



## 2: What Division Can Do For You

Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 2 of Praise Through It.



This is a podcast based on Philippians 4:8 -- *finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.* We're going to practice seeing the praiseworthy side of our daily struggles. I'll offer a perspective that shifts our eyes from that daily grind, those daily struggles, to seeing the beauty in the mess, the order through the chaos, the glimmer of hope that inevitably shines. If that's something you're working on or you'd like to be a part of, listen in.



We made it to the year 2021. I know last year it felt like sometimes, it might never get here. But it has. It has arrive. And our sense of unity and division in our lives, publicly and personally, is, on its best days, comforting. On its worst days, it's divisive and mean and disheartening. Division is something we all experience. Unity is something we all long for. Publicly and personally. To some of us, unity is as easy as slicing a piece of cake on your birthday. For others, division comes as naturally as pollen in the springtime. So much goes into how we view, express, and are motivated by unity and division.

And whether or not someone says it out loud, *unproductive* division happens because of an Aaron Sorkin line from a 2006 TV show, Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip: one side thinks the other side thinks they're stupid, and the other side thinks they're stupid. But what about *productive* division? What about productive division in your life that could do you or someone else some good?



By definition, unity is to be as one. To be without division. I don't know about you, but for me, unity seems harder to achieve and harder to find than division does. And I don't just mean publicly, though I know there's a lot of that going on. I also mean in our personal lives. Sometimes I think that the more we're able to tailor our individual lives with our technology, our curated content, and our instant-streaming culture we're all entrenched in, being agreeable to any kind of disagreement just gets farther and farther from anyone's wheelhouse.

Division, the opposite of unity, happens in all of our spaces. In our marriage and romantic relationships. In parent/child relationships. In our friendships, at work, at church. Division can happen horizontally, with our peers and family members. It can happen vertically, with bosses or subordinates or elected officials.

Division can happen over anything. Any difference of opinion, from the minute to the life-altering. From the acceptable amount of gummies in a dirt cake, to what candidate to vote for in a general or special election. From the acceptable date parameters for Christmas lights to be displayed or Christmas music to be played, all the way up to global, social, and political policies.

Now, to expect anyone in our lives to line up with us 100%, to the T, is unrealistic. It's against human nature. It's not a kind disposition, and it sets us up with false expectations. We'll talk about expectations in another episode, but for a sneak preview, let me tell you: the phrase *expectation management* is one that I really do not like, and it is also one that has saved me more than once.

It is also human nature to try to influence and persuade our loved ones to whichever side of the fence we're on, on whatever topic we're talking about. You know what you know and you want others to know it, too.

You know what I've been thinking about, though? And, honestly, I thought of this for most of 2020, especially during some pretty tough conversations with some dear, dear friends. Unity doesn't have to mean that we change our minds or change our convictions. And it doesn't mean that we force others to change their minds, either. Author and bridge-builder Latasha Morrison calls herself a unity champion. I love that. In her racial reconciliation book, *Be the Bridge*, she talks about the difference between unity and uniformity. We don't all have to look the same. In fact, we'll never look the same, ever. But we can still choose to walk the roads together. That is unity.

Jesus asked on the cross for unity, but it wasn't to make me as a Jesus follower feel better. It was to make the world a better place. To let the world know who God is and what He's about. So to me, unity means that we humanize each other in a meaningful way, in a way that removes the

bitterness, removes the malice. And then, maybe there is such a thing as productive division. In our homes, and beyond.

We can still *know* that gummies should be sparse in the dirt cake. And we can know that Christmas lights are over with on December 26th. Or we can *know* that a dirt cake should be loaded with gummies in every layer, especially if you're 5 years old, that is a truth you cannot deny. We can still *know* that Christmas lights are acceptable all year round. And *both are okay*. If we want the kind of relationships and the kind of world that I believe a lot of us strive for in our hearts-- if not with our lips or our keyboards -- it *has to be okay*.

We have to be able to have healthy and productive conversations within the division, wherever that division lies. That's what makes it productive. That's what keeps our relationships, our communities, and dare I say our nation, intact. We have to be able to be able to say, "I don't agree, and that's okay." We can say that with kindness and with tact and with confidence, and we hope that the other side receives it with the same. We can say, "I disagree" without an insult, without name-calling, without a BUT. That's B-U-T but.

One rule of thumb I've gathered in my life over the last year or so is replacing that word BUT with AND or ALSO. Because "We have different opinions, but I still respect you," is *kind of* nice, but not as wholehearted as "We have different opinions AND I still respect you." "I love you but please agree with me," sounds very different than, "I love you AND I wish you'd agree with me."

If we don't put a condition on our shared humanity, whether in our home or in our community, the unity might come a lot easier. And that division might be a little more productive, in our homes and beyond. It would do us well to remember that if we're made in God's image with all of our own neuroses and perspectives and opinions, so is the person who's standing across the chasm.

Now, I know that there are much bigger issues than gummies in a dirt cake and Christmas lights and Christmas music. Issues that you care about and are not to be taken lightly, nor should they be thrown to the side.

We have a lot of fish to fry. I get that.

Thank goodness we have so many cooks.

How important that my husband has a burden for our finances, and understands it through and through, much farther than I do.

