

Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST

Episode #229: How to Find the Elusive Freedom You Long For

Cheri Gregory

So, for as much as we trash talk perfectionism on this podcast, we can still find ourselves – okay, I'll just speak for myself, Amy, I can still find myself living back in the middle of perfectionism without intending to. And without even knowing how I got there. Why is this?

Amy Carroll

Well, I'm sure I have a wise answer for you, Cheri, that I can't really think of it right now, because maybe I'm like that, too. Now, it is my default for sure. And I've come to think of it actually as my besetting sin.

Cheri Gregory

Oh my. Well, that went serious really fast.

Amy Carroll

That really did. But it's true that perfectionism as my besetting sin. I just have to be super aware of it.

Cheri Gregory

Well, okay, it's a good thing, then, that we have Barb Roose back on the podcast today. And she's going to be sharing six powerful freedom principles that I was thinking of tattooing, okay, I mean, stenciling on my walls, but maybe you need the tattoo.

Amy Carroll

I think I do probably, on my forehead, and backwards, so every time I look in the mirror I can review.

Cheri Gregory

Well, this is Cheri Gregory –

Amy Carroll

– and I'm Amy Carroll –

Cheri Gregory

– 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

Today we're talking with Barb Roose, author of *Breakthrough: Finding Freedom in Christ*. Barb is a speaker and author who is passionate about teaching women to live beautifully strong and courageous so that they can experience God's great adventure of faith and purpose for their lives. Barb is the author of five Bible studies, including *Breakthrough: Surrendered* and *Joshua*. She's also written three other books, including *Surrendered: 40 Days to Help You Let Go and Live Like Jesus*.

Cheri Gregory

We're about to talk with Barb Roose about some topics that we both have some strong feelings about — topics like perfectionism, performance-based religion, legalism...

Amy Carroll

Deep sigh. I mean, I have done the big swings back and forth between actually living in those places, and having them leveraged at me in ways that were very painful. So the strong feelings, of course, are towards those other people who are trying to use those things against me.

Cheri Gregory

Oh, my goodness, I love it. I love it. Well, you know, here's what I'm finding myself. Barb defines legalism as human effort to gain God's favor. And my first reaction when I read that was, well, I would never do that. Of course you wouldn't, and neither would I. Yeah. But then I went on, I kept reading. And she said, 'Legalism is when we focus on what we're doing for God, rather than on what we're receiving from him.' And I was like, oh, wait, I do that all the time.

Amy Carroll

Barb, we're thankful you're here. Help us. Barb, welcome back to Grit 'n' Grace!

Barb Roose

I am so excited to be back with you and Cheri. Hello, everybody out there. Oh, I'm so happy to be here.

Amy Carroll

Friend. We cannot even keep up with you. You are such a prolific writer. And we love every word that drips off your pen. So today, we want to know about your newest study *Breakthrough*. What led you to write it?

Barb Roose

Breakthrough – the subtitle is *Finding Freedom in Christ*, and actually was just inspired by a memory that I had growing up in the Black Baptist Church. And I was just remembering how my grandmother and her friends, they used to wear these giant hats, these fancy hats, and they had these super sharp suits on, and I remembered that my grandmother and her friends, they used to put all kinds of bobby pins in those hats, because when the music started getting good, and they started shouting, they needed to keep their hats on their head because there was a secret underneath those hats. Do you happen to know what that secret?

Cheri Gregory

No, do tell.

Barb Roose

Well, so my grandmother and her friends, they did not comb their hair underneath those giant fancy hats. They were on point everywhere else. They were on point. And the reason why I wrote the Bible study was because I remembered that often growing up in the church what I saw was that as long as you look good on the outside, it didn't matter what was happening on the inside.

Amy Carroll

Hmm, I might resemble that remark. All right, Cheri, please speak.

Cheri Gregory

I'm just needing to breathe for a moment at the truth just received here. All right, well, Barb we do hear a lot about having freedom in Christ almost to the point that it's a cliché. So what does that actually mean for a Christian?

Barb Roose

Cheri I'm so glad that you brought up kind of the cliché, because the fact that people go 'Oh, you must be free in Christ forever.' Anybody who doesn't feel free, then we feel like failures. Yes. And so I had to think about it from my life I went, Jesus died on the cross for me, why am I struggling? So in the Bible study I've defined freedom in Christ is living free from fear, and fully alive in God's great adventure of joy and purpose. And so freedom in Christ has two parts, this part where we receive what God is doing. So He breaks us free from fear. But then we're also fully alive in this great adventure of God's joy and purpose. And that felt more tangible to me. And it also helped create this picture that I needed God's power to do it in my life that I couldn't do it on my own.

