

# Grit 'n' Grace — THE PODCAST

*Episode #264: How to Seek and Find the Source of Heart Happy*

**Amy**

Feeling alone in the chaos and stress of your life?

**Cheri**

We understand!

**Amy**

Yet, everyone has seasons that it's hard to harness the happy that we're promised.

**Cheri**

In today's episode, we're digging deep into the obstacles to "heart happy" ... and ways to overcome them.

**Amy**

You'll hear both practical tips and deep spiritual practices that will help you draw closer to God for the happy He has to give.

**Cheri**

Well, this is Cheri Gregory ...

**Amy**

... and I'm Amy Carroll

**Cheri**

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**

Today we're talking with **Tricia Goyer**, author of ***Heart Happy: Staying Centered in God's Love Through Chaotic Circumstances.***

TRICIA GOYER is a USA Today bestselling author of seventy-five books and more than 500 articles. She is a two-time Carol Award winner, as well as a Christy and ECPA Award finalist. She won the Retailer's Best Award in 2015 and has received starred reviews from publications such as Romantic Times and Publishers Weekly; she also is a member of the blogging team at TheBetterMom.com and other homeschooling and Christian sites. In addition to her roles as wife, mom, and author, Tricia volunteers in her community and mentors teen moms. She is the founder of Hope Pregnancy Ministries in Northwestern Montana, and currently leads a Teen MOPS group in Little Rock, Arkansas. Learn more about Tricia at [triciagoyer.com](http://triciagoyer.com).

**Cheri**

What Does It Take to Find—and Keep—a Happy Heart?

**Amy**

Today's fast-paced world has plenty of chaos to offer all of us ...

**Cheri**

*Work stress.*

**Amy**

Financial fallout.

**Cheri**

*Family problems.*

**Amy**

Caring for kids.

**Cheri**

*COVID.*

**Amy**

... and it shows no signs of slowing down.

**Cheri**

Under circumstances like these, it's easy to misplace our joy and peace—but we don't have to.

**Amy**

Author Tricia Goyer understands what it's like to be pulled in a dozen different directions with the longing and intention to do all things well.

**Cheri**

A busy homeschooling mom of ten children—several of whom are still in the house—caregiver to her nonagenarian grandmother, speaker, and blogger, she also knows what it feels like to fall short.

**Amy**

But through her years of trial and error, she's found uncomplicated but effective practices for nourishing the soul—and that is of utmost importance, because everything stems from the heart.

**Cheri**

*Heart Happy: Staying Centered in God's Love through Chaotic Circumstances* will inspire you to stay tethered to the Lover of your soul.

**Amy**

By taking time to make your heart happy in the Lord, you'll grow closer to the Heavenly Father, fostering true transformation from the inside out.

**Cheri**

Peace and joy can be yours—no matter what life dishes up.

**Amy**

So Cheri, Tricia had so many valuable things that she shared with us. Tell us how you processed. What are you losing who you're not?

**Cheri**

Okay, so my lose who you're not statement is 'You're not alone in the chaos of your life.' And one of the things I so appreciated Tricia sharing with us is that she got to a point – because I've admired her from a distance, you know, all the things she does, we don't even have, we wouldn't have time in a single episode just to list this woman's accomplishments and the way she's made a difference in the world. And so it's so easy for me to make assumptions like, oh, she's made out of different stuff, or she's naturally good at this. So when she said she got to a point in her journey, where she literally said to God, "How could you do this to me? It's supposed to be easier." I was like, Oh, my goodness. I love her so much for that honesty.

And she said “Hard happiness came from during one of the lowest seasons in my life when all I had was Jesus. I couldn't just keep putting a smile on my face and going out and serving people because I had nothing left to give.” And that line, all I had was Jesus, just really resonated with me. I – and our friends who have been listening for a while know that for those of us who are recovering perfectionist and reforming people pleasers, we can spend so much of our energy trying to prove ourselves and feeling like it's all up to me. And, you know, during the most panicky part of the pandemic for me early on – I won't go into all the reasons why it was panicky – there was a day that the phone rang and I had a decision to make.

