

Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast

Episode #225: How to See the Joyful Journey Your Soul's Already On

Amy Carroll 00:00

Cheri, when we watch a baby grow, we understand that they're going through developmental stages,

Cheri Gregory 00:06

but we often expect our own souls to arrive fully grown.

Amy Carroll 00:10

Yes. And in today's episode Kristi Gaultiere introduces us to the spiritual formation of our souls.

Cheri Gregory 00:17

This is a joy filled concept that will allow you to enjoy your souls baby steps

Amy Carroll 00:23

and extend grace to those coming along behind you.

Cheri Gregory 00:26

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy Carroll 00:28

And I'm Amy Carol,

Cheri Gregory 00:30

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. Well.

Amy Carroll 00:39

Today we're talking with Kristi Gaultiere, co author of journey of the soul A Practical Guide to emotional and spiritual growth. Kristi and Bill her husband of 35 years are doctors of psychology who have dedicated their lives to serving Jesus and are the founders of a nonprofit ministry called soul shepherding. As therapists and spiritual directors, they have spent over 70,000 hours in the pool of pain with people and share their learnings to strengthen others in their intimacy with Jesus and emotional, relational and spiritual health. Kristi is also the mother of three adult children and she has two grandchildren.

Cheri Gregory 01:16

Okay, Amy. So I know that I'm the one who when this book came across our emails, I was like, Hey, we absolutely have to do this interview. What was it that intrigued you about this topic?

Amy Carroll 01:25

Well, this is probably not going to surprise you or our listening friends. But I'm a brain science slash kind of growth junkie. So I just always love a framework that gives me more insight to emotional spiritual growth, personalities, all of that. Hmm,

Cheri Gregory 01:43

I love it. Well, I've been following Bill and Kristi and their ministry Soul Shepherding for probably 15 years now. And one of the things I found years ago when I surveyed my blog readers, I asked them what they long for most in their relationship with God, and can you guess the one word that came back? The one word that came back was intimacy, they longed for greater intimacy with God. And so this is one of the things I love, love, love so much about this book, *Journey of the Soul: a Practical Guide to Emotional Spiritual Growth*. And the message that Kristi brings to us is, like you said, this paradigm, this approach to being intentional about developing intimacy with God, and more has come from this interview than either of us expected, I believe

Amy Carroll 02:31

so much more to say that I did a deep dive after this interview is probably an understatement. Well,

Cheri Gregory 02:39

we will talk more about that after the interview. For now let's just say I think that this topic is so timely for so many of us.

Amy Carroll 02:49

Kristi, we are so excited to have you with us today. Thank you for coming. Thank you for having me. during a time when so many of us feel like our souls have been in turmoil. I know we need this conversation. So tell us how you came to write *Journey of the Soul*? And who did you write it for?

Kristi Gaultiere 03:08

Well, I wrote this book because it was the book that I really needed to hand clients who came to see me for therapy for spiritual direction. And they were wondering why they no longer feel close to God, or why they didn't want to attend church anymore. Or maybe they felt supported in God. Understanding this development of stages of faith had been so helpful to me personally in pressing through trials and temptations in my own relationship with Christ. And so I really wanted to be able to help a person who's burned out on their faith, it's maybe become dry, or just duty, or who's struggling, really, with legalism and judging themselves or others, or the person that was just really hurting, just desperate for God's healing, touching their soul. And then also, because my husband and I, in our ministry work a lot with leaders. We wanted this for leaders who are experiencing a lot of conflict among the people that they are leading because there are different stages of faith in different stages of emotional and psychological development, too. And they're not understanding each other and they're judging each other. And we knew that God would use this to bring a great empathy for other people in his body to

Amy Carroll 04:16

this just sounds so needed in our contentious culture. And I have to say, I can't wait to share what you're going to share with us today. I have two friends that we've been meeting on the front porch, the three of us and talking through so many of the issues that you just brought up so can't wait. Oh,

Cheri Gregory 04:32

I love that. Well, when I first opened your book, one of the first things I saw was the map here you call it the CHRIST stages map and it's an acronym C-H-R-I-S-T and it shows the stages of emotional and spiritual development. And Amy and I are geeks were research geeks, we love a good paradigm. So we are totally dialed into this. So first of all, I'd love to hear how did you come to identify these stages of emotional and spiritual develop? Listen, this is a new concept to me, it resonates. But I'm like, I've never heard of it. So tell us where it came from.