Amy Carroll

That is good. Well, and I love that definition. Because with that definition, you can be living an imperfect and yet free life. So that's fantastic. Now you know that we're checklist girls, we love a list, and you have six freedom principles. I can't wait for this, I saw this question coming. And I'm like, Barb always brings the good stuff with the list. So tell us what they are.

Barb Roose

Well, these freedom principles were a reflection of Paul's letter to the Galatians, which the *Breakthrough* Bible study is a study on the book of Galatians. And so I have the six freedom principles. But I also have six breakthrough observations to help us see where God is working in our lives. And so we can get to that in a moment. But these freedom principles are how we live free from fear.

So the first one is freedom principle number one, that the gospel is based on God's perfect promises, not our performance. This is for those of us who get stuck in perfectionism, those of us who feel like we have to live by the checklist, but that the gospel isn't about us. It's about what God has already done. And so number two, then means the freedom principle as a

relationship with God means we receive from him, rather than following the rules to be in this place where God wants to give to us. And the only thing we have to do is wait with open hands for what he wants to do with us and through us. And so there's a number of other freedom principles. But my favorite is number three, freedom principle number three. And it's this: that your freedom in Christ cannot be shaken or taken away by anyone who chooses not to live like Christ. Wow.

Amy Carroll

That's a truth bomb right there.

Barb Roose

Because as believers, we are imperfect people. And how many of us who faced the Bible study talks about church hurt, we talk about hypocrisy. These are all things that Paul covers in the book of Galatians. But I know that my freedom in Christ cannot be taken away from me by anyone who doesn't choose to live like Christ. My freedom in Christ isn't dependent upon how other Christians behave. Can I get an amen?

Amy Carroll

Oh, amen. Yes.

Barb Roose

Good news is good news, especially when we are feeling hurt or vulnerable. And so actually, that – I'll share one more freedom principle number six. And this is the most precious to me, because I wrote this as I was going through my divorce and really struggling with just feeling like God's daughter. And so freedom principle is the sixth is this, that you are God's beautiful, lovable, capable daughter, you are confident in Christ, and worthy of God's best.

Cheri Gregory

We could spend all day unpacking each one of those, those are powerful. Alright, so Barb, you said, *Breakthrough* is a study of the book of Galatians. And so let's get a little nerdy here. Why do scholars consider Galatians to be one of the most significant books in the New Testament?

Barb Roose

Well, the nerdy answer is also the most important answer for all of us, because Galatians is all about the gospel. And as I was sitting down to write the Bible study, especially for seasoned Christians, mature Christians, they just go, 'Yeah, the gospel. We've heard that before.' But the Apostle Paul, he recognized that the believers in the Galatians church, especially the ones who have been believers for a minute, they had begun to get swayed by people who said, 'If you want to be a super Christian, you should do X, Y, and Z.' And I realized that in our culture today, especially amongst Christians who've been following Jesus a long time, anybody else, Amy, Cheri anybody else like to have that super Christian status? Sure. And so we begin to layer on some things that we say we're doing it in Jesus name, but we really want to be super Christians. And so Paul wants to break all of that down and come back to the foundation that the gospel is about God's promises, not our performance.

Amy Carroll

So good. What I believe in Galatians that Paul is also kind of dealing with two people groups, right. And we are finding that diversity in our own culture has been very hard to navigate in the last year. So oftentimes are hesitant to start hard conversations about diversity at the risk of offending someone or making the situation worse. So what are some of the ways that we can start and continue discussions with the correct heart? You've modeled this really well online, Barb, let me just say, but I want you to answer the question. But for our listeners, you need to go follow Barb on Facebook.

Barb Roose

Well, Amy, you beat me to the punch, because I was about to say that you have done this beautifully and admirably. And I have celebrated you for how you have championed this heavenly perspective of unity and diversity. Thank you. And if we had to drill this conversation down to a word, it's really about listening. It is about the decision to invite people who look differently than us to share their stories. And for me listening, it starts with simple questions like, 'Would you tell me about your life?' or 'How does your family celebrate holidays?' or 'What's been hard for you lately?' and these conversations are where we get a chance to learn from each other.

I was reminded of the early church in Acts II, when they met in each other's homes to break bread, to fellowship, to worship, in those moments, they were finding out about each other. They were getting to know each other's lives and and they were building community through listening. God listens to us. We can listen to each other without trying to fix someone else's perspective. We can love through listening

Amy Carroll

Beautifully said. Well, and that's a big takeaway for me, too, is I always thought that listening meant that I agreed with people if I didn't talk back. And it doesn't mean that. It's exactly what you just said, listening is equal to love. Period.

