

Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast

Episode #219: Hope for When Life Falls Apart

Amy Carroll 00:00

Friends, have you ever been in a crisis situation when none of the tools in your survival toolbox worked anymore?

Cheri Gregory 00:07

I know I have. And not only is it a miserable place to be, but you end up feeling like such a failure because in the past, you've been able to get out and this time for some reason, you feel so stuck.

Amy Carroll 00:20

I've been there too. And I'll bet so many of us have been and this is the exact place that Sheri Rose meets us in her new book *Beyond the White Picket Fence: What to Do When Your Life is Dismantled*.

Cheri Gregory 00:33

I am so excited to discuss all the things that we learned from Sheri Rose last week, there were so many mic drop moments, and I think we might not want her to have her own today.

Amy Carroll 00:46

Let's do this!

Cheri Gregory 00:47

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy Carroll 00:49

And I'm Amy Carroll.

Cheri Gregory 00:51

And you're listening to Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast that equips you to lose who you're not love who you are, and live your one life.

Amy Carroll 00:59

Well, today we're discussing what we learned from last week's interview with Sheri Rose Shepherd, author of *Beyond the White Picket Fence: What to Do When Your Life is Dismantled*.

Cheri Gregory 01:09

You know, I love how practical Sheri Rose is in this book. She doesn't just talk about what to do. She shares the nitty gritty how to as well.

Amy Carroll 01:19

Well, Cheri, Okay, I gotta say, I'm kind of excited that we're having a convo today.

Cheri Gregory 01:25

Time to process life with Amy Carroll!

Amy Carroll 01:29

All the interviews are so great, but you and I need these convos as much as our listeners! Anyway, they're good for ourselves, we hope you guys like them. To start us off. Cheri, we had such an amazing conversation with Sheri Rose, and she had like 10,000 gold nuggets in that conversation. I just was trying to pick them up as fast as she was doling them out. So start us off with what we're not from that conversation.

Cheri Gregory 01:57

All right, so the statement that I came up with here is you're not a broken record or a band aid dispenser. And I'll unpack that just a little bit. The broken record concept is, you know, she had that moment when she was basically demonstrating just kind of this rote memorization of Scripture as if you just repeated over and over. And my first reaction to that was, but scripture is sacred, like however we use, it must be wholly right. But I realized that what she was demonstrating was almost using it as a numbing agent, rather than a healing agent. So that's the whole idea of being a broken record is it might be the way that I use it inside my own head. And then bandaid dispenser is the way I might use it to just slap cliches over other people's open wounds without really recognizing the severity or actually triage what's going on. And so in both cases, it's a matter of using something that's become cliché, there might have been kernel of truth to it, it might even be God's truth, but when it's being used, like a cliché to shut down an honest expression of authentic pain.

Amy Carroll 03:07

So that's a moment right there, Cheri Gregory, that when we use scripture, to shut down an authentic moment of pain, oh my gosh, I've done it to myself. And I've done it to other people, just like he said, broken record or band aid.

Cheri Gregory 03:23

Exactly. And again, I kind of recoiled when she implied that scripture wasn't enough that just having it memorized, but I think she's right, just parroting words, scripture is not a magic spell. It's not an incantation. Now. Let's be clear, God can use anything, okay? In a moment. If he

chooses, he could use even my worst, you know, mindless repetition, he could break through that I'm not in any way trying to say he doesn't have the power to do that. But I know that he what he longs for is an ever deepening two way relationship.

Cheri Gregory 03:52

And so you know, just as an example, I love it when we're having a conversation and you remind me of something that I've said that you found valuable. But I would get really annoyed if that's all you ever did if all you ever did talking to me was repeat a bunch of Cheri-isms over and over and over again at me, I'd be like, let's move on. Let's dig a little bit deeper.

Cheri Gregory 04:09

And so one of the things that I've been doing while we're going on almost six months now is a practice. Since we're talking about spiritual practices in this series in season three, yes, I've been doing Lectio Divina, which is a spiritual practice of choosing a scriptural selection and then reading through it. First of all, taking the time, I generally set aside a half an hour for it and reading through it three separate times. And there's a set of questions to ask and kind of process and respond and there's some quiet time in it. And what has been so amazing to me, and this is in contrast now to the broken record or the band aid approach.

