

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #98: Daring Decisions for Your Highest Screen-Time Standards

Cheri

I was actually wondering if maybe we could just skip this episode all together. Do you think our listeners would notice? You know like...

Amy

Oh my gosh, the personal conviction. Even as I worked on the notes and you have us grading ourselves. What?

Cheri

I know.

Amy

I don't like giving myself an F but the fact (is) that both of us had bump ups with our cell phones in our hands.

Cheri

Okay, I like that you call it a bump up. So, you have to tell me about yours, 'cause mine was no bump up.

Amy

Well, mine was a bump up, but I was sitting at a red light. I had my cell phone in my hand, which, can I just say that I'm not the worst driver in the world, but I'm not the best driver either. I didn't tell you that before you visited me and rode in my car, but anyway I shouldn't be allowed to have a cell phone in my hand for sure. And, I thought the light had turned red, and 'cause I was only half paying attention, and I ran into the car in front of me on the way to pick up my kids from school.

Cheri

You thought the light had turned red or green?

Amy

Oh, I thought the light had turned green. See, I'm still confused about how it all happened.

Cheri

Hey, hey, how many u-turns did I have to make while I was driving you around central California? We won't even talk about getting lost several times daily.

Amy

We took the scenic route. That's what it was.

Cheri

Many times. So, how much damage did you cause, though?

Amy

I got by without having to pay anything. So, I didn't. I kind of gently bumped the car in front. I'm sorry that it's not the end of your story, but I just thought it was amazing that we both rear-ended somebody with our phones in our hands.

Cheri

Oh, absolutely, no. I was so completely at fault, because I don't even think I was even looking forward. It was a red light, and I think what happened is a car came next to me to make a right turn on a red and because of the motion I thought I should be going forward, too. You know, I think about it and I'm like, I pressed the accelerator without even looking up. I mean how bad is that? And in my case, I floored it. I floored it. And fortunately, the vehicle in front of me was a Jeep Wrangler, and I smashed into the spare tire in the back. It was brand new. Didn't cause a stitch of damage, and I totaled my husband's Pathfinder.

Amy

Oh, ouch!

Cheri

Yeah, completely rearranged the engine section. So, to our listeners, what's the moral of the story?

Amy

Put your cellphone down while you're driving. Note to self: put your cellphone down while you're driving.

Cheri

You saw my strategy: let's tell other people what do to.

Well, this is Cheri Gregory.

Amy

And, I'm Amy Carroll.

Cheri

You're listening to Grit n Grace: good girls breaking bad rules. The podcast that equips you to lose who you're not, love who you are, and live your one life well.

Amy

Today, we are processing what we learned from our interview with Arlene Pellicane, author of *Calm, Cool and Connected*.

Cheri

So, if we are going to do this, I thought we might as well do it in the most painful way possible. She gave us this acronym habit: H.A.B.I.T. I thought we should just go through and grade ourselves. You know, we do all this breaking up with perfect stuff, but I thought, okay, let's do some, like, gut-level honesty.

Cheri

So for H, she said Hold Down the Off Button, that we should have some times with no tech. And, this one I got an A on. My cell phone doesn't even go upstairs with me. So, I'm not one of those women who reaches over for the cellphone first thing in the day. How about you? How do you do on the H part?

Amy

F. My cell phone is my alarm clock. So, but I was thinking, oh yeah, there are these things called alarm clocks that I could actually use instead of my phone. But it charges beside my bed. I set my alarm in it. So, I have an F on this one. Do you have a landline anymore?

Cheri

No.

Amy

We don't either.

Cheri

In an emergency we will die.

Amy

I used to excuse that if kids or parents needed us in the middle of the night that we need to have our phone there, but that's a little weak. But I will say, I do turn off my email. I try not to answer emails on Sunday. Well, definitely not on Sundays. But I try to check out Friday afternoon late, like a usual workday and not answer emails again until Monday morning. Sometimes, I look at them on Saturdays, but I try not to engage much or answer. So, I do a little sort of half way on this get a C maybe on that part, but an F on the having the phone by my bed.

Cheri

I was going to say well I think you should up yourself to at least to a D-. Like that's going to make a recovering perfectionist feel a whole lot better.

Amy

I know, right.

