

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode 41: Tenderness and Truth — Wrapping the Gospel in the Warmth of Relationship

Cheri

Being a control freak is *totally* exhausting.

Amy

You can say that again!

Cheri

Being a control freak is ... okay. But here's the thing about being a control freak—it sneaks up on me SO quickly. I start each day trying to meddle less, but by evening, when I look back, I see all the ways I've been at it again!

Amy

Well, you would probably sympathize with the reader who sent us this:

"I am want to learn a deeper trust that God is in control. I want to let go and allow God to take control because I know in my head His outcomes will far exceed anything I can ask or imagine."

Cheri

Well, this is Cheri Gregory...

Amy

...and I'm Amy Carroll...

Cheri

...and you're listening to "Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules."

Amy

Today, we're sharing what we learned from our conversation with Cindy Bultema, author of ***Live Full, Walk Free: Set Apart in a Sin-Soaked World.***

Cheri

If you struggle with trusting GOD to be in control in your life—and especially your relationships—we get it ... **and** we've got some ideas for you to try today.

Well, let's talk about our amazing conversation with Cindy Bultema. Idunno — I keep pinching myself that we get to do this. And when we first started this podcast I was so worried about microphones and doing things right and now I'm just finding myself getting totally caught up in

listening and learning and my mind starts spinning and my heart starts being convicted and you and I are both pulling out the Kleenexes more frequently.

Amy

I know. What is up? And on one hand I'm like, "Amy, stop it with the crying" and on the other hand, it is so cathartic. And to hear the wisdom coming out of women like Cindy Bultema. And as you said, we just got so taken with her passion that came across.

Our listeners may not know but we do our recordings on Skype. We started doing it just audio, but Cheri you wanted us to be able to see each other, which has been really transforming to be able to watch people's faces. To see the light in Cindy's face while she is talking about her story and the way Jesus has redeemed her life just gives me chills all over my body right now to think about it.

Because for a girl who grew up in church, and to listen to Cindy's story...sometimes I hate to say it but I take Jesus so for granted.

Cheri

Yeah. I understand.

Amy

Cindy never will. *Never* will. And I need people like her in my life to just remind me of how precious this relationship is.

Cheri

I'm the same way. I have to be careful not to say, "Oh I'm a third generation, or a fourth generation church member" because of course we're all first generation when it comes to our relationship with Christ. We can't inherit it. We can inherit some wonderful traditions and amazing beliefs. I did have praying parents and grandparents.

I'll tell you the thing that so struck me with listening to Cindy, is listening to her talk about her absolute enthusiasm for digging into God's word. And she was talking about how she *always* wanted to study 1st Corinthians and I'm like, "I can't remember ever thinking to myself, 'I've always wanted to study ... a particular book of the Bible.'"

I've always wanted to read a book I bought at Barnes and Noble, or see a movie somebody recommended, and then when she said she dove in for a year and half, I was like, "That's some serious commitment." And I'm a word nerd. I'm a geek. I mean I like to study but I'm like, "Cindy, girlfriend that's over the top." But I realized listening to her...and then of course the trip to Corinth.... and that it wasn't just a shopping and baklava trip; it was a ...

Amy

Well. Okay I really did have to pause a moment there. I needed to ask her: *surely in the midst of your archeological explorations you packed some baklava in your backpack.* Come on!

Cheri

I hope so!

Amy

Go ahead.

Cheri

No No. Baklava is very spiritual. You know Jonathon and I make homemade baklava and the decision between whether to make it with almonds and pistachios or walnuts and ... these are all very holy decisions. Baklava is like one of the foods on the tree of life. But now I've really gone down the wrong road here.

Amy

Okay back to Corinth!

Cheri

We need to find out for sure though, because you're right, I will lose sleep if she didn't have some baklava.

But you know what she reminded me of is the rewards when we do immerse ourselves in scripture. And I'm going to say this without attempting to do any kind of guilt because I know one of our biggest things on this podcast is to offer compassion and permission.

And each woman listening is at her own stage in life, so if you're listening and you're a mama who is being kept up by a colic-y baby, what I'm saying may not work for you, for your season of life. Okay? Maybe your in the season of life where 30 seconds with Jesus is what you can catch before you need to go back to sleep.

But I'm in the season of life right now where listening to Cindy wakened something in my heart and made me realize I was lonely. I remember those days—I've done that kind of scripture study myself and I tried to remember the last time that I was when I really, really went that deep just because I wanted to, just for fun. You've talked about this: how when you're in a season of writing and speaking sometimes you can go to the Word you can spend the time with God, but its always to get something because you need to give it immediately, you've got a purpose for it.

And to really linger that long just to see God and to spend time with Jesus and to let the Holy Spirit work, I'm like, "Okay 2017 this has my name all over it."