Cheri Gregory 04:45

What's been so amazing to me is how these same old words because I'm pretty familiar with a lot of the Scripture at this stage of my life, but what started out is the same old words that turned into such a rich, intimate conversation between me and God as He shows me how it applies. for that particular day and shows some extra special nuance that had never seen before. And so you're not a broken record or a band aid dispenser, because God longs for that two way communication that builds the relationship through His Word.

Amy Carroll 05:15

Beautiful. Hey, just to insert here, Lectio Divina, I've only done that a couple times, like in retreat settings, do you have a some kind of a link that you could share with all of us, Sherry, that would teach us how to do it? Sure. Because it is an incredible practice. So that would be something really helpful. I think

Cheri Gregory 05:34

I'll add that to the show notes.

Amy Carroll 05:35

So mine is you're not a reality TV star.

Cheri Gregory 05:40

Oh, my goodness. I love that so much. Unpack that for us.

Amy Carroll 05:43

So one of the things Sheri Rose just knocked my socks off with was when she was talking about how people are curious about her story. And they'll ask her over and over again to tell her about her story. And do you remember her script? Because I just had this moment when she said it. I love a script.

Cheri Gregory 06:03

I remember she gave us something amazing. What was it?

Amy Carroll 06:05

When people will ask her ... or I think particularly if people ask her very private kinds of things, she says that she asked him very politely and I could see where tone of voice would be everything in this response. Do you mind if I don't relive that? Wow. Okay, so there's so much about that I just had this huge moment, even when she said it, it made me think back to I remember, years ago, I was at a women's conference. And my friend Pam was doing a breakout session where she shared her testimony. And it's a painful testimony of her husband having an affair. He was a deacon in the church when it happened. And then God put their marriage back together. And he was shot in the line of duty, just as they got back together as a policeman. And it caused some brain damage and things. And so there was just this ongoing, like years and years of pain and their marriage. And so at the end of the session, there was this woman who she didn't even know Pam, who started asking all these very personal invasive questions. And the rest of us especially those of us, who knew Pam and had walked with her through that story, we kind of just sat there with our mouth hanging open, like how could someone ask her those questions, and yet now years into especially ministry, I have seen it over and over again. And I honestly think it comes from our reality TV culture, which says, I have a right to every detail of your story. And you must tell it to me.

Cheri Gregory 07:43

We've been trained to be voyeurs. I mean, this is a form of voyeurism.

Amy Carroll 07:47

Oh, it's really true. It is really true. So I just want to say to everyone, all our friends that are listening today, if you find yourself in that position, you do not owe people the details of your story. Just because people are curious does not mean that you have to answer those questions. You are not a reality TV star. And it was so interesting. My friend Wendy and I have been studying women in the Bible and worse for LED. We're studying the Mary's and Jesus's story, and I was reading this morning about his mother and how twice and Luke it says she

treasured all these things in her heart. And you know, we just do not live in a culture that treasures things in our hearts. We have to share it on Facebook, we have to tell everybody, I mean, it's like if we don't broadcast that it's not real. And I loved what Sheri Rose was telling us about her book, which was she retold her in her book, what was useful. So she shared what was useful. She retold what was useful. And she with holes, what is hurtful. I was like that is very instructive for me. And I think for our reality TV culture that we live in that we can withhold those things that would be hurtful, either to us or other people in the retailing. And we only retail what is useful the rest of it. We just treasure in our hearts. Absolutely. So anyway, it's a very different way of thinking about things than our reality TV culture that we live in.

Cheri Gregory 09:24

That is wonderful. And I just realized that that ties really well to what I want to talk about under love who you are. So we're going to make that pivot from lose who you're not. So I said, You're not a broken record or a band aid dispenser and you said you're not a reality TV star. So we're going to move to love who you are. And so my statement for this is you are empowered to shift from a bitter heart to a broken heart. And her distinction between these two was absolutely mind blowing. Sheri Rose was talking about how when our heart is bitter, we're seeking revenge. And part of that revenge often involves telling way more details about the other person and what they did wrong to me so that I can have a sympathetic audience. And I can rehearse that story over and over again. And she pointed out that that rehearsal, like you said, that rehearsal of too many details can be reliving and can be re injuries and can keep a portion of that story alive that really needs to be receding into the past. That is a wonderful connection here. God empowers us to shift from that bitter heart that seeks revenge to a broken heart. And I loved how she said, a broken heart is not evidence of unforgiveness. A broken heart is a heart that is aware of the feelings that are really happening, you know, my feelings, my reactions, my needs, my responsibilities. As I was kind of processing all this, I realized another term for what she's calling a bitter heart, especially that revenge seeking heart might another term for that be a control freak.