Cheri

Okay, how about “A”? Always put people first. Pivot away from tech and engage with people like as soon as they show up. I just wanted to crawl under my table when she said that ‘cause I already I know. I could just sort of hover above a scene where Daniel comes to talk to me or, of course, we have adult kids. I can’t imagine how hard this would be if I had littles. And you know, “Mommy, mommy, mommy read me a book.” What would I be like?

Amy

Well, okay. So, the saddest thing in the whole wide world to me though is when we go out to eat and I watch kids and parents sit at a table; specifically, when the parent is on the phone the whole time and the child is eating in silence. I have to say that totally breaks my heart. Would I have done it if I had had a cell phone when my kids were little? Maybe. But I hope not. So, this is a hard one, right? I mean definitely Barry gets the short end of the stick with this. So, I need to be aware of that.

Cheri

Well, and I was going to say, if Daniel starts telling me something and it’s not particularly interesting, I just kind of zone out and go back to what’s on the screen rather than that full-body pivot and the full attention or closing, since my main computer is a laptop, closing it or turning off the screen of my cell phone, which are things that would signal to me that I’m no longer paying attention to it. I’m paying attention to him.

Amy

I am an etiquette person probably because of my perfectionism to a large degree. One of the things I have tried to do is make sure that if I’m in line at the bank, at the grocery store that I put my phone away. That I don’t look at my phone while people are waiting on me. It’s so dismissive and rude. So, I thought, oh wow, I should give that courtesy to my husband, as well.

Cheri

Have good manners at home, as well as when you’re in line at the bank, huh?

Amy

I might get a C on that one. Needs improvement.

Cheri

You can teach me some lessons. I’m Californian. We don’t have etiquette.

<Laughter>

Alright, B. Brush Daily. Live with a clean conscience. Did I post something rude? Hide behind the Internet because I didn’t want to talk to someone or watch something I’d be embarrassed if

others knew about. I saw this as a good reflective practice. I didn't grade myself, mostly because I'd never thought of doing this. So, I'm giving myself a pass first time around on this.

Amy

I'd say I at least have a B on this. Only because I was so impacted by a quote that I heard years ago. I was at a women's event. One of the women's leaders shared this sentence that has just rocked my world ever since. She had a leader say to her, "How can we be entertained by what Jesus died for?" Good gracious! That has impacted my TV watching, my movie watching, and also my Internet usage.

Cheri

Sure.

Amy

Will I allow myself to be entertained by sin, the thing that Jesus died for?

Cheri

Sure.

Amy

So, everyone, just let that sink in for a little bit. I hope it rocks your world as much as it has rocked mine.

Cheri

Alright. "I" is I will go online with purpose. And she asked if we check one email and find ourselves on there an hour later. I gave myself an F minus, minus.

Amy

Same.

Cheri

Squirrel. Oh look! I mean the number of times I realize I have been on an hour, and I still haven't done the thing I supposedly went on to do.

Amy

Yes, well, my husband got a little judgy on me the other day on this. So, we are getting ready to do some renovation to our house. Can I just say my Pinterest boards have exploded? Exploded. I was showing him how I want the tiles put in the shower. And, he goes, "Amy, seriously, when do you have time for this?" Now, I'm not going to out him about his time usage, but let's just say...although I could.

Cheri

Barry, that was an unwise question to ask. Oh my word.

Amy

But, he was right. You know, especially Pinterest. I don't know. I'm very visual. So, I could scroll through Pinterest all day long.

Cheri

For me, it's personality quizzes. I know which Disney princess I am.

Amy

I just had to keep myself from falling out of my chair. I love that.

Cheri

Oh, dear. So, you know these don't fall under the previous category. You're still laughing at me.

Amy

I want to know which Disney princess you are now. Do tell.

Cheri

I'm not telling. No. I'm not telling. I'm holding that information to myself, because clearly you won't respect it.

Amy

Inquiring minds want to know. Our listeners.

Cheri

I'm Belle, of course, the reader.

Amy

Oh, yes, the brainy princess.

Cheri

See! Important information. See, you wouldn't have known if I hadn't taken the quiz.

Amy

I am dying!

Cheri

Alright, so we are going to just move on here.

We are going to move on here to T. Take a hike. And, oh my goodness, you know, you've been here now. You've walked my beach. And, I don't remember if I actually confessed, but I had not been to the beach in months until the day we walked down there. I know. Go ahead. Don't slap me.