Kristi Gaultiere 05:05

Great. Well, I first learned the stages of psychological development as part of getting my doctorate in clinical psychology. And then later in studying spirits formation, I began to see that actually their status development in Scripture in the Bible, John gives us some we see it in Psalm 23, we see it in the life of Jesus in His own development, and Paul and Abraham had their own faith development. And then I kept seeing it in the lives of those that I was journeying with in my psychotherapy practice, as well as just in reflecting upon my own growth and development in my life and my journey with Jesus.

Amy Carroll 05:39

So could you walk us through an overview of those stages of emotional and spiritual development?
Yes, well, we

Kristi Gaultiere 05:46

put them in an acronym to help them to be easy for us to remember, because that's how these stages can be so helpful in US loving people that are in different stages than asked if we learn the stages, then the Lord will use that to help us identify what stage those that we turn with are in. And so the first stage is the C stage acronym is Christ, because this is our development in Christ in His wholeness, really look at him as the perfect man as well as God. So the first stage is C for confidence in Christ, we're putting our confidence coming to trust him. This is when we are becoming Christians, and we're committing our lives to Jesus. And then the second stage is h for help in discipleship. Once we become Christians, we've come into a committed relationship with Jesus, we kind of need to understand well, what does this mean? Okay, Jesus has these commands in the Bible, but how do I live into him? Or how do I even read the Bible and make sense of it, it's not an easy book to understand prayer, okay, prayer, I've heard of that. But I'm not quite sure how to do it. We're learning through coming and getting involved in a church and and those that are ahead of us on this journey. We're learning to worship the Lord. It's an exciting stage of a lot of growth. And then the next stage are his responsibilities in ministry, we're discovering that God has given us some unique gifts, we call them joy gifts in the book, how we take them out of the list that Paul gives us in Romans in Ephesians. And we're learning to discover what those unique gifts God has given us are, and that actually, he's put us in a family to family of God, and that we can use those gifts and we can receive from others gifts and be strengthened. And we find great joy in that and responsibilities in ministry stage. And we're beginning to discover more about our identity in Christ and this sense of belonging in his body in his church and being a part of something bigger than just our own lives. And then usually around that time, we'll hit a wall. And this wall to often takes in different forms. I think we're gonna talk about that a little bit later. But if we'll press through the wall, then we can get into some of these second half journey stages. And the first that second half

journey stage is the eye stage and its inner journey. This is the stage where God is really wanting to take us deeper into looking back at some of our wounds from childhood, some of the consequences of our sins and been sinned against and wanting really hand us kind of an opportunity for greater sense of healing and deeper rootedness in him in the eyes stage. This is a stage where we're growing in our emotional honesty with ourselves and with God and safe people. And we're also growing into greater longing and trust for God, a deeper surrender to Him than the S stage is Spirit led ministry. And this is the stage where we're re engaging again with our gifts and ministry and loving others and partnering with Jesus. But we're doing this no longer depending just on ourselves, like we did in the our stage, but we're doing this 30 to be fully surrendered to Holy Spirit in his guidance. And then the last stage that we identify here in the Christ stages is transforming union. This is a stage where we have really grown in our likeness to Jesus, our full surrender to Him, we're able to be aware of and appreciate his presence at all time. It's like a long marriage, that you can't even imagine yourself without your relationship to Jesus, he's more a part of you, then you in yourself apart from him.

