further to say that less than that is an actual sin. I mean it's an affront to our Creator. If we begin thinking about it that way, that really flips it from like, "Oh, this is just humility," which is, we know, this is not true, to something that's an affront to God.

Cheri: So what's the bad rule that we're breaking in this episode?

Amy: As you say, "I can be myself, or I can be loved." Then you follow up with the truth, which is, I can be myself because I'm beloved by God. So the grit for me in that is really fighting the critical voices in my head. I think this a struggle so many of us have. The things that we say ourselves we would never say to anyone else.

So yes, *Exhale* from the very beginning has been about changing your life. We're unabashed about that. *Exhale's* changed our lives, but we want to be able to embrace change without shame. There's a big difference in being shamed into changing something and being loved into changing something.

Cheri: So true. Well, being shamed is going to be temporary at best. To cope with that kind of shame there will then be a host of unhealthy coping mechanisms that then develop...

Amy: So true.

Cheri: ... along with it; whereas, when we change because we are loved, it's being transformed by God and that's going to be permanent.

What I love, the grace here for me, because I'm still thinking about this if we're loved with the same depth as the Father loves the Son, and we are, who are we to do less? My first thought is, "Wow, this is so freeing." It means I don't have to hyper focus on, "Don't be selfish, don't be selfish, don't be selfish. Oh, that sounds selfish. Oh, no, no, no, no. You're thinking about yourself too much." And I don't have to work harder to be humble and to show how humble I am. In sort of all of that nonsense, I can simply, now I'll put simply in quotation marks, but I can simply join Jesus in loving. In loving God, in loving others, and loving myself. That is an exhale right there.

We hope you've enjoyed episode 161 of Grit 'n' Grace, Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Amy: Stopover at our website, gritngracegirls.com/episode161 to find our transcripts and this week's Digging Deeper download.

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Cheri: If you're a fan of the Grit 'n' Grace Podcast, we would love if you would leave us a review. You can go to [gritngracegirls.com\review](http://gritngracegirls.com/review), where you'll find a link and even a little video showing you how to do it.

Amy: Our guides for our small groups are available now on Amazon. Just search *Exhale* book, and they'll come up under *Exhale*.

Cheri: For today, grow your grit, embrace God's grace. When you run across a bad rule, you know what to do. Go right on ahead and break it.

Amy & Cheri: Break it!