Amy

Let me paint a picture for the listeners. Literally, you look out the back window of Cheri's house and there is the Pacific Ocean. It is the most breathtaking thing. So, Cheri doesn't have to take a hike to the beach, she walks out the door to the beach. I was shocked. I was shocked when you said you don't walk on the beach. Not to judge or anything, but I was shocked.

Cheri

No, go ahead and judge, cause one of the prayers I prayed about coming here in the first place was, Lord if you let me come here I will walk on the beach every single day. I will enjoy your nature. And, yeah, now I've been just content to just look out the window. But I know that I do better when I get my body in motion. You and I are both of a certain age, and we know we need to be out there walking. When we went down to the beach I was reminded how beautiful it was. And, also, it's real. It's not made up of zeros and ones and pixels. It's God's real nature, not Instagram pictures of His nature.

Amy

Well, you know, I broke my toe at the beginning of the summer this year.

Cheri

Are you trying to make excuses?

Amy

Well, yes.

Cheri

Oh, okay.

Amy

It was a major break.

Cheri

Oh.

Amy

It has just now stopped hurting. It was crazy. So, I took my first walk. Long walk, at least, yesterday. For the first time in months that I took a very long walk. And, I had forgotten how much I need it for my head, as well as my, you know, thighs. I need it for my head, because we know that the science is that endorphins get pinged around when we're exercising. Particularly when we're outside. I need this for my head, but I also realized, my walking time is also my podcast listening time, which I totally love. When I did these notes last night and got ready last night though I thought I need to set a timer, for half my walk listen to a podcast, for the other half of my walk, take my earbuds out.

Cheri

Good idea.

Amy

Let my brain rest. Let my own thoughts happen. So, I think that would be a good solution for that.

Cheri

Well, one of the things that I feel the most convicted about 'cause my habit GPA is terrible after going through these five. I'm like, wow! Serious work needed here. And, you know I came up with a plan to do all sorts of different things. But the one thing of everything that Arlene said, that stuck out was reclaiming the red light moments. And not just because it was at a red light that I totaled my husband's car needlessly and literally am paying for it. We are going to pay for this for the rest of our lives. But it's all those other little red light moments in my life. I mean if I can't go a few minutes or even a few seconds without reaching for whether it's my phone or my laptop. What does that tell me about myself and my need for what is it? I need stimulation. I need attention. I mean I am an input gal. You and I share that in common. It's one of my greatest strengths. But when it's to the point that I can't not have it. When I'm constantly twitching to reach for something else. I think the word for that is it's become a drug. And, I'm really pretty proud, probably obnoxiously proud, that I'm not much of a TV watcher, but I have the same kind of unhealthy relationship or I can have the same type of unhealthy relationship with my media, my social media, my phone: the whole nine yards. So, for me reclaiming those red light moments and just letting silence be silence just letting downtime be downtime. And, uh, whether it's taking time at the red light to say prayer. Or, you know, I've let myself fall into some of the habits that I observed in my students when smart phones and even just cell phones became popular. It was my students who told me that they use them to get out of awkward situations. Like, if they were standing in line and the person they were trying to chat with wasn't a good conversationalist, they'd pull out their phone and pretend to be texting, pretend to be texting. Like, they would fake a phone call just to get out of an awkward situation. And, I was so appalled. I mean this was 2007-2008 when I had these conversations. Here ten years later I'm standing in line and I'm not acting, I'm not faking it. There's plenty happening. There's an Instagram feed I can check. There's Facebook. There's text messages. I can text my daughter, and she will text me back. But that means I am not engaged or aware of the actual people that God has placed right in front of me. And, we've talked in other episodes about being aware of who God has placed in our proximity possibly for a purpose. And so, I need to start keeping my cell phone in my purse during situations like that.

Amy

You know I am a brain-science geek. So, I'm fascinated by the brain science behind cell phone usage. It's alarming. You said it's like a drug. No, it actually behaves on our brain just like a drug. There are all kinds of things that happen in our brains. Companies are starting to pay attention to this and do what's called brain hijacking. There's a whole *60 Minutes* about it. So, this is for real. There's been a study about what our brains are doing if the phone is not even within reach, but in the room with us and our thoughts are constantly connected with what is happening with that phone. If we don't take these steps that Arlene talked about, oh, and I'm just preaching to myself as hard as anybody else. If we are not intentional, our brains will be

hijacked. It's just the facts. It's the science behind it. If we're not intentional about these red light moments, for example, we will inevitably slide further and further into this engagement with our phone and disengagement with our reality.