Amy

It was really, really good. And the thing that struck me, too, about the trip—of course I will do just about anything to get my passport stamped, so I was having a little travel envy — but...

Cheri

So if California breaks away from the union you'll come visit me?

Amy

Yes, yes! I want to come anyway. I'll go. Anybody who's listening if you've got a state that I haven't been to I'd love to come see you.

And I had the same experience because so many of my Proverbs 31 sisters have been taking these trips to Israel.

Cheri

Yes.

Amy

But just hearing about her trip to Corinth and to Greece, that area, and these trips to Israel, they're a reminder that **this is real**.

Cheri

Yeah.

Amy

I know that sounds wonky that I've based my whole life on a book—the Bible. That I need a reminder every once in a while: this is not just a book. It's not a story. It's history. **It's real**. And "just a story" doesn't change a life the way Cindy Bultema's life was changed.

A person does that. And that's the person of Jesus. AND the people that He used in her life to bring her to Him. How amazing was the story of the couple that reached out to her?

Cheri

Oh my word.

Amy

They were the people that came and sat at her table at the restaurant. So not family, not even close friends. I was really struck by that—they were the people she had reached out to. Because they had evidently formed a relationship as they sat at the table that she was waiting on.

Cheri

I think that's such a key point that was a takeaway for me. I tend to follow my former students on Facebook. I don't friend them, but after graduation if they friend me I will always friend them back. Many of them make choices that I wouldn't necessarily have hoped they would make after graduation.

Amy

Sure.

Cheri

And one thing that is so sad to me—now I'm sad for the consequences of their choices, I'm not trying to let them off the hook.

But I've had some of them tell me that they actually ... and I'm thinking of one particular student and one student in particular ... she told me that she gets Facebook messages from people that she doesn't even know. And they are throwing Bible verses at her, long lists of Bible verses, and telling her that she is at the top of the prayer list of their weekly prayer meeting.

Now they've never met her, they don't know her, they don't have have a relationship with her.

And first of all she says she just feels like she's just a project on their list. That they've feel so good that they are doing their duty.

And she's like, "Where were they?" She aged out of the foster system. And she's especially sensitive to people who want to throw information or throw advice, but where were they, where *are* they?

She doesn't have a home to go to for thanksgiving or Christmas or Easter. She doesn't necessarily have some place to go and just crash and hang out on the weekends.

Are the words of scripture true? Yes. But is what they're doing effective? And is the *way* they're doing it consistent with the love of God?

I'll just say its not being received that way.

She's feeling very judged, and when she sees that little bubble show up on Facebook, she's feeling harassed. Because she didn't ask for any of this. She never posted something saying, "Please let me know what you think about me. Please, by all means tell me anything you want about your opinion about me." She never did that.

Amy

Right. That's hateful behavior. And it's un-Christ-like. Let's just call it as it is.

It makes me think yesterday I was talking to a coaching client, and we were talking about sticky statements and things that connect and then change your behavior. And one that she used for parenting but applies here too is that "connection has to come before correction." Which is so powerful. I mean it's a great parenting phrase. But really in the context that we're talking about it's so pertinent as well.

I think about on the flipside, this student is reaching out to you, obviously. You have an ongoing conversation with her. Berry had the rare and wonderful opportunity to teach kids for 6 years because he was in a band room that was in between the middle school and the high school. So they started coming to him in sixth grade all the way until they graduated from high school.

Cheri

Oh, gotcha — that’s wonderful when you can do that.

Amy

He had such deep relationships with these kids.

Cheri

He could watch them grow up!

Amy

And this was in a public school setting so he couldn’t preach the gospel from the front of the classroom. But he had lots of opportunities on those long band bus trips to have spiritual conversations.

Cheri

Oh, those are the best!

Amy

It is remarkable to me how many of those kids have become Christians and some of them, to be quite honest with you, I would have never believed that they would have become Christians. They were some pretty hardcore kids.

And I cannot help but think that its because of my husband’s influence and connection with him in their life, that they saw 6 years of Jesus coming through him. It’s just a remind of just how important relationship is.

And then the fact that this couple used both tenderness *AND* truth. It was a combination of both, not one or the other.

Cheri

Yeah I was struck with the fact they didn’t invade her life without an invitation. They said yes to her invitation, and then they invited her into their lives.

And so that really challenged me to think...we’ve talked so often about how as recovering perfectionists we so often see the problems in everybody else’s life. And the first things we want to do is point the finger and focus out externally and correct them because it makes us feel so much better. Plus we don’t have to worry about our owns lives.