Barb Roose

Amen.

Cheri Gregory

All right. So that leads to another sticky question. For those of us who are recovering perfectionist, how can we be more supportive rather than judgmental Christians, especially with a friend who's fallen into sin?

Barb Roose

Whew. You know, this is one of those important questions. Because I have heard from so many believers – I was on staff for 14 years at my local church, I was a longtime staff member in spiritual growth and development. And we had a large number of people who would come to our church, and I'm from the mega church world, so we had about 10,000 or so people on the weekends, and so many people had stopped going to church years before because their hearts had been hurt from the church. And the thing is that we all make mistakes, we've all sinned. But in Galatians, Paul teaches us that our role as believers is to be gentle and humble. When we approach those who have fallen, generally gentle and humble aren't the two words

that Christians use. I don't know. Can we think of some words that Christians generally use? I don't know, what are some that come off the top of your head, Cheri or Amy?

Amy Carroll

Well, I'm just a truth teller. Right? That's the big one. Because then that you have a spiritual gold star. Yes, you do before you bring down the velvet hammer on top of somebody's head. Done it. Had it done to me.

Barb Roose

Yes, me too. Me too. And so the best way that we can love people is to come alongside of them. We don't want to add to their guilt. If we believe God's promises, if we believe that God is at work, we can be present with someone and point them to God's promises, and trust that God will do the work. I think sometimes we're afraid that God won't do the work. So we want to do the work for him. So when we do come alongside of someone who's fallen into sin, to be present, to let them be where they're at, to pray for them, and to continue to point them to Jesus, and trust that God is at work, we are not responsible for someone else's spiritual journey. We are not responsible for someone else's sin, and we are not responsible for someone else's repentance. God can take care of that without our help.

Cheri Gregory

So good. That right there is a very freeing perspective.

Barb Roose

Yes, ladies, I can't even get myself straight. So why do I think that I can get somebody else who has gone off into a ditch spiritually? So yes, it is freeing for us to not be responsible for people's repentance.

Amy Carroll

Okay, so can you give us, Barb, some examples of legalism that hold us back from our own freedom? (Laughs) I have to ask that question with a laugh 'cause I'm like, how long is the list I could make? Anyway, we wanna hear your answer.

Barb Roose

You know, I was speaking at an event back in us before the pandemic. It was September of 2019 and Susie Larson and I were speaking at a retreat. I met a young woman and her mother, and the young woman had been sober from drug addiction for six weeks. And she had recently come to faith in Christ. And we stayed in touch via text message for many, many, many months. And so a number of months ago, while I was writing the Bible study, she called me one day and she was just discouraged. She had been in Bible study, she had been going to church, she hadn't been using drugs. I mean, she was praying, she was excited about her faith in Christ. But then she said, 'Barb, I kind of feel like a bad Christian.' And I said, 'Why?' And she said, 'Well, I see other Christians, and they're good Christians. They read their Bible, and they don't swear, and they never miss church.' And she goes, 'Well, sometimes I forget to read my Bible, and I still smoke, and I just, I feel like a bad Christian.' And in that moment, I felt the Holy Spirit prompted me to say this, and I'm saying this to everyone out there, who has ever felt like a bad Christian, if you've ever felt like God is disappointed to you, this is what God

put on my heart to say to her, it's this: that you can't mess up God's love for you. That there is freedom in knowing that we can't mess up God's love for us. Legalism teaches us that we always have to do more, do better to do for God. And God to say my love for you is on changing. That is a step toward freedom when we can believe that. Oh, good.

Cheri Gregory

Oh, okay. I didn't bring Kleenex. I should have.

Okay, a topic that will make me want to cry, or punch a wall. It seems like since the pandemic began, that people in general have become more and more argumentative, and staunch in their opinions over just about everything, even related to how the local church handles certain situations. So what does Galatians teach us about agreeing or disagreeing together?

Barb Roose

I am so grateful that Galatians is perfectly timed for where our church culture is at now. I remember well, again, as somebody who was a longtime church staffer – I still serve at my church, I also work with lots of churches, and I had lots and lots of pastors contact me over the summer over all the racial, the Civil Rights movement of 2020. Churches were deeply divided on how to handle it. But that's not been the only issue. Churches have been deeply divided in how to handle issues such as homosexuality, how to handle the issues of women and leadership, how to handle you name it, the church can fight about it.