Cheri

Probably one of the most convicting things she said, and I think it was more of a throwaway for her to say it, but it really landed for me was that we google everything before going to God. Like Google has replaced God as a source of answers. And, you know the thought I had was, wow, it means I'm less dependent on God. I don't see myself as being wholly dependent on Him. I have much more of the, "I've got this" kind of an attitude verses I'm constantly in need of God for whatever the situation might be in my life. It made me realize that anything that comes before God or maybe we even talked about it and I'm just being reconvicted anything that comes before God is an idol and you picked a scripture this week that matched right with that.

Amy

It's right from the Ten Commandments. It's Exodus 20:2-3, where God says, "I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." That was my big takeaway, too. That we go to Google before God. What heart-piercing thing. You know, what we're talking about with this brain hijacking, the science, all that. It's just slavery. No Doubt. And, it's idolatry. We have turned it into idolatry, our phones. So that was my big takeaway. Also, my pastor preached this fabulous sermon this past Sunday, and He said, where there is self-perseveration and self-sufficiency the prescience of God cannot abide. Well, this going to Google instead of God is both self-preservation and self-sufficiency on my part. Oh man, I wrote that down. That is going to be posted on my computer screen, because I tend towards that anyway. Phones make it more; we have all this information at our hand. Talk about leaning on our own understanding.

Cheri

Absolutely, so what's the bad rule that you articulated for these two episodes?

Amy

I need my phone with the emphasis on need. But the truth is not so far off from that, and that's what I loved about Arlene's approach. The truth is I need God, but my phone can be a useful tool.

Cheri

Okay.

Amy

You know if Arlene had come at this and told us, you need to get rid of your phones. You need to, you know, have them on one day a week or something harsh, I think none of us would have bought into this.

Cheri

Rebel Amy would have shown right up.

Amy

Exactly. Don't give me a stupid rule. But she didn't. She put it in perspective. We need God, but our phones can be a useful tool.

Cheri

Alright, so the grit and the grace of all this. I'll speak on the grit, cause I'm going to have to be doing some teeth gritting, because I'll just speak for myself. This isn't necessarily true of everybody. But I recognize that when I am checking my email multiple, and by multiple, I mean dozens, okay I'm not talking once or twice. I'm talking dozens of times or check in to Facebook, and I suddenly realize I can't even count how many times, I mean it's a compulsion. It's going to take some teeth gritting to break that quick fix habit. I do it when I'm bored, and I do it when what I need to be doing in my real life gets hard. So, we're really kind of talking about a maturity issue. I go for something quick and easy over the thing that takes longer and is hard. It's a character development thing, and character development takes grit. So, yeah, that's where I'm at.

Amy

I can relate.

Cheri

What is the grace for you?

Amy

I really focused on the grace, because I always joke and say, not only do I want to be perfect, I want to help you be perfect, too. Now, this is a problem especially in our household. Yes, I have a lot of work to do on myself in this area. But I can see it best in you and your failings. So, the grace is that I can only control my own phone usage and maybe my kids. You know when your kids are little. Not my kids now, cause they're adults. Nagging others is not going to help them. Instead, I need to show grace. I need to pray, and I need to trust God and not try to micromanage other people. That will have to be the grace for me.

Cheri

Head on over to Grit n Grace Girls dot come backslash episode 98.

Amy

There you'll find the transcript for this week's episode, a digging deeper download, bible verse art, and a giveaway of Arlene's fantastic book.

Cheri

Amy and I would love to get to know you a bit better. You'll find more about Amy over at her website: AmyCarroll.org. And my website is CheriGregory.com.

Amy

Make sure to join us next week when we'll be interviewing Diane Kim, author of *Unbroken Faith*.

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 break it!

Amy & Cheri

Break it.

Outtake

Amy

Trust God to speak to them about their phone usage...

Cell phone ring tone

Amy

...rather than trying to micromanage.

Cheri

Sorry. Go ahead and say that last sentence again in case it picked up.

Amy

So I need to trust God and not try to micromanage other people.