Is it okay if I wrote this up as a devotional? Is it okay if I actually read it to you? Because I kind of like the way I wrote it to read. Okay, so this is going to be devotional reading time with Cheri. So here's here's how I ultimately wrote it:

I reached to answer the phone but then caller ID flashes on the screen. My hand hovers as two competing needs play tug of war within me. One is the need to remain loyal to conform to habit to simply pick up the phone and say, hey there, how are you? The other is a newer need one that's been growing at a surprising pace. The need to quit faking fine. The phone rings again, and I teeter between duty and desire. I know the person calling loves me. I also know that our conversation will follow one of two scripts: in the first one they ask “How are you?” I will muster up my best acting skills and put on a convincing performance. They will be thrilled to hear I'm doing so well. They will praise God that their prayers for me are being answered. They will affirm me for doing all the right things, reading my Bible, praying, keeping a gratitude journal, serving others.

In the second script when they ask “How are you?” I will tell the truth. I'm doing all the right things. I'm reading my Bible, praying, keeping a gratitude journal, serving others. And I am exhausted, depleted, discouraged, and possibly depressed. After a brief pause during which it will be definitely obvious that they will not be praising God that their prayers are being answered, they will muster up a pick me up speech meant to fix me. I will do my best to listen while simultaneously choking back tears. I will know they want to help. But I will feel an undercurrent of blame for not trying hard enough to hold myself together. And I will feel dismissed as if their need for positivity is a higher priority than my current reality.

And then skipping down to a later point in the devotional – although I crave human understanding, I know I cannot expect from humans what only God can provide. So instead, I follow David's lead in the Psalms, and I call out to the one who can handle my sorrow. Letting the phone call go to voicemail, I sit down in my prayer chair with my Bible and prayer journal. There I pour out my heart and my tears to God with no restraint. I'll return the call when I'm not a ticking time bomb of reactivity, ready to detonate on an unsuspecting friend or family member.

First I need to be real and raw with God alone. It's okay to feel a deep sense of loss with God. It's such a relief to know he sees us where we actually are, not where others wish us to be, expect us to be, need us to be. God can handle every single bit of our humanity with him. There's no dismissiveness, no reprimand, no roundabout hinting about how you shouldn't be

feeling. No cliché. 'Pain is inevitable, misery is optional.' With God you never ever need to fake fine. You are seen by God. You are known by God. You were loved by God right where you are right now.

And so that is where this my lose who you're not statement comes from. 'You are not alone in the chaos of your life.' And I love Tricia's statement that this book came out from a time when all she had was Jesus. And that's enough, more than enough.

How about you? What's your lose who you're not?

### **Amy**

Well, and mine really dovetails with yours. But I just think that – especially in the social media world that we live in – we are so tempted to believe that that other person that we admire, like Tricia, that she couldn't possibly be experiencing what we're experiencing, but this is the human condition. And so we are not alone in chaotic circumstances. And then really, you expressed a lot of what I wanted to say too, which is 'You are not the source of heart happy.'

### **Cheri**

Oh, so good.

### **Amy**

And, you know, here's the hard thing. And Cheri, you and I have been processing this on a personal level quite a bit. But because I am wired kind of naturally positive, kind of naturally cheerful and positive, I have realized that I took that to a very unhealthy place of feeling that I was responsible for not only my happiness, but other people's happiness, for bringing – I've talked about bringing my cheerful to God, that I couldn't bring anything less than that happiness, that cheerfulness that positivity to God.

So, so not scriptural. But, you know, because I kind of had that natural wiring at my overdeveloped sense of responsibility paired with that natural wiring made me feel that I was responsible for that heart happy. And one of the things that I have realized recently, and I think I talked about this on another episode that I bitterly said to you one day "Well, so there goes the myth of the happy family," you know, which, listen, I have a family and we just love each other so much. But that was the place that that kept me.

