



Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 14 of Praise Through It.

This podcast is based on Philippians 4:8, which says "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is excellent and praiseworthy -- think about these things."

My hope for our short time together will always be to help you see an old burden in a new way, to see the praiseworthy side of your daily struggles. To see life in a way that brings hope, and in a way that shows the glimmer of light that inevitably shines, even in the daily grind. So, if that's something you're working on or you'd like to be a part of, listen in.

(soft acoustic guitar)

We're back to our regular episodes today & I'm going to get us back in the groove by talking about the daily struggle of presence. In my very first episode of this podcast back in January, I talked about multitasking and how the brain is not designed to do more than one thing at a time despite our daily efforts to make it so. Consider this topic of presence to be the more mature cousin to that episode. I'll link that first episode in the show notes, or you can go to your podcast app and scroll all the way back to the beginning.

Presence is this beautiful thing where we're actually aware of where we are and, once we're aware, we stay there. It's when our thoughts, words and actions all align with exactly where we are. Being present doesn't have to fit inside one, prescribed box that someone else has created. Being present is about knowing your priorities, knowing what kind of life you want to build, and then making daily habits and choices to support that. I'm not just talking about putting down our phones so we can enjoy the world around us, though I think that matters a whole lot. I'm talking about engaging in our actual life, in real time.

This summer I was swimming in a hotel pool with my daughter. We were tossing a mermaid back and forth, as one does with her 6 year old daughter, and I remember this distinct moment of thinking: this is what it's like to be here. To be here. Here. Right where I am, nowhere else. In

mind, body, and spirit, I was right where she was - in the moment of hoping the bright purple hair would fly by the other person so that giggles and laughs could fill the space over and over again.

Later in the summer a moment like that happened again. We were at a waterpark and I distinctly remember going down one of the waterslides and laughing, and my laughter was all I heard. Every other noise seemed muted compared to my own laughter, and what a joy that was to be so present that my own delight was the entire experience. A moment when I quite literally had nothing else to do but to laugh. And I don't think it's a coincidence that those two moments of pure presence both involved laughter.

Now, I must admit that I don't always know where I am in my physical space. Two car accidents this summer that were both my fault and more spills over my lifetime than I could ever, ever count are evidence of that. I'm talking small things like a drop of milk, up to an entire stockpot of freshly made chicken noodle soup. So maybe I have to work at it harder than most, the physical presence, but presence matters so I'll keep practicing. Knowing where I am and then being there, really matters.

The absence of presence (see what I did there?) means being physically in one place and mentally and/or emotionally in another. We call it zoning out or disassociating. In the Enneagram practice it's called Narcotization, which doesn't just mean taking narcotics to zone out. It means a numbing of feelings or a dulling of feelings. Sometimes this is done out of survival, because sometimes the grief or weight of a situation is too much to be in for too long. I appreciate that. I've been there. I also know there is a moment to come out of that absence and to jump back into being fully present.

The absence of presence can feel like this description from author Lindsay Hausch. She was on our summer series talking about principles from her book, *Take Heart*. She writes this: Lights go out, and your day felt full, but your heart feels disconnected from it all.

That's what the absence of presence does. It disconnects our hearts. It removes the experience of connecting with the people and space around us. It takes us from where we are over to where we think we could be or what we think we could be doing or who else we think we could be with or a worry that's consuming our mind. And that zoning out tends to work for a little while, but what happens when you're jolted back into reality? We've not dealt with it so now we have to catch up and deal with it. Double hard work. No, thank you.

The absence of presence means having more memories of looking at your phone notifications than looking in the eyes of actual humans who love you and want to be with you.

The absence of presence means missing the delight in an experience. Ignoring the sights and sounds that make a life.

The absence of presence means missing the connections we're all longing for.

The absence of presence means no authentic giggles. Laughter actually, literally, relieves stress in your body. The phrase is "break the tension" because tension can feel like this steel rod holding your body in place; laughter and giggles break that rod and make your body nimble again. So laughter actually, literally, makes your neural pathways stronger and healthier as it sends good, happy signals to the rest of your body. It sounds so soft, right? But it's so true. Because the stronger your neural pathways, the stronger your body from head to toe.

The absence of presence is sure to put us in bed at night with disconnected and discontented hearts. The absence of presence is sure to misalign our actions with our heart's actual priorities.