Amy Carroll 09:10

That is so beautiful. And as you were describing each stage, I could think about so many things in my own life and try to assess where I am now. That's so helpful. Well,

Cheri Gregory 09:21

I'm curious, do you find people resisting the I stage? Absolutely. Because I was raised in a very legalistic church, and many people I know, I think see the our stage as the pinnacle and anything other than staying there would be seen as falling away and following the world and becoming self centered. So do you see people having a concern that the inner journey becomes self-absorbed? Absolutely.

Kristi Gaultiere 09:50

Cheri, so insightful of you to say that, in fact, over half of the church research shows really never go beyond our stage. They just kind of keep re-cycling back. Because this is a cyclical model. It's not a linear model, our growth and development happens in cycles. So we'll have a home stage that we're in, and then we're getting some touches into the next stage. And we're cycling back to the stage previous, but we have one stage that cuts mostly at work in our life. And at that time, he won't override our will we get to choose if we're going to say yes to his invitation, and if we're going to participate, and it involves a greater sense of faith with every stage that we move forward in. And it also involves us persevering through trials and temptations because we have an enemy at every stage who's trying to keep us stagnated and stack and immature. So absolutely, and that that transition through the wall is the hardest one. And most people, they're not willing to lean into the suffering, they're at the wall in order to break through into the inner journey. And like you said, they're afraid because they don't understand it. And also, because not many Christians have done it. They don't there aren't a lot of guides to guide them through it.

Amy Carroll 11:00

Well, and I'm reflecting that I think I have gone past that wall, and you get a lot of rocks thrown at you by Christians who refuse to go through it. Any thoughts about that?

Kristi Gaultiere 11:14

Well, absolutely, you know, we often tend to judge what we're afraid of and what we don't understand. And this is a big paradigm shift here between the first half of the C-H-R stages and the second half of the I-S-T stages. And so often when we don't understand this model, and we don't understand what God's doing will tend to judge it because we're afraid we feel uncomfortable. Maybe it's a defense against feelings of shame.

Amy Carroll 11:39

Well, and I will say having pushed through that wall or maybe been pushed through that wall, I'm not sure what that I, I would have been the Christian that cycled around and around the car, because that's my comfort zone. so fascinating.

Kristi Gaultiere 11:55

Yes, absolutely. Thank you for your honesty about that. You're not alone in that either.

Cheri Gregory 11:59

We're a couple of recovering perfectionists ... So, Kristi of how has this map been helpful to you personally and in journeying with others?

Kristi Gaultiere 12:09

Well, it's been so helpful to me personally, with just persevering through my own temptations and struggles, it's been hugely helpful for me and freeing me from shame, and comparing myself to other people, because I've finally been able to really appreciate what God is doing in my own life, as well as getting a vision from him where he's leading me next. And that really has helped me to respond to his invitations to grow more enhance. It's been huge for my own life, and then a journey with others. It's really helped me not to judge other people, but really celebrate where, where they are, what God's doing in the stage they're in. And it's also helped me to participate with his grace in their life, to guide them and to help them to see the invitation of where he's drawing them to deeper growth in him and transformation in him.

Amy Carroll 12:52

So Kristi, in your book, *Journey of the Soul*, you talk about times in our journey, where we hit a wall in our spiritual and emotional growth. So what are some of the signs that we've hit a wall?

Kristi Gaultiere 13:03

Well, there's several different signs and they might look different at different times in our lives, or among different people. One could be burnout from overworking or over responsibility. Or it could be a spiritual burnout, kind of from a compulsive spirituality, or it could be more of a compassion fatigue. Sometimes the wall will look like a moral failing, it'll be more of a blowout. It could look like a faith crisis, just even secretly doubting God or becoming cynical or hopeless, maybe just apathetic kind of has this author is a Christian life. It can look like a dark night of the soul where you just you really can't sense God's presence anymore. You feel alone and abandoned by God,

Cheri Gregory 13:43

Would you be willing to share your experience at the wall with our listeners?