You asked me the question, "What did you sacrifice on that altar?" And I was like, wow, go away. And then reflecting on that, and reflecting on what Tricia has said, I would say I sacrificed healing on that altar. Because when I had to maintain heart happy for myself and my family, what that meant with was a lot of things went on dealt with.

So here's an example. I was just processing the other day that one of my sons was very unhappy after a birthday party when he was in middle school. And instead of leaning in, and asking questions about what had happened, because I think I would not have liked the

answers to the questions, I didn't. And I believe that the Lord brought that to mind. That was a long time ago. But why didn't I ask the questions? Because then I would have had to have dealt with the answers. And I think the answers were not gonna be happy answers.

Okay. So that's a small example. But it's just a microcosm, a great example of the way I think I had, I actually prevented God's healing, into flowing into some situations by trying to create and maintain what actually was a facade of a happy heart that is heavy and deep. And that feels like a real confession to make, but I hope it helps somebody else, you know, that is in that place, and maybe earlier on than I have.

Listen, I believe that God is the Redeemer and He is redeeming a lot of that now. But I love what Tricia she said, she said, If we ever come to the place where we're happy, and we don't need God, we would be missing out on so much. So but what if we're in a place that we're unhappy, but we're pretending to have to be happy? Then what do we miss out on? Yeah, I mean, these are some deep, deep things. And when we take ourselves out of being the source of heart happy, when God becomes our source, then healing can flow into the truly legitimately unhappy places, the places that we cannot fix.

### **Cheri**

Okay, so I'm just going to pause and let that land because that whole idea of, I mean, because what you just told the story of, and it may have been a small illustration, but it was a huge one, it was a huge one. It's a very relatable one. When I call that as I'm seeing that in my life as passivity, like, I'm going to passively not engage in something that could open another Pandora's box. But what if – and why don't I want to open it? Because I can't handle it. But what if that's okay, what if me not being able to handle it is alright?

And you know, I've been thinking about you in terms of this, you know, heart happy in your statement here, you're not the source of heart happy? Well, your belief, all of your life of having to bring cheerful to God is basically saying you were trying to bring God to God, if He's our source of happiness.

### **Amy**

Now, my mind just broke.

### **Cheri**

But isn't it circular, it's circular, and we ended up in this – we end up stuck because we're a sealed system. And we fail to ask the questions means we're not breaking out of that, that unhealthy bubble, but when it breaks open, it means that that's when God can come in and do the healing. So we're so busy avoiding the pain, or the problems that seem uncharitable or unhappy, whereas that's the actual solution. So good, so good.

**Amy**

It really goes to do we trust God or not?

**Cheri**

Bleah. Bleah. (Laughs)

**Amy**

Yeah. Ouch.

**Cheri**

Okay, go away, Amy Carroll, go away. You go away now.

*<Both laugh>*

**Cheri**

Alright, so moving on to love who you are. And I kind of feel like we've transitioned to that, because that is how we can love who we are. We are someone who needs God. And we are learning to trust God. And so my statement of love who you are is 'You are in the presence of the one who loves and adores you most every minute of every day.' And I know that's really long, and it's probably not most memorable. And I tried to condense it to make it pithy, and I was like, no, I need it to be bigger and longer. 'You are in the presence of the one who loves and adores you most every minute of every day.'

And so I actually, I ended up with a little bit of a list here of how to do this. And I pulled it from different parts of our conversation with Tricia. And so the first thing that I saw was 'Let God minister to me.' Like if this is true, then one of the ways I can love who I am one, of the ways you can love who you are, is to let God minister. And there are so many ways He wants to do this, He is willing to do this, He's ready to do it, He's already doing it. It really does come down to that let part and to take the time and the pause, to receive God ministering.

And then the second thing – and I love, this is such a beautiful juxtaposition, and so good for the two of us. And for our friends who are listening. 'Focus on all that He has done, rather than what I haven't done.' That's a great reframe, because I don't know about you, but at 2:37 in the morning, the list that's going through my mind is 'didn't do this didn't do this didn't do this didn't do this.' Whereas if we can switch that focus to all that God has done, is doing, and we know we can count on him to continue to do it, it at least balances it out somewhere else saying that the two dues don't ever have to get done. I'm not trying to be Pollyanna. But it reminds us oh, yes, I'm not alone in all of this.