However, I have a dangerous theory. And the dangerous theory is that what if we believed that the gospel was enough? To answer our issues with racism, sexism, poverty, family dysfunction, and everything else? If the gospel is the answer for all of those, then what kind of influence could the church have if we believe that the gospel was the answer for all of that? And so Paul, he wanted to address the power of the gospel for the believers, because they were still they were struggling with the exact same issues that we were struggling with today. There is nothing new under the sun, they were struggling with racism, they were struggling with sexism, they were struggling with sexual issues, they were struggling with identity and gender, and the gospel is still the answer, to recognize that we needed to be rescued, that God's promises for us to receive, and that we respond to God's work in us after we receive from him.

Amy Carroll

So, so good. And that is such a powerful insight for me, a woman who for years wanted to manage people's behavior, instead of just leaving them to Jesus and letting him take care of it. So that is some powerful stuff.

So Barb, you've been with us before. So you know our listeners are fantastic friends and they gave us some great questions for you this week. So buckle your seatbelt here, we got it all. The first one is: How do you know the difference between things you really shouldn't do? There are some black and whites, right? So tell us about that, between things you really shouldn't do and things that are just ingrained in you from legalism. She says now that I'm mentally free from having the burden of having to do things now I don't even know which things are good

and which things are just burdens that was so insightful. When you step into freedom it's confusing sometimes.

Barb Roose

It very well can be. I want to applaud that reader for the question. Paul does address it because part of the conflict in the Galatians church was that the Judiaizers they were afraid that people would think that freedom in Christ was freedom to do anything. There's a pastor called easy believism. But Paul also writes about licenses and licenses – when you get to do whatever feels good? However, when we experience freedom in Christ, freedom in Christ is living fully free from fear, but fully alive in God's joy and purpose.

So when we look at our freedom, part of what Paul writes about is a freedom to love like Christ. So as I'm thinking about my life and walking in freedom, I have all kinds of actions and choices out there. But as we live by the leading of the Spirit, there are some things that I do not feel the freedom to do that other believers do. And so there's not a one size fits all answer, because we're all being individually led by the Spirit. There are some believers that they have no issues or problems watching R-rated movies, other believers know that that's just the way that their heart is set up, that that's not good for them. There are some believers who they can have alcohol in the house and it's not a problem. There are other believers that the Spirit is like, just for whatever reason, for me, there is a particular spiritual discipline that I have done for the last six years that I write about in the Bible study weekly. But I know that not all believers are called to do that discipline. So this idea of what are we free to do, in many ways, is driven by our connection to letting the spirit lead in our lives. Does that make sense?

Amy Carroll

Oh, so good. And you know, that is harder, but so much better than just following a set of rules to actually engage and follow the spirit

Barb Roose

Very much. So one of the game-changing parts of the Bible study, and we'll get to the other questions, is every week there's a spiritual breakthrough exercise. And when I looked at how I learned how to receive from God, I had to think through and go, what did that look like? Because I'm a doer, I'm an achiever. I'm a checklist girl. So I had to be really intentional about how do I see where God is working. So part of learning how to let the spirit lead me was to be able to go okay, what kinds of ways do I see God working in my life, and it's – in the Bible study, I call them lightbulb moments, butterfly moments, rainbow moments, the busted brick wall moment of the line in the sand and the split the rock. And so each week as a woman does the study, she gets a chance to think through and go 'Where am I seeing God working in my life?' and she can attach those moments to one of those six observational tools. And when I started doing that, it reduces the pressure for me to have to start doing things to legitimize my spiritual growth, I had language to identify where God was working and where the spirit was leading.

Cheri Gregory

Wow. Oh, okay. So I cannot wait to go through those. I feel drawn to having tools that don't sound like a rigid system. So that I love.

Now the next question is almost the flip side of the first question. The first question was very, very personal. This one is a little more theological. This person said: It seems like every time I turn around one woman's sound theology is another woman's legalism. Add the fact that at times, the Holy Spirit calls one of us to a season of stricter adherence to a particular principle for our own growth, which you just acknowledged. So given all that, how do we tell the difference between legalism and sound theology?

Barb Roose

One of the most important learning points for me in studying Galatians was seeing the consistency of who God is through the Scripture. One of the foundational parts that we miss on often as believers is that God's promise to us began with Abraham. And so Abraham got into this covenant with Abraham. And I love reading this story. Because when God told Abraham that he would have more descendants more than the stars in the sky, Abraham was asleep at the time. So that was that covenant that God made with Abraham, the law was given there was kind of this handoff to the law. And so the law was this system of being able to demonstrate God's holiness in his character. And then the law then moved into the new covenant in Christ.

