



Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 17 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)

When my daughter runs, she tends to look to her side and to her back to see where her competition is. It's an interesting and sometimes terrifying thing to watch because sometimes there's an obstacle in her upcoming path. Those of us on the sidelines can see: if she doesn't turn around and look where's she's going, she's gonna get huuuuuuurrrrrrrt.

My daughter's main reason for looking at her competitors is to see where her competition is. You'd think it would be so she could win, though she doesn't usually gripe when she doesn't win. It's more so that she just *knows*. She is a child of knowing - a child of the FOMO generation to a great extent. If there is a word spoken in a room, she wants to know what it is. If there is a sound dropped in the house, she wants to know what it is. She is a mix of her Enneagram 5 mama who craves knowledge and understanding, and her Enneagram 7 dad who wants to know, see, and do it all. And we love her for it. Someday I'll do a parenting episode on how children are unrefined versions of ourselves. Today, though, I want to talk about how wanting to know where everyone else is can contribute to a terrible case of feeling behind. And honestly, in my opinion, so much of the standards we abide by and strive for in this 2021 world are completely made up and fairly arbitrary.

Let's have a truth moment here: how many times have you had some variation of the thought: *I am so behind in life* or *I've got to catch up* or *I'll never get to do all they're doing*. If you've

scrolled any social media ever, the answer is probably: at least once. But if we're all being honest, it's way more than that. We see these people doing all these things and we see ourselves doing less.

So. Much. Comparison. And I get it; I really do. The sharp increase in being let into each other's lives via the device you're holding has led to seeing what everyone else is doing at the same exact time you're doing something much less interesting. I'm not talking about filters here; I did that in episode 3. I'm talking about your actual life quote-unquote "measuring up" to others' actual lives.

I think of older television shows. I think of Friends and the 80s show thirtysomething, TGIF shows, The Wonder Years. I think of these characters who lived without social media and texting and endless noise. Trends were discovered in a wave fashion as they spread through magazines, radio, television shows & commercials. Nothing like the way trends spread now, which is more of a tsunami - tidal wave of trend, washes over the intended audience, goes away. Over and over and over again.

I'm not here to say all of the technology is a bad thing. Some of it is, but that's not the conversation here. The conversation here is the mistake we've made in assuming that we are behind because we decide that we're not doing something equally or greater than whatever we see someone else doing. Did you hear the subtle nuance in that sentence? We have *decided* that it's less interesting. We have *decided* they're doing something better. It's not necessarily better, because that's a subjective idea - what's better or farther ahead is subjective when it comes to how we're living our lives. And you know, the math principle of greater than/less than/equal to is meant for quantities. This life you're living is meant for quality. Quality of life, relationships, faith, and more. Maybe you have a number in mind for how many years you want to live, but let me tell you that won't mean anything without some sort of good quality prioritized over that quantity.

Listen, in those old television shows and in real life - we used to physically leave our house and head to a friend's house to see what she was up to. Or we would physically pick up the phone, one that fit the contours of our hand, and hit seven clunky buttons to find out what our friend was doing that afternoon. If we didn't want to know, we wouldn't go or call. We'd happily hang out at home with our family, in our room, with our records or CDs, with our books or whatever hobby took up our time.

Now I can see her hobby of globetrotting and their hobby of RVing around the country. I can see her make earrings and him build business brands. I can see all 5 of her kids out the door and ON TIME for church, when I struggle to get my one from door to door with both shoes on. (She loves being barefoot). But comparisons like this make me wonder... what am I actually doing

with my time here on earth? I -- and you, if you're honest -- go into this spiral of wondering what in the world we're doing so wrong that we're so far behind in life.

I guess, to me, how are you behind if that's not your story to live and tell?

How am I behind if that's not my story to live and tell?

How are you behind if that's not where you're supposed to be?

How am I behind if that's not where I'm supposed to be?

How are you behind if that's not your path?

How am I behind if that's not my path?

I'm not meant to globetrot - in fact, that sounds incredibly stressful to me. I like to travel. I want to plan my travel. I'm definitely not meant to be a full-time RV family. I don't want to make earrings. I don't want to raise 5 kids. I *do* want to build my business, so I learn and I do that - at my pace, with my talents and treasures. And that's okay. That's good. That's really good. Because that's what I'm here for, to live my life and my story as God sees fit to write it.

If you're on the wrong path, I don't think you're behind; maybe you're just in the wrong place *for now* - you figure that mess out and get to the right one.

If you're trying to tell a story that God isn't writing for you, I don't think you're behind; maybe you're just frustrated and looking at the wrong piece of the puzzle.

If you're looking at where other people are as they walk a path with you, I don't think you're behind. We have to remember that we can walk with people and -- together -- light each other's way. The disposition of keeping up with each other has a way of stamping out one another's light. Walking with others is how we light the way. That is the way to go I think.

Let's go back to the "measuring up" for a minute. What measuring stick are we using? Because I'm thinking that so much of what we use to measure ourselves culturally is not only a construct, but it ebbs and flows with time. If it's made up & always changes, how can I measure myself as being behind?

You're worried about your kid not being up to snuff with writing or reading or math? The brain develops as it sees fit to do so. Provide the environment for learning and it'll come when that kid's brain is ready to absorb it.