And then the third thing that I picked up that she said was 'Care for my soul.' And that seemed a little nebulous, but I love how she talked about that she's picked up water coloring. Now let's

just be clear, watercolor is not something most of us should just try to pick up. I mean, my daughter is an artist and I watched her when she was taking her watercolor class. If you do not have patience, do not try to pick up watercolor. Oh, it relies on allowing things to dry and layering. And I remember she used to bring out the blow dryer to try to speed up the process. It was – it did not set – let's put it this way. Watercolor did not appear to be caring for a soul that has our temperament or her personality.

Pick something, experiment with something, explore something. It sounded like something with a creative aspect to it. You know, it's important I think for many of us when we get into that frenzied, busy place, creativity and fun are some of the first things to go and so finding ways to care for our souls.

And then I know you really jumped – we both jumped on, but you especially jumped – on this whole idea. Number four, take small immediate action. And I loved especially for somebody who's prone to overthinking – that's me – and ruminating. And then the moment has passed. And then I'm like, 'Oh, well, how can I...' I make too much of things, and then they don't actually get done. And so I love how she said, if somebody texts them, instead of saying, 'I'll pray for you,' text them the prayer, and instead of thinking of something to do, just do it. So text a prayer or take a meal.

So those felt like really practical ways to love who you are, to recognize that 'You are in the presence of the one who loves and adores you most every minute of every day.'

### **Amy**

I loved that last one so much. And I actually put that into action. I think like within days of talking to Tricia that I had a friend that was having some unscheduled surgery, so it was set in, and I didn't have time to cook and I'm not a great cook anyway. But she's vegetarian and I stopped by this little store that's – or a little restaurant that's near us and just picked something up and took it to her and said, "I'm on my way to your house." Like I just, I didn't hesitate. I didn't try to overthink it. I just went and picked it up and took it. And it was great. I was like, oh, yeah, so I've been doing the overthinking too.

Mine is 'You are the recipient of Jesus's empathy.' Now, listen, I know I'm a broken record, like I – but here's the thing is repetition. God is using repetition to do a deep work in me. And we've talked about Christie Gautier, and her saying to me, "Jesus empathizes with you." over and over again in a call and it just broke me wide open. And Tricia said something very similar to that. She said "Jesus is there." And he cares about our emotions, and He's also weeping with us because He's heartbroken. And then she says, "It's okay to sit with God and let him sit with you in those moments and really let him minister to you in that way that only God can."

And you know, I just think in those moments, even of great pain, or even in regret – you and I've been talking about regrets – these moments are moments of chaotic circumstances, that when we will pause, and we will absorb Jesus's empathy for us. He's our high priest who empathizes with us. I mean, if this is scriptural, this is not woo-woo, out there, made up stuff.

Jesus empathizes with us, when we will pause and sit and absorb that and think that thought. Jesus empathizes with me.

It really does bring happiness into that, you know, we talked a long time ago with Jennifer Dukes Lee about the difference between joy and happiness, and really there's not a difference is what she told us. And we know that even in the Scripture we'll talk about in a minute, "Blessed is He," 'Blessed' means happy is He, and so this brings joy into our situations. Because we are never, never ever alone in what we are feeling. Jesus has been there and He empathizes with us.

So I had this realization recently. I have been studying the stories of Mary and Martha, with Jesus in Scripture for decades, literally over 20 years.

**Cheri**

At a recent retreat, you told them you were going to go through it again, but with new insights.

**Amy**

Yes. Yes. So here was one of the new insights.

**Cheri**

Oh, do tell.