The absence of presence is really easy to give in to. Your phone begs for attention. Dinner demands to be made. Nature calls. The game is on. Some dude on Tik Tok is doing a new dance you want to learn. The bathroom needs to be cleaned. The show needs to be binged. The kids are tugging on your arm. The spouse wants to share about their day during homework and dinner-making time. I know. There will always be an external reason to be half here and half there. There is no way to live in the year of our Lord 2021 and not experience the tension of wanting or feeling the need to be in two places at once.

But that is impossible. Just as your literal body cannot travel two actual roads at the same time, neither can the neurons in your body walk down two neural pathways at once. One road, one path, always suffers.

Listen, I get it. If I get tucked too deep into the hardwiring of my personality, I could stay in my head all the live-long day. I'm a 5 on the Enneagram if any of you can relate to that. But think about the big moments in your life that fill you, that fuel you, that get you through the yucky days. Are they moments where you were half in, half out, like a game of Hokey Pokey? Or are they moments when you were all-in? Moments when your mind, body, and spirit were singularly focused on that one person, that one experience, that one song, that one conversation, that one ... whatever. Those moments when you're all there - they change you, they mold you, they make you.

So how do we do this? How do we remain present with A when X, Y, and Z beg for our presence all at the same time?

Here are my suggestions, for better or worse.

First, name your priorities of who and what you want to present for.

Friends, family members, kids, spouses, social groups, leaders, books, movies, television shows, cake decorating classes, rest. I'm talking - anyone or anything you want to be present for in your 24 hours of life, name it.

Then, figure out a daily habit to make yourself be present with that priority.

I'll say what I said at the beginning: Being present doesn't have to fit inside one, prescribed box that someone else has created. Being present is about knowing your priorities, knowing what kind of life you want to build, and then making habits that support that.

Now, I know what's true about presence: that it's really hard. Because zoning out or doing 3 things at once is what seems easy and it's what we're used to. I also know the truth that presence can feel like just one more obligation. And, like I said before, if we're in a season of hard feelings like grief, betrayal, forgiveness, trauma - presence can be the very last thing we want to engage in.

Here's what else I know about presence:

What's true is that it enhances the human experience to deeper and fuller levels.

What's right about it is that when we go all-in, we're experiencing the fullness of God as He intended for our lives to behold.

What's noble about presence is the feeling that comes from giving someone or something your undivided attention.

What's lovely about presence is that it's a good, healthy thing that makes your body, brain, and life stronger.

What's pure about presence is it removes impurities from your day because you have spent your day and your time moving from one thing to the next instead of moving from 3 things at a time to 4 other things, and so on. The scatter is less.

What's excellent about presence is the satisfaction that comes from falling into bed knowing your heart was connected that day to the actual life you're living in real-time.

What's praiseworthy about presence is if God has asked you to be where you are, you can have full faith that being where you are, living in the story He's writing and building for you, will ultimately be nothing short of abundant, life-giving, and praiseworthy.

(soft acoustic guitar)

Today I want to leave you a really corny joke. Feel free to use it. Here it is: the past, the present, and the future walked into a bar. It was tense.

That's it, there's the joke. Not only is that a funny play on words, but it is true: all 3 were not meant to exist together. That's my encouragement to be where you are. Walk into the present, leave the past and future for their own times. Be where you are. And trust God to bring you everywhere you need to be, and trust Him that you can be everywhere you are without missing out on something else.

(soft acoustic guitar)

I am so grateful to you for spending some time with me today. There are millions of voices to choose from on your podcast app, and you chose here! Thank you so much. Remember I send a blessing & an episode recap out to my email list every Monday, so if you like to read along or if you want to pass it along to someone who is a reader, head to elisapreston.com/signup to get these right to your inbox. THIS Friday, September 24th, I'm also starting a Friday Crew email that I'm very excited about. I'm officially a certified Enneagram coach & my Friday crew emails will be all sorts of adulting tips – relationships, parenting, getting along with difficult people, asking the right questions, breaking bad habits. And so much more. Head to elisapreston.com/enneagram to get those, or to find out what the heck this Enneagram thing is that everyone's talking about. That's elisapreston.com/enneagram – E N N E A G R A M. Thank you again for spending some time with me today. I'll see you next time for another episode of Praise Through It.