And yet when it comes to even simple hospitality, I tend to be like, “Nope, nope, nope. I like my privacy...” I don’t want to have anybody over. And *this* is “No, no. Not only are we going to have people over, we’re going to invite people with problems. We’re going to invite people who are wrestling and struggling and say, ‘Come on in. Come and be a part of my mess. Come be a part of my imperfect life. And we’re going to do life together.’”

And then I loved, loved, loved, the fact that there was still accountability. Because that's, you know we've talked about the extremes:

"I'm either going to judge you completely, or I'm going to [offer nothing but grace]."

Cindy made the comment that we can extend too much grace and I don't call that grace, I call that license. It's not freedom anymore when there's no consequences and there's no boundaries. I don't think that's mercy, I don't think that's love, I don't think that's freedom, I don't think that's grace; I think that's license: Have at it. Okay.

I would love to become a better friend that people can trust me to help hold them accountable in love and in humility and in—I want to say *slowness*. Because, again, I'm so quick to have the snap judgment, I'm so quick to want to say something. And I know that sometimes my best input comes when I've paused. And I've been like, "Really Lord, am I supposed to say something? *Really?*"

And then I need 24-48 hours, not to stall, not to be disobedient, but to really listen and make sure that this ones not just an impulse.

I brought up something with a good friend a few days ago and it turned out I was meddling. I just had that urge to say something and I was like, "I don't think I need to say it this morning..." But "no you need to say it right now." And it was fine. We worked it all out.

But as I was reflecting on it I was like, "No, I don't think that one was from the Holy Spirit because that was..." I had the *need* to say it. And I even thought to myself, "I should wait. I should wait till this afternoon. I should wait till tomorrow." It wasn't a timely issue. It wasn't something that had to be [immediate] — the next day would have been just as fine. I just couldn't stop myself. Then I was like, "Oh yes, I remember. That's the feeling I need to hold in check. That's when I really need to pause."

Amy

That's really astute. That exact same thing happened to me in a meeting this week. There was something I needed to say but the timing was off. I said it too quickly, you know?

Cheri

Mhm.

Amy

So Cindy, one of the things she talked about that really gripped my heart was the circumstance with a friend that she told the truth to that then led to estrangement. So I mentioned that I have been in these shoes but mine wasn't necessarily as grace-filled. I learned over time. With me I had 4 friends within 5 years that had affairs.

Cheri

Oh!

Amy

I don't know. And 3 of the 4 are believers. And one of those 3 in particular I would have said is the rock of Gibraltar. Like her faith would never be shaken. So it was just a really, really hard time. And I think I got progressively better at dealing with it. And I'm thankful because in all of the circumstances, 2 or 3 really of the 4 in particular, God has redeemed those friendships. I don't know that we'll ever be as close again as we were at one time. I don't know if Cindy will find that. Because there's some damage that can't be completely undone. That's just the truth. But I do have pretty good relationships with most of them; we've been able to work through some of it.

But I will say this: this is another littler red light indicator—in the beginning I realized I was always the last to know in our friend group. *Always*. And I thought (in the beginning) I sort of took pride in that. I kind of thought *Yeah they don't want to tell me because they know I'll be the one to tell them the truth*. Wow. That's pretty disgusting isn't it?

Cheri

Wow I totally resonate with that though.

Amy

And then by the end I was like *No, they're not telling me because I'm self-righteous. And they know it*.

Cheri

Oh man, oh man.

Amy

That's where *Breaking Up With Perfect* came from. I mean the pain of that realization of moving from taking pride in being *the one that tells the truth* to realizing *I'm self-righteous*. That's where it really came from. That's where the work starts, its when you realize, *oh hmm this is sin in my life*. Because self-righteousness isn't just a nasty character trait: It is **sin**.

Cheri

Absolutely.

And that urge to be right—that's where my speed came from. That I wanted to bring this topic up and it wasn't because I wanted to bring it to resolution; it was because I was so excited about being right about something. And I turned out to be wrong. I not only turned out to be that the timing was wrong, but I was actually wrong. And if I had taken the time...this is why the Holy Spirit was nudging me in this situation and saying, "Relax. If you relax and wait, you will discover that you don't need to say what you think you need to say because it's only true in

your mind right now because its spinning so fast. And if you will slow down and think more fully about the situation, you'll realize that you don't need to say what you think you need to say."

Amy

Yeah I might have had a nickname that's related to that particular trait.

Cheri

What would that be?

Amy

I was on a mission trip when I was 20 with a girl and her name was Pam, and I'm Amy of course, and so she became *Praying Pam* and I was *Action Amy*.

Cheri

Oh my word.

Amy

And whenever that whirring starts in my mind in my heart, "I gotta do something, I gotta do something" I'm like *Okay, action Amy, take a chill pill*.

Cheri

Whoa. Okay. That is going to res-I'm going to think about that. The Holy Spirit is going to bring that back to me when I'm starting to get into *Commander Cheri* mode. "Action Amy take a chill pill"...I like it.