**Amy**

So this was after Lazarus died. Jesus says, you know, I am – He tells the disciples, I'm waiting. And it's going to be for God's glory. So we can say, wow, there are a lot of things. He let him die so he could resurrect, and that was for God's glory, but I saw this new thing. So there's this little phrase in there that says the people come from Jerusalem to be with Mary and Martha, that's a new version, but something like that. And I thought, why is that sentence in there? And I was sitting there just asking the Lord like, why is that sentence in there? And all of a sudden, I was like, shiva.

Now shiva is the Jewish practice of mourning. It varies now depending on what kind of synagogue you're part of, but I think that the original was seven days, seven to nine days, something like that. And I was like, wait, Jesus came to sit Shiva with Mary and Martha. And then I was like, well did shiva even exist in that time? So I called a Jewish friend. And I was like, Dave, so talk to me about shiva, like, when did it originate? He said, well, the first time in the Old Testament that it occurs, probably – Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible and Job's friends came to sit shiva with him.

And then he said, and the next one that's really mentioned is Joseph, and his brothers and sitting Shiva together after their father's death. So this is a very, very ancient practice. And listen, Jewish people have this right. And Christianity has really lost something, I believe,

because it is a communal sitting, literally sitting, and he said, they sit on hard things, to mourn over people during this time.

So I believe that part of the glory that Jesus brought God in this situation is the came to mourn with his friends. And there's something so powerful with that, that the next time – friends that are listening – that you are in a place of mourning, I want you to picture Jesus empathizing with you, and sitting shiva with you. When you are sitting in complete sadness and misery, over a situation in your life or a loss, Jesus is there with you, He came to sit shiva with his friends, Mary and Martha, after the death of their brother, and He did that first even before the resurrection. That piece of it brought God glory and it still will bring glory to God in our lives today.

**Cheri**

Okay, that's mind blowing.

**Amy**

Isn't that amazing?

**Cheri**

Like, that flies so in the face of “but we don't mourn the way the world mourns.”

**Amy**

Unhealthy! Yes.

**Cheri**

Like, I mean, somehow – and I'm not saying anybody ever told me, I will say, but yeah, somehow I got the idea that we had to be happy clappy, even when bad things happen, because that way we don't look like the world. And you're actually saying it's so much deeper. To say we don't mourn in surface ways, but we mourn in the presence of God.

**Amy**

God is community. It is so rich and deep and where our Christian community could really benefit from learning from the Jewish community in this.

**Cheri**

Yeah, absolutely.

Alright, well, let's talk about practical ways to live your one life well. And so for me and my questions, here are the here are five questions that I'm asking myself. Number one: how am I

protecting my heart happy time in my just Jesus and me bubble? And I love how Tricia really talked about that bubble time as being so key to being able to be heart happy, is to not just take that time not to just make that time but then to protect that as something that is life giving, that we can't live without it. We certainly can't live heart happy without that. Just Jesus and me bubble time.

Number two, how can I be intentional about letting God minister to me? And how can I fully receive his emotional and support? How can I fully receive his emotional support and love? And as you said, His empathy? And you know, I said, how can I – I'm going to go ahead and say that it for me, it requires intentionality. It requires me to stop, slow down, pause and really focus on it. It's not something I can do on the fly at this point.

Number three, how can I remind myself to switch my focus from what I haven't done to all that God has done? To do that reframe.

Number four, what is one way I can care for my soul?

And number five, who is someone I can send a text message to or take a meal to?

So, action Amy.

### **Amy**

Well, my action this week is a little mystical, actually. So you know I just got back from France.

### **Cheri**

Yes.

### **Amy**

Little squeak for France here. Amazing. And the trip was incredibly amazing. And one of the amazing things to watch was how God used the women on the trip to minister to each other. So there was a woman on the trip who was in immense pain over some terrible circumstances in her life. And on the way back to Paris – like God had done a lot during the course of the trip – but one of the women in our trip, shout out to Laurel, sat beside her and introduced her to an Immanuel prayer. And I had actually heard of this through a counselor, but I have never, never seen it practiced. And so for those of you that want to go into great detail, Google it, Immanuel prayer, because there's much more detail out on the internet.