Kristi Gaultiere 13:48

I share what I didn't have this map when I hit the wall I was in my late 30s I was really struggling with doubting God's goodness and love I had become kind of burned out from all the pain that I was containing from the lives of my therapy clients. And also just the stress of being a parent of three young teenagers. And I really realized that while I was able to teach and really evolved in busy at church with leading, I'm teach the God was loving that he was good. But I was running into this sanctification gap between what I taught and what my life showed, I really believed about God. And this really began to bother me to realize that I'm professing all this truth that I've read that I've internalized from Scripture and from my life in church, but inside I'm feeling angry at God because he's let these good people that I love dirty with suffer so much, and I, I couldn't see His goodness. And then I found myself, you know, reading in Scripture and knowing and having to memorize God's instructions to not worry, but I was worrying about my kids. And I knew that I was supposed to be trusting God, but I was dependent on myself in reality, to try to make my life work and All of this was just causing me to crash into the wall. Because what I had experienced as new and exciting earlier my faith and just, I'd lost my joy in it, I lost my passion, and it just become beautiful. At the same time, my husband had already pushed through the wall, and he was in in a journey and he was ignited with this new passion for God and this new longing for God. And I wanted that, but I felt shame like, well, what's wrong with me, I mean, is any of my faith even real anymore? And I began to doubt my own sincerity and my own relationship with God, thankfully, because my husband and his growth ahead of me and and having the vision from him, and then other mentors, and some of the great spiritual writers of the past, I began to get this vision of other is more, oh, this is where I am, okay, this isn't this isn't something where I've like backslidden, or where nothing has been true that I've experienced so far. This is this is a part of my journey. And God's working something here with me and I get to choose if I'm going to trust him and venture in through this stage, I don't understand. So through it, I actually reached out to a mentor of mine, Dallas and Jane Willard have been mentors of ours. And I called Jane and I said, Can I meet with you for spiritual direction, I just need some guidance. And so she was gracious enough to meet with me. And through that time, she began to just say, Christy, you need to look back at some of your early ones of abandonment. As a baby, I experienced a huge abandonment wound, because I had to have a surgery when I was six weeks old, and that surgery ended up saving my life. But it also meant that I was in the hospital, away from my parents and anyone that I knew and loved. And I hadn't ever really let the Lord go deep into the full lie that Satan implanted in me at that point of believing that I shouldn't have left, and that God didn't really have a purpose for my life, I had dealt with some of that woundedness that abandonment wound through my studies and psychology early on in my own therapy, but God wanted to take it to a whole nother level that I wasn't even conscious of. And so as I got really honest with God, and myself and others, and reached out for that help, and began to own, that my own struggle with self hatred, and kind of let God dig deep and uncover some unconscious lies that I believed and bring healing to that child with me that had felt only eligible to be abandoned. That's when I was able to discover a new life in Christ and a new passion for God and longing for God and growth in him. That's that led me and then to Spirit led ministry, which is a part of what dirty the soul has resulted from.

Amy Carroll 17:41

When we asked you for a vocal scripture you gave us Psalm 23, which I've been studying with friends, so I can't wait to hear your perspective. So you specifically gave us Psalm 23. Three, he restores my

soul, he guides me along the right paths for his namesake. Can you share with us why Psalm 23 is so significant?

Kristi Gaultiere 18:02

Well, Psalm 23 is really a it's about the stages of development. Each one of the verses is a separate stage of our journey. And David has given us a great gift in this because he's given us beautiful, poetic language that engages us in our imagination and our emotions. And every stage of life, we follow Jesus, we're following him as a shepherd of our soul. And so Psalm 23 is a is a scripture we've used throughout the book, as we're explaining the Psalms and as some of the soul care exercises that we unpack as well, because it's important for us to be able to grow in great trust for Jesus as our good shepherd, if we're going to grow so he can continue to guide us down this path and our journey. And really, he is the one that restores our souls. Beautiful.