Oh my word and yet as I've been thinking about how all of this ties into Grit and Grace and I feel like my grit has been weak much of my life. And I feel like I'm working on it... I'm willing to work on it, and I feel like Cindy gave such practical tools for telling the truth in love, and I'm feeling like I'm feeling convicted.

Of course and then the danger is I'm now looking for somebody to practice on and that's not a good thing. You don't want to be on my crosshairs.

Amy

Oh gosh. We don't have anything scheduled for the next week, do we?

Cheri

Amy's quickly ducking and running.

Amy

Don't practice on me!

Cheri

Amy's running in a serpentine fashion, already.

What I'm really becoming convicted on is if I think I'm going to do it for others, I've got to start with myself. And I'm like, I know I have good truth-telling friends and people in my life, but I've not been nearly as intentional as Cindy has been about setting them up for success. And I would like to make it so that they know and so that they even have a script they can use. They have an in that they're like, "Cheri remember how you once told me..." and "Remember how you've always said..." Nobody can say that to me.

People can say, "Well Cheri I know you fall apart when anybody gives you any kind of input but..." I mean that's what they can say to me at this stage. And so I was thinking to myself *How would I go about giving someone permission?*

And I realized that in *Overwhelmed*, Kathi and I have a section that talks about making your Personal Manifesto. And I was thinking what could I share with my closest friends and tell them, "If I deviate from this, please let me know. If I stray from who God has called me to be, please call me out on it."

And I realized that the Personal Manifesto I've made is the perfect way to do that. Because it's a list of who I am or who I aspire to be and I can just hand that over, it's a single piece of paper, and say, "this is it. You see something that I'm doing or saying or starting to trend that deviates from this, hold it up. This is your in- 'Cheri remember this thing. Did your really mean it when you gave it to me and gave me permission to call you out because if so...number 4 we need to talk.'"

And I not saying that's an easy conversation. But I am saying I feel like I have a tool. I feel like I have something tangible. And...

Amy

That's terrific.

Cheri

...I would feel so honored if somebody would do that for me. So. Anyhow.

Amy

Mhm. Well and I was thinking about the grace part of it...my favorite quote from the time with Cindy was "The message of Jesus isn't 'shame on you' its 'shame off of you.'" Whew! It makes me tear up. And we need to see people through "glasses of grace with lenses of love."

Cheri

Oh I love that.

Amy

Beautiful pictures of grace.

The other visual that Cindy gave us was the picture of her two houses: The old house where she had lived as a drug addict. (Which, honestly, girls, if you're listening and you haven't gotten to look at any pictures of this woman, go find a picture of Cindy Bultema online and you'll be like, "Cocaine addict? This woman?" it just doesn't even connect in my head!

Cheri

I know!

Amy

But anyway. So there's the picture of her old house where she lived as a drug addict and now her new house where she always wondered, "Would I ever be able to live in a normal house like that?"

That visual...and driving past the old house to get to your new house ... I was like *We should all be doing this!*

Cheri

Yes.

Amy

Like internally driving past the old house in gratefulness to the new house.

I love the scripture- and I may have even talked about it here on the podcast before- John 15:9 and 10. Where Jesus says "As the father has loved me so have I loved you, now remain in my love if you keep my commandments" there's the truth part "you will remain in my love" there's the tenderness and the grace "just as I have kept my father's commands and remain in his love."

The cool thing is I've done a word study of that word "remain" and it means *dwell* . It means dwell. Dwell there.

So I'm thinking about Cindy's houses. I'm thinking about *dwelling* . I'm thinking about how we are called to *dwell* in God's love—the new house. Drive by the old house but live in the new house. It's just...it gave me chills!

Cheri

I love it. I love it. That is a great picture and that's a great connection to that verse.

You pulled a really "good" bad rule out of our conversation with Cindy. What was it?

Amy

It's my job to "help" that's in air quotes. It's my job to "help" others behave. Because really, we don't help others to salvation when we carry the shaming stick that she talked about. We might

get them to behave externally, but that internal change that's really the goal is not gonna happen.

Cheri

So true. So what is the fact we can focus on instead?

Amy

Truth must be combined with love and grace to transform lives.

Head over to GritNGraceGirls.com/episode41 where you'll find this week's Digging Deeper Download, Bible verse art, and transcript.

Cheri

We hope you've enjoyed Episode #41 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules!

Amy

Join us next week, when we'll be wrapping up our OVERWHELMED series by putting one of our favorite guests — Kathi Lipp — on the HOT SEAT!

Cheri

For today, **grow your grit ... embrace God's grace ...** and when you run across a bad rule, you know what to do: go right on ahead and

Amy 'n' Cheri

BREAK IT!