Amy Carroll 11:02

Oh, my gosh, Cheri — did you have to go there?

Cheri Gregory 11:06

You know, one of the things she said was, the Lord showed her that she needed to give up the need to be understood. And when she gave up the need to be understood, that's when the hooks of the enemy came out. But isn't that at least part of what happens with bitterness is that we keep trying to control the narrative and make sure other people understand what really happened. And we're so busy, again, fixating on other people, and what we want to tell them what they want them to know and do instead of taking that broken heart to Jesus. And so one of the things that's been important for me over the last, I'd say, couple of months, I've been

doing some reading on stress. And because the last year has been a source of stress, and there is I thought I knew a lot about it, I thought I knew a lot about our stress response cycle.

Cheri Gregory 11:50

But the thing that's been kind of new for me is to realize there's the outside stressor. And so in the case of somebody who is a recovering control freak, the outside stress or is often a person who won't do what I want them to do, I might be harboring that bitter heart towards them. And then there's my own stress response. And that's going to involve my brain, which is the thoughts going through my head, and then my body is going to have all sorts of stress responses to it. Here's the thing that's been so important for me to recognize, I have to deal with my own stress my own physical and mental stress responses before I can effectively deal with the stress or in other words, that other person and for so many years, I had no clue that I even had a stress response, let alone how to manage the stress response. And so when you don't know how to handle your own brain and body that is going through all of this, well, the natural thing to do is try to control other people right to shut down the source of stress so that I can feel better so that my brain will calm down in my body will calm down, which is just another way of saying meddling in other people's lives and trying to fix them. So they won't do the things that trigger those stress responses in me that I again used to have no clue how to deal with. And so here's the key, the key is not to figure out how to make people behave the way I think they should. (And let's just be clear, I can't believe I just said that sentence out loud.)

Cheri Gregory 13:11

But the key is for me to learn how to recognize my own stress responses to recognize my own broken heart, and to deal with it in a healthy way. And so as Sherry rose shared with us, God led her back to her tears of all things. And it makes me wonder how much bitterness we carry. Because we hold back from letting honest healing tears just flow the way God created them to flow. Tears are a completely appropriate stress relief and a god given way to express our sadness and our grief. so bitter heart, broken heart. I mean, obviously, what we really want is a pain free existence, which is just not an option that's available to us on a broken planet. And so making that shift, so let me go back to my statement, you are empowered. And maybe I should even just add by God, you are empowered by God to shift from a bitter heart to a broken heart. And that may well mean feeling the pain and shedding those tears in his presence as part of the healing process.

Amy Carroll 14:11

Well, and that ties in so well. So what you're not also you know that when you acknowledge I have a broken heart, that's when you stop numbing, that's when the tears come and that doesn't feel good, it feels negative, but that's the path of healing. Absolutely.

Cheri Gregory 14:28

Alright, so what is your statement? How are we going to love who we are, according to Amy Carroll,

Amy Carroll 14:32

Oh, gosh. Well, I wrote down you are strong enough to love the seemingly unlovable. So one of the things that just spoke to me that Sheri Rose talked about was this relationship with her mother and the fact that her mother who was it sounds abusive, when she was young is now living with her, and that God is doing a restoring work but I like to Skip to the happy ending. So God is doing a restoring work. But really, when you think about all the messy in that middle, that's really something and I have a personal friend who has a similar story, very abusive mother got very sick towards the end of her life and my friend had become a Christian In the meantime, cared for her mother for the last year of her life was extremely painful, extremely difficult. And yet she saw God work in ways that she could have never anticipated. So I don't have anything that dramatic in my life, but let's just say that we all have people in our lives that are difficult to love. And sometimes I am the person that is.