Cheri Gregory 18:48

So as a Highly Sensitive Person, I so appreciate the way you integrate spiritual and emotional growth. What would you say to the woman listening right now who tends to judge her emotional self and even hate it?

Kristi Gaultiere 19:03

Such a great question. And Cheri, I'm a Highly Sensitive Person too. So I feel such empathy for you and for the women that you're representing here. In fact, we could do a whole podcast on self-hatred. I mean, that in and of itself is a huge an important topic. In fact, freedom from self-hatred is a huge part of my own personal journey and what God did in my inner journey stage of development, the reality is of why we work so hard to integrate this understanding of our emotional and our spiritual growth is because if our faith doesn't touch down to that emotional reality in our life, there's no true transformation. This is what Jesus invites us into. He invites us into an intimate relationship with him, one where we give him access to our whole self, even ugly emotions, the painful emotions, and where we really can receive His healing into our wounds, our traumas and emotional realities

Cheri Gregory 19:58

Coming from a very head-based, logic-based upbringing, and which, you know, I'm not saying that it's either or not trying to paint a complete dichotomy here. But that's I so appreciate your integration of emotion with spirituality.

Amy Carroll 20:12

So skimming through *Journey of the Soul*, it just looks so incredibly practical. There are charts and lists and examples so we can learn to live this out. So can you walk us through the key features in your book and tell us how they help on our journey?

Kristi Gaultiere 20:29

Absolutely. We wanted this to be practical and be an easy reference for people. So each chapter we've included trail markers for each stage that really are identifying the different signs of each stage as well as Pathfinder questions to help you kind of understand, well, what stage Am I in what's my home stage right now. And then we've included things like spiritual disciplines that are particularly life giving a

fruitful for each stage, we've listed Scriptures for each of the stage some of the key scriptures to help us understand how this integrates with God's truth in His Word, and that we've put a packing list and what might help us progress what God's invitation is to us towards the next stage might be each chapter, we also included soul type questions that we just hope people will use to process with a friend or in a small group, because we really grow even best in community. And I love that you guys are in community here and grit and grace of leading the community of women growing in Christ itself. We've put those together as well as opportunities for your own reflection, and then an exercise in the book of how you can start to reflective kind of your life journey and map of growth so far, and through that, see how God has been working and redeeming in your life. Even the hard things, even things you thought were insignificant how it all fits in this map,

Amy Carroll 21:40

what he's doing is fantastic. I think I need to bring the book to the porch. Just saying.

Cheri Gregory 21:48

I'm thinking I need to do a group study, an online group study of women who are in ministry, who are Highly Sensitive {ersons who either are have hit the wall or are you know, on one side or the other have a wall experience. It's just so practical. It's so like just flipping through it. I was like, Okay, I know, spiritual growth can be hard and painful. So I often resist books like that. But I looked at this one, I'm like, I just feel like this is going to be such a gentle guide. And I love how you said it's not just for ourselves, but also to help us understand others.

Kristi Gaultiere 22:25

Yes, it's a great tool of empathy for our brother and sister in Christ.

Cheri Gregory 22:29

Yeah, that's a huge gift.

Kristi Gaultiere 22:30

It's been helpful to my marriage even just understand you and Bill and I have been in different stages or with as a parent of my adult children and understanding what stages they're in and having empathy for them, instead of being tempted to judge them or have expectations that would be hurtful to them.

Cheri Gregory 22:44

So Kristi, what closing words do you have for our friends who are listening who feels stuck, and they want to take the next step on their journey of emotional and spiritual growth,

Kristi Gaultiere 22:54

Trust Jesus. He's the author and the lover of your soul. And he's with you, and He loves you, wherever you are, in your journey with him. He's invited you though to more and he wants you to grow in awareness of yourself, and then you're longing for him. And I also want you to know that your story in this life isn't meaningless. It's part of his story. And he's really working his redemption in and through your story. So Bill, and I would love to support you in your journey of the soul to this book and through

our ministry of soul shepherding and thank you for leaning in to this opportunity to listen to Grit 'n' Grace. Join Cheri and Amy and the ways that God is using them, too.