How equally important that I have a bent toward empathy and learning about each other through the enneagram, and I can help move us in the direction of emotional health and wellness.

We do not always agree within those two categories. Even though we have our own strengths, we still have our own opinions in the other person's strength. But together, we're using what we care about to build a home of strength, faith, love, truth, and unity. We're using our divisions productively.

And beyond my home...

Let us listen to our friends who have a burden for social and racial justice, for anti-racism and what that means.

Let's listen to our friends who have a burden for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Let's listen to our friends who have a strong burden for those who have endured increased domestic violence since the pandemic started.

Let's listen to our friends who speak of the burden on educators, all the time, not just during a pandemic.

Let's listen to our friends who are small business owners, so we know how to support them.

Let's listen to those who care for the elderly and who care for foster children, so we know how to lift them up.

Let's listen to those who care about healthcare and gun ownership, because there are things that we can't know or do on our own, simply because we can't possibly *know* and *do* e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g, and those with expertise and a different perspective can help us understand.

In our division, let's listen. We don't have to agree, but let us listen in a way that humanizes each other. In our homes, and beyond.

On Instagram, there is a woman named Joy Vetterlein. Well, she exists in real life too, but I found her on Instagram. On January 8, she wrote about right and wrong responses to extreme events, and I loved what she said. I'll link the post in the show notes, but here's a quote from the post:

*Prophets are crying for truth and justice.*

*Peacemakers are calling for kindness and peace.*

*Priests are seeking the favor of God.*

*Leaders are striving for change in systems and processes.*

Can it be enough that we each have different burdens? Does it have to be, 'my burden is heavier than yours,' and 'put that down so you can carry this with me'? Can it be, 'I see that's heavy. So

is mine. Let's walk together in case one of us falls, the other can help.' In our homes, and beyond. First in our homes, then beyond.

Because maybe the God who created seven billion people did so because He knew there would be too much for one person or one group to tend to all at once. He knew that there would be so many ways that we would all need each other, that we would need different hearts to carry different burdens.

God is a God of justice and love. He is a God of truth and compassion. He is a God of advocacy and peace-making. We have to learn how to be in both, how to hold both. In our homes, and beyond. If we want unity as Jesus prayed for on the cross, the kind that lets the world know who God is and what He's really about, we have to learn how to hold both sides. Productive division. The justice and the love. The truth and the compassion. The advocacy and the peacemaking.

True unity, when we can be one with our partners, our friends, our family members, is such a peaceful, lovely thing. It is a gift. It is comfort on a cold day, it is peace in a storm, it is joy in times of anxiety. In a world that can be divided in the most unpleasant way, reaching across the chasm and saying, "I am with you, let's walk this together," is a lovely, admirable and excellent stance to take.

This week, may you find ways to unify among your people, whether in person or digitally. May your home be filled with comfort, peace, and joy as you do the work of curating a united home.

May you lean on God to feel unity and compassion in your heart toward those who think differently than you, whether in your home or beyond.

May you find ways to walk beside others carrying their own burdens, and may you lay yours at the foot of the cross for the bearer of all burdens to care for your heart.



Thank you for listening to episode 2 of Praise Through It. Life can be messy and chaotic and hard. And we can see that side. We can also find the glimmers of light that shine through our everyday. No rose-colored glasses, but true things that bring hope and joy and peace.

I received wonderfully kind words from listeners last week, and I'd love to keep connecting with you. I do most of my socializing on Instagram as Elisa Preston. You can find me at [Elisapreston.com](http://Elisapreston.com), where there is more about this podcast and some fun extras. You can also sign up for my weekly blessing and monthly newsletter, which has a free gift, an encouraging word, and a short read/watch/listen list. That goes out the first of every month.

On the podcast page, you'll find a transcript of today's show in case you like to read along or take notes. Or you can pass an episode along to a friend who is deaf or hard of hearing.

I'm working my way back onto Twitter, but you can find older Tweets under BigEPreston - more about that high school nickname another time.

If you like what you hear, head on over to iTunes and leave a review. It is incredibly helpful to podcasters, especially new ones, for their shows to be reviewed so that more people can find it and we can grow this Praise Through It community.

Thank you so much for listening, I'll see you next time for episode 3 of Praise Through It.

**Show notes**

Joy Vetterlein + responding to extreme events: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJxHJXfhIk4/>  
 Latasha Morrison: Be the Bridge: <https://latashamorrison.com/> & <https://latashamorrison.com/book/>

**Scripture:**

Justice	Love	Truth	Compassion	Advocacy	Peacemaking
Exodus 34:7	John 3:16	Exodus 20:16	Exodus 34:6	Proverbs 31:8-9	Matthew 5:9
Jeremiah 22:3	Romans 5:8	Psalms 25:10	Lamentations 3:22-23	Job 5:15-16	Romans 15:7
Proverbs 31:8	Romans 8:38-39	Psalms 111:8	Psalms 86:15	Jeremiah 22:3	Galatians 6:2
Isaiah 1:17	1 John 4:9-10	Isaiah 65:16	Psalms 103:13	Zechariah 7:8-10	Ephesians 4:3
Micah 6:8	2 John 1:6	John 17:17	2 Corinthians 1:3-4	Matthew 25:40	Colossians 3:14-15
		Romans 2:2		James 1:27	
				1 John 2:1	