Amy Carroll 15:43

Right now, I have a person in my life that is difficult to love. And so I'm trying to work through this because I'm listening to Sherry rose, and the redemptive work that she's seeing God doing. And I have confessed here before that I don't like messy and difficult. And so my default is to put some distance between us to do some ghosting to kind of put my arm out and keep you at, like, maybe 10 arm's length. And that has been my response. And so I am trying to be a grown up.

Cheri Gregory 16:20

No, horrible, it's the worst.

Amy Carroll 16:23

Now try to be a grown up. But I've been thinking about what you say Sherry, about being so all or nothing. As a reforming perfectionist, I thought, that's what I've done. Like I'm either all in on a relationship, and we're buddies and I'm loyal, or I don't want to like have anything to do with you. And that is not kind or loving, or godly or healthy. And it keeps me from seeing God's redeeming work and relationships. So I was thinking again about this today, I think I've shared this before that I heard Bernie brown say at one point, the most loving people I know have the best boundaries. So I've been thinking about that all these things about this relationship. So how can I not be all or nothing this time? And how can I set boundaries that actually nurture this relationship and allow me to stay in it as a loving and kind person? And so I've been thinking, Okay, there's two sets of boundaries that I need to create a need to create some

internal boundaries. And one of the internal boundaries that I need to create is that I need to become unoffendable.

Cheri Gregory 17:31

What's the fun in that?

Amy Carroll 17:34

Now I know, I would have said in the past that I'm sort of undefendable sometimes I'm just clueless I got something awful to me and I don't really leave doesn't really register for several days. And by then I'm kind of over it. Recently, this person, the barbs were directed at Barry. And I gotta tell you, like, I can get over my own stuff. I'm not really a grudge holder, but man, you know, you say something to Barry, or one of my kids, and you might be dead to me. So I was realizing, oh, I am offended. I do hold grudges in that case, and I need to create some internal boundaries so that I'm gonna be undefendable because Barry is not offended. That's the funny thing is like, Ah, that's just let this person does. He just moved on. And I'm still mad. But anyway, I'm getting over it. I'm becoming undefendable. And then I need some external boundaries. So one of the things that's been difficult and there was a relationship is the amount of communication this person wants. And I just, you know, I just don't have time for it in my life. And so in the past, what I have done is I've just been like, well, I can't be friends with this person. But Barry said, No, he you have the ability to create a cadence just because this person texts you doesn't mean you have to text him back two minutes later, you can wait a day or two, you know, so those are just some practical things. And so but I did have this moment that I connected to Sherri Rose as a story as sitting across the table kind of wrestling through this with Barry and talking to him and getting his feedback on that disc because this is an area he's stronger than I am. And he said, Amy, this person is one of the least of these. I had this total, like I teared up because I didn't mean to like say something to hurt your feelings. I was like, You did it. That was a Holy Spirit truth bomb. That was I'm tearing up because that hit my heart in the place it needed to hit like and he wasn't being condemning, and it helped me reframe these seemingly unlovable people like I don't want to think about them as the least of these but they are and so God makes us strong enough to love the seemingly unlovable.

Cheri Gregory 19:45

Okay, I want you to please tell Barry Carroll that I'm very upset with him because I had every intention of leaving this podcast recording defending my amazing ability to hold grudges especially on behalf of others. And because of his Words I have been stripped of that justification so far right? It hurts so good as you are so fond of saying it's true. It's true, because I mean, really what is grudge holding? Except bitterness?

Amy Carroll 20:13

Yes.

Cheri Gregory 20:14

It's all connected here. It's another form of bitterness and being brokenhearted because they are the least of these is a much, much more Jesus Christ like thing to do. Yes. All right. So let's bring this all together into the into your favorite part, which is taking some action here in live your one life well. So just a couple of questions here that I'm going to be asking myself and friends who are listening, you are welcome to borrow any and all of these, I'm going to be asking myself and really this is going to be a prayer of I'm going to be processing what signs do I see, or maybe hear in myself that I'm behaving like a broken record, a band aid dispenser, or a reality TV star, or maybe all three, so I'm going to really be praying that the Holy Spirit will show me will make me sensitive to see those and to hear them in myself. Am I being a broken record, a band aid dispenser or reality TV star?