But here's the here's the foundation of it: so Immanuel, of course, means God with us. And one of the things that you said, is that, that God loves us so much each and every minute. So if we think about God with us being Immanuel, in each and every moment of our life, He has actually been there for each and every thing. So if you are in a place today that you are finding it very hard to find heart happy, I suggest trying this Immanuel prayer. And in a nutshell, all it is, is thinking of a memory. Maybe one that's very painful, and imagining Jesus there. And what is

Jesus doing? And what is Jesus saying? And asking Jesus, 'Where were You in the situation? Help me see You here. What were You doing in this situation? What do You want to say to me about the situation?

And this brought such powerful breakthrough to this woman in pain that I realized, this is not a fantasy to believe that Jesus is there in every situation, He is Immanuel, He is there. And so if we approach Him and say, "Where were You here?" I think it's a place that we can bring great healing into our situation. But here's the beautiful thing. When I Googled it, tried to find some more information for you all, someone said this: the primary goal in an Immanuel prayer is to connect with God and enjoy being with Him. This intimate connection with God often leads to healing counsel and deliverance. But there's secondary benefits to being with God in His presence. So anything that flows out of that connection with God is a secondary benefit. It's the being with God that will bring us to heart happy.

**Cheri**

Oh, that's so incredibly powerful. And thank you, I'd never even heard of it. So I'm looking forward to –

**Amy**

I hadn't either.

**Cheri**

It sounds it sounds like it would be a great working great partnership with Lectio Divina, which you know, it's a contemplative practice.

**Amy**

Yes, yes.

**Cheri**

Alright. Well, the scripture that Tricia gave us, Psalm 1:1-2 says, "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on His love day and night."

**Amy**

You know, being heart happy, in the end really is a matter of where we're focusing. And I think that the scripture says it so well. And you've said so many enlightening things along that line in this episode too, Cheri, but where is our focus? Is it on all that we have not done? Or is it on what God has done and is doing?

**Cheri**

Absolutely.

**Amy**

And, you know, the grit in that is I sometimes literally had to drag my thoughts there. (Laughs) I would just say, I tend to be a ruminator, you know, someone who just goes over and over my failures along the way, and I have to drag my thoughts out of that pit and ask God to empower me, ultimately, the power to do that even comes from Him. But there's grit in that, that I have to, as you said, be intentional. And decide I am not letting my thoughts stay there, I'm going to focus them on the Lord.

**Cheri**

And, you know, I think the grace is Immanuel, the grace is that God is with us. And that the goal of anything that we do the external productive goal, the results goal is secondary, and that the primary goal is knowing Him, spending time with Him. That intimate connection with God. That is pure grace. And almost feels too good to be true. Unless you've lived as much life as we have and figured out that all the other things don't work. (Laughs) All the striving and attempting and trying. And again, I love, love, love what Tricia said, that when it came down to it, she got to a place where all she had was Jesus. And that is – when we come to the end of ourselves and we find that Jesus is there, that is pure grace.

**Cheri**

Friends, we so appreciate you tuning in each and every week.

**Amy**

And we're especially grateful to **Tricia Goyer** and her publisher **Salem Books** for making this week's episode of Grit 'n' Grace possible!

**Cheri**

Check out this episode's webpage at  
<https://GritNGraceThePodcast.com/Episode264/>

There you'll find this week's *transcript*; a link to Tricia's new book, ***Heart Happy: Staying Centered in God's Love Through Chaotic Circumstances***; and a link to Tricia's website, which is full of fantastic resources.

**Amy**

Be sure to join us next week when we'll be talking with Rick Johnson, author of ***When Grandparents Become Parents: How to Succeed at Raising Your Children's Children***.

**Cheri**

For today, grow your grit ...

**Amy**

... embrace God's grace ...

**Cheri**

... and as God reveals the **next step** to live your ONE life well ...

**Amy**

... we'll be cheering you on ...

**Amy 'n' Cheri**

So TAKE IT!