Cheri Gregory 23:38

Alright Amy wrapping back around to something we dropped a hint of earlier. This interview has had a lasting impact on you tell our friends what you've been doing as a result of our time together with Kristi.

Amy Carroll 23:52

Well, as we talked to Kristi, I just had this over whelming I believe Holy Spirit led sense of connection with her. And Cheri, you and I behind the scenes have been just talking about some of the difficult things that I've been processing in the last year. Things like just my church membership. Some of the things that I've been doing on social media have been really difficult lots and lots of things and bless Barry's heart. He has to listen to hours and hours and hours. I'm processing from me. So I just decided it was time to

Cheri Gregory 24:34

St. Barry has had enough.

Amy Carroll 24:38

He was really a little crestfallen when I told him that I had hired Kristi a a spiritual director of because he's like, well have I been doing an okay job of listening. I was like, Oh, yeah, doing more than your fair share. That's why I'm spreading it around. But so I hired Kristi as the spiritual director and that I've had to phone calls, absolutely really life shifting. But more than that, I decided what I needed to do is really understand this *Journey of the Soul*. And so I bought the book. And I have a friend that I do calls with on Thursdays, we study together. And I said, we need to deviate from what we've been doing and do this book. And so I've been going through the book slowly, it's a lot to absorb and really implement if you're trying to take it seriously in your own life and talking about it with a friend every Thursday. So it really done the deep dive. But I'm telling you, all of that is doing deep internal work in me. I love, love, love hearing about that. And I'm planning to do a small group with the book with a small group of friends who are in ministry in any way shape, or form because I've glimpsed the tip of the iceberg. And I'm looking forward to doing the deep dive once the school year is over. So it's fantastic. It's a mind shift that I needed not only for myself, but how I see others how I see my kids and the stages that they're not kids how I see my son's the stages that they are going through in their faith, and it's just been hope filled and inspiring.

Cheri Gregory 26:19

Well, friends, we sure hope you've enjoyed listening to episode #225 of Grit 'n' Grace—THE PODCAST as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll 26:28

And we want to say a big thank you too. Kristi Gaultiere, a co author of *Journey of the Soul: a Practical Guide to emotional and Spiritual Growth*, and to her publisher Baker Books for making this episode possible. Check out our web page at GritNGraceThePodcast.com/episode225. There you'll find this

week's transcript, a link to *Journey of the Soul: a Practical Guide to Emotional and Spiritual Growth*, and a link to Kristi's website which has some great resources related to this book.

Cheri Gregory 26:58

If you've enjoyed this episode of Grit 'n' Grace, we would so appreciate it if you would leave us a review. Here's an example of one: this person said, "They seem like friends ... " Isn't that nice, Amy?

Amy Carroll 27:10

I love that. And we *are* friends!

Cheri Gregory 27:13

But she said she feels like *she's* our friend.

Amy Carroll 27:15

Yes, I love that.

Cheri Gregory 27:17

"I enjoy listening to these two ladies who are so relatable and real. They and their guests hear so much wisdom and insight struggling with similar issues like perfectionism, and I love their humor. Thank you."

So to whoever this was, we want to say "Thank you!" And if you recognize your words, email us and we will send you a free copy of our book, co authored book, *Exhale*. And for those of you who are listening if you would be willing to leave us a review and you're not sure how you can go to <https://gritnegracethepodcast.com/review/> and there's even a little video showing you exactly how to do it.

Amy Carroll 27:50

Next week we'll be discussing what we learned from Kristi Gaultiere co author of *Journey of the Soul: a Practical Guide to Emotional and Spiritual Growth* and how it's impacting our lives.

Cheri Gregory 28:00

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

Amy Carroll 28:10

we'll be cheering you on. So TAKE IT!