Cheri Gregory 21:08

And then the second question, what signs do I see that I need to shift from a bitter heart to a broken heart, and one of the ones I just know happens with me is when I look around at whoever has been listening to me for five or 10 minutes, and they all have their eyes glazed over and I'm still going on and on and on about this other person who did a certain thing to me, and I'm so offended. So you bringing up this idea of being undefendable is going to really fit in here. When I hear myself doing that. It's a sign that I need to shift from a bitter heart to a broken heart.

Cheri Gregory 21:40

Alright, Action Amy, tell us what we're going to DO?

Amy Carroll 21:43

Well, the first thing we're going to do is we're going to use scripture as a bomb, not a bludgeon.

Cheri Gregory 21:51

Oh, my goodness.

Amy Carroll 21:54

Use scripture as a bomb, not a bludgeon. I think this whole idea of the broken record, like as you talked about that, yes, sometimes I use it as a numbing thing. But sometimes I use it like a baseball batum itself. Do you know what I'm saying? Yeah. Exactly. If you are a godly person, you would think about it this way. And you wouldn't have these feelings and all that. I mean, all the things that we do to ourselves and other people. So God gave us like when you were talking about that lectio Divina and reading it over and over again, and how it builds relationship with God. Whenever we're close to God, we experience all that he is he is love and kindness and mercy, all those fruits of the spirit that we think we have to figure out

ourselves know those come because we're close to him, and they're his gifts to us. So scripture really is a bomb and not a bludgeon. And then the next one is to set internal and external boundaries to love others and yourself. Well, and especially in crisis, you know, Sheri Rose's, whole story in her whole book centers around when your life is dismantled. And I can't help but think in this moment about our friends that are listening, and that some of you are probably experiencing a dismantled life. And we want you to know that God is there to be balm for you. And we want you to take good care of yourself cross in tears if you need to.

Cheri Gregory 23:21

Absolutely. So the scripture that Sheri Rose shared with us is Isaiah 61:4 and it says "They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall rise up the former devastations they shall repair the ruin cities and the devastations of many generations." I love the redemptive picture of that scripture.

Amy Carroll 23:40

So we've got grit and grace to go over here. I tell you what the grit for me is really what I talked about last is to set boundaries instead of ghosting people you know that when things get messy when things get hard relationally that if I will set a few boundaries, then I will be able to be the loving kind person that I really do want to be and I won't have to do this all or nothing in relationships. How about you Cheri? What's the grace.

Cheri Gregory 24:07

The grace is going to be borrowed straight from Barry Carroll. That grace that I need to give to others is to look at each person that I'm tempted to be bitter towards that I am tempted to ghost rather than love and look at them and realize that each person is the least of these and is deserving of God's grace. And that's our love.

Amy Carroll 24:33

Darn that Barry Carroll!

Cheri Gregory 24:37

Well friends, we sure hope you've enjoyed listening to Episode 219 of Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll 24:46

And we want to say a big thank you to Sheri Rose Shepherd, author of *Beyond the White Picket Fence: What to Do When Your Life is Dismantled*, and her publisher Salem Books for making this episode possible.

Cheri Gregory 24:58

Now, normally, we would never ever say, "This book is for everyone!" As authors, we know that every book is supposed to have a really narrow niche of readers.

Amy Carroll 25:08

But considering the times we're living through right now,

Cheri Gregory 25:11

We really do think this book is for everyone!

Amy Carroll 25:16

Check out our web page at <https://gritngracethepodcast.com/episode219>. There you'll find this week's transcript a link to Sheri Rose Shepherd's newest book *Beyond the White Picket Fence: What to Do When Your Life is Dismantled*, and a link to Sheri Rose's website.

Cheri Gregory 25:33

If you're not yet a member of our Facebook group, we would love to have you join us just search for grit and grace the community and you'll find us

Amy Carroll 25:41

next week we'll be talking with Heather Dixon, author of renewed finding hope when you don't like your story

Cheri Gregory 25:47

For today. Grow Your grit, embrace God's grace. And as God reveals the next step to live your one life. Well,

Amy Carroll 25:55

we'll be cheering you on ...

Amy & Cheri

...so TAKE IT!