And so for many believers, it does feel confusing, because the Bible does outline these principles for godly living in the context of what we go between sanctification, so it can be confusing. So there's two things that I want to say. The first is it's very important for us to understand God's consistency and character from the Old Testament to the New Testament. That's very helpful for our theology. The second thing is that when we look at the daily Christian life, what's most important is to keep our eyes on our own hula hoop. Because it's really easy for us to get swayed by somebody else's theological interpretation when really God is saying, 'Don't make this so hard, wake up, see where I'm working in your life and respond to it.'

Amy Carroll

That is good. So Barb, what closing words do you have to motivate our friends who longed to have this breakthrough and walk in freedom in Christ?

Barb Roose

Well, I want to say first, I always love having a conversation with you. And the ladies who sent in questions, thank you. And my encouragement is if you have ever felt like you aren't doing enough for God, if you felt like you were a disappointment, or you're wondering how in the world to break free from feeling like I have to just keep doing more – and really, it comes back to you cannot mess up God's love for you, that God has made his promises to you, that He is faithful to those promises, and for their spaces in your life.

If you are struggling, if you are feeling like you've got to earn God's blessing in favor today, I want to tell you to take a deep breath and relax. Philippians 16, one of my favorite verses that says "And then God, who began a good work in you will carry that work on to completion until Christ Jesus returns." That is a reminder to all of us that we are not going to get it right, and God is not going to give up on us and that he is going to be at work within us. So be encouraged, and keep following after God.

Cheri Gregory

You cannot mess up God's love for you.

Amy Carroll

Well, both of us just adore Barb Roose. And I think one of the reasons that I love her so much is these sticky statements, these sayings that she has that just really do mess with you because they stay with you. She's the best at those.

Cheri Gregory

You know, I've got her newest Bible study *Breakthrough*. And it is just chock full of these sticky statements. These either one liners or these carefully crafted sentences that are just, they're profound. They hit you at the head level and at the heart level. And I really am looking at it – yes, it's a great Bible study. But it's also like a reference book to keep going back to like, what was it Barb said? I really am trying to memorize them. But for the days that I can't, it's nice to flip back and find it right there in print.

Amy Carroll

I love a great visual, but also I was thinking about Barb's Bible studies, you know, Cheri, both you and I have written what the industry calls trade books that we write, their Christian nonfiction. And so we did have Bible teaching in our books, but they're not really Bible studies. There are lots of stories, lots of examples, those kinds of things. But you know, one of the things in my own Christian growth is that time and time again, I have to put down the trade book and go to a true Bible study. And this this study that Barb is just told us all about is a true Bible study on the book of Galatians. We need to do that on a regular basis to make sure that our plumb line is straight. So true.

Cheri Gregory

Well friends, we sure hope you've enjoyed listening to Episode 229 of Grit 'n' Grace: The Podcast as much as we've enjoyed making it for you.

Amy Carroll

And we want to say a big thank you to Barb Roose, author of *Breakthrough: Finding Freedom in Christ* and her publisher Abingdon Press for making this episode possible. Check out our web page at <https://gritnegracethepodcast.com/episode229>. There, you'll find this week's transcript, a link to order *Breakthrough: Finding Freedom in Christ*, and a link to Barb's website, which has some great resources related to her book.

Cheri Gregory

So we got an email from a listener a while ago, and I just loved it so much, literally, her subject line of her email said 'Thank you for being me.' It turns out she's an Enneagram... I can't remember if she's a 2w1 or a 1w2, but she just identified with so much of both of us. And she ended up saying "Thank you for being a representation of how I sometimes find myself thinking and feeling and for reminding me that my personality type is God given and that I need to trust he will use me for the purpose he created me for."

Friends, we just love hearing from you, whether it's by email, whether it's in our Facebook group, and we really love these things called reviews. Yes, indeed. So we would love it if you would take a moment to leave a review of grit and grace the podcast and we've even made a little video showing you how you can find it at <https://gritngracethepodcast.com/review>.

Amy Carroll

Next week we'll be discussing what we learned from Barb Roose, author of *Breakthrough: Finding Freedom in Christ* and how it's impacting our lives.

Cheri Gregory

For today, grow your grit,

Amy Carroll

embrace God's grace,

Cheri Gregory

and as God reveals the next step to live your one life well,

Amy Carroll

we'll be cheering you on. So –

Both:

TAKE IT!