Let's take Kindergarten - it is a German word that literally means a child's garden. A place to play. A place to plant and grow. Which it was upon its early inception in the U.S. Improvements are essential to the healthy evolution of a society. I'm not saying standards shouldn't exist; and I'm not saying we shouldn't stay relevant. I'm just saying that maybe we provide more stress-free environments for the learning and for the growing, and then remember that things tend to even out over time.

You're worried about your marriage not being as deep or as fun as your neighbor's? Maybe you all have different personalities and need different rhythms to make it all work. Maybe my husband and I need to play card and board games more often than you do, and maybe you all need to see more art--musicals, movies, television shows, museums--together in order to connect because you connect over stories. That's okay. Neither one is more mature, neither one is better. They're just different.

You're worried about your work not being as far as you see others' being on Instagram? If you could see me here, I am raising my hand. Exuberantly. Every dang day that thought threatens me, because as a content creator all I'm usually looking at is the content created by other creators. It's exhausting and incredibly easy to fall into this trap of: I'm not doing enough, I'm not far enough ahead. I wasn't created with the energy to hustle, and I'm okay with that. Also, I want to work well and I want to do what I'm called to do. When it takes time to get there, I -- we -- can get so restless, so antsy. We want to do our thing. We want to keep moving forward. We want to get ahead...

Again, I'm wondering ... Ahead of what? There is no definitive start and end here on earth except for the conception of life and the last breath. The in-between is pretty subjective. And I think we've forgotten that. And I'm not even talking only about hustle. I'm talking about our constant and consistent wondering if, as we go at our own pace, we're "behind".

I'm going to say - no. I honestly, completely believe that such things don't make us "behind" in life overall. If we believe that God made us on purpose and for a purpose - and I do believe that for every person within earshot of this podcast, that God made you on purpose and for a purpose - then we have to believe that where we are is where we should be. Maybe that's in your living room, maybe it's in a mobile office. Maybe it's across the globe, maybe it's across the country. No matter where & no matter what, it might be uncomfortable. It might be maddening. It might be full of joy and roses and rainbows. Either way, it's yours. You're doing it. You're building it. You're living it. That matters. And it makes you right on time.

(acoustic guitar music)

I've been studying the book of Acts in the Bible. Paul is one of the main characters, and one of my favorite parts of the story is when Paul stands up to his shipmates and basically says, "Listen. I know we're being tossed to and fro in this storm, but God said I was going to stand before Caesar in Rome. That tells me, we're on the right path and I know we're headed in the right direction. It doesn't look or feel that way, but we'll get there." Now, is he irritated with the ship leaders for not listening to him about the storm? Yes. The fact remains, though, that he knew where he was going and even though it took long, stormy, seafaring months to get there, he didn't lament the time passed. He rode the waves and he did and learned what he could where he was.

(slight pause)

What's true about prioritizing quality of life over quantity of life is it will absolutely look different than other people's life, and sometimes that can leave us feeling behind.

What's also true about prioritizing quality of life over quantity of life is it's all in your hands, it's all your own choices. You get to choose. Your choice of quality is just that -- your choice -- and it doesn't need confirmation or permission. You're not hurting anyone, you're doing the best you know how to do with where you are and what you have - it's your quality. Monitor & adjust as you see fit, and do so for your life's sake, not for what you see others doing or where you see others going.

(short pause)

I'd like to leave you with a blessing for when you're feeling behind. When we speak blessings over ourselves and over others, we are mirroring what God has done to build hope, confidence, joy, justice, and truth in his people for generations. The tongue has the power of life and death; this is one way we use the power of life. If you're able, take a deep breath and settle yourself to receive it.

May we feel peace enough to stop racing with an impossible, arbitrary standard that we're not even sure was meant for us.

May we instead reach for Jesus' hand as he invites us to walk alongside him in the life God has called us to live.

May we know that our ultimate impact is more for the people around us than it is for the people who follow us.

May we know that the work we do today has eternal impact, and in the case of eternity there is no such thing as 'behind'.

May we know the simple truth that Jesus died for us to live the life we're living, that he loves and meets us right where we are, and that we're right on time in all of it.

Amen.

(soft acoustic guitar)

I am so grateful to you for spending some time with me today. There are literally millions of voices to choose from on your podcast app, and you chose here! Thank you so much. If you want more from me you can head to elisapreston.com/signup. I'd love to meet you in your Inbox, too! I've mentioned a couple times I'm a certified Enneagram Coach. The Enneagram is a personality assessment tool that talks about our core motivations - why we say, think & do what we say, think & do. As a coach, I help people understand people. I help individuals, couples, families, and work teams go from *I just don't get why...* to *Oooohhh, I see now*. Using the Enneagram has this beautiful power to help us get unstuck in ways we never thought we could, and I absolutely love teaching it. If you're interested in learning more head to elisapreston.com/enneagram – E N N E A G R A M or find the link in the show notes to become part of my Friday Crew - they get short & to the point messages each week that give personality tips for adulting well. I'd love for you to join us!

Thank you again for spending some time with me today. I'll see you next time for another episode of Praise Through It.