



Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 15 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.

Today's daily struggle: gray hair & wrinkles.

Listen, this topic touches most of the people on this planet, definitely the people listening to this podcast. Men and women. Single, married, dating, in between. Working or not. Kids at home or not.

One of the first things I think of when this topic comes up? Honestly? The President of the United States on his first day in office vs. the President of the United States on his last in office. Now, first I'd like to say, someday that might be a HER first day in office vs. HER last day in office. Because when you have a daughter and she wants to do a lot of things in her life, and she says that someday she'd like to be president, you say 'okay'. For now it's he, and that's okay. I'm just saying. Someday. Anyway... Have you ever looked at that difference? What the weight of the free world does to a man's hair color and to his face?

I find the study of that fascinating, because no matter the political party of the leader, it's a stressful position and it shows. No one can deny that.

For us laypeople, life can be just as stressful as leading the free world. And we age just the same as leaders of nations. Aging is a non-discriminatory event. It hits everyone. Some more gracefully than others maybe, but it gets to everyone nonetheless.

The first time my husband found a gray hair on the top of my head--because I'm not quite five feet tall so eventually someone was going to find the first one and it wasn't going to be me--I am pretty sure I vehemently denied it. He thought it was hilarious. I thought it was the absolute opposite! I can't very well look atop his head to see how well his hair follicles are faring through marriage and parenting and the ups and downs of careers and pandemics and such. Right? Right. So let it be, man.

Anyway... I guess that's not uncommon, bemoaning the aging process.

I do love celebrating my birthday, but I was so freaked out about my 30th birthday that I decided to celebrate it for 30 days in a row -- 30 in 30 -- in order to make me feel better. It worked! By my actual 30th birthday, I felt great about turning another year older. I'm contemplating the same for my 40th. At 37, I'm not *as* excited about that number ticking up, but I think that's really only when I focus on the wrong side of things.

When I focus on how time is just slipping right on by, I long for my easy, laid-back just-married days.

When I focus on how I used to live under sunny skies just minutes from the ocean, I wonder what in the world I am doing with my New York life.

When I focus on how my 29th, 30th, 33rd, and 35th birthday parties were bashes for the ages, I long for the easy relationships I had formed at those points in my life.

When I decide to look at newborn or toddler photos of my daughter, I wonder where the time machine is that would take me back to those cooing, snuggly days.

When I focus on how I have to check a new age group on surveys and race packets, I get all squishy inside.

And acknowledging those feelings is totally fine. It's good to be aware of what's making you feel what kind of ways. My Grandma used to talk about her wrinkles and she'd comment all the time (I mean, all. the. time.) about Rod Stewart's skin and how it looked like he never aged, apparently because of his daily Oil of Olay usage. So if you want advice from a 92-year-old woman who put great thought into such things, by all means go and get you some Oil of Olay.

I *could* sit here and talk to you about how aging is a gift. Because it is. As late as 1900, life expectancy past 50 years old was pretty slim. But now, there are more people on the planet over the age of 65 than there are under the age of 5. So even though it's become more common, it's still a precious gift. There's no denying that. But since you already know that life is a precious gift, I'd rather chat about the gray hair and wrinkles of life. The *evidence* of life. Embracing the parts of us that tell the whole story.

Because gray hair and wrinkles do tell a story, a very nuanced one. They tell of a life lived in better and worse times. Gray hair and wrinkles tell of choices made, good and bad, that have made a life. They tell the story of living the spectrum of emotions - the joy & jubilee, the pain & pleasure, the hurt & disappointment, the acceptance & rejection. Gray hair and wrinkles tell the story of a child of God who has been called to live here, there, and everywhere at very specific times and for very specific reasons. Gray hair and wrinkles tell the story of a human who hasn't been afraid to move through life. Whether you've barreled through like a linebacker, or you've shrunk back from time to time, or you've meandered like a snail enjoying a sunny day - it doesn't matter. Gray hair and wrinkles tell your story, the story of a human with courage to live.

I got the idea for this episode by scrolling through Instagram and coming upon one of my online friends, Heather Gillis. She had a post about going gray together with her husband and letting those roots grow in. She wasn't trying to wax eloquent about the experience of letting her gray show more than ever, but I think that's why I liked it so much. It was just some words she'd spontaneously share if we were sitting over a cup of coffee. My favorite sentence was this: *I don't have to spend so much time covering up what's hidden beneath those roots!*

We spend time trying to figure out how to tell our story. With our outward appearance, with the clothes we choose, with the company we keep, with the church we attend, with the jobs we do, with the books we read, with the meals we cook - it's all part of the story of our lives. And it all says something about who we are to those who see us.

I'm going to propose that one of the best ways to show who we are and what God has asked of us and what stories we've lived is through the tried-and-true, age-old picture of gray hair and wrinkles. We let those natural elements do their job and show our people: *this is me, this is where God has taken me, this is where God has brought me, this is what God has done for me.* We use our gray hair & wrinkles to show how our heart has fared from life's various ups and downs. We use our gray hair & wrinkles to show the honest truth of how God isn't done with us yet, that we still have plenty of life to live. **We use our gray hair and wrinkles to show the hurt we've held & the hope we've lived.** We use our gray hair and wrinkles to embrace and honor the gift of continued life.

Now, I'm not here to *should* you. I won't tell you that you should or shouldn't get hilites, low lights, dye your whole head of hair or leave it be. I won't tell you that you should or shouldn't use X, Y, or Z to get rid of your wrinkles. That's your choice. I'm just reminding you of some simple truths. I'm being the gentle friend by your side that says: *Look in the mirror at that beautiful face. Look at you; look at how far you've come; look at what you've been through and you're here to tell the story.*

The truth about gray hair and wrinkles is that they can make us feel self-conscious. It can be tough to think of anything good, noble, pure, lovely, excellent or praiseworthy about gray hair that shows how long we've been stressed out.

But I'm gonna try.

(soft acoustic guitar)

A true thing about gray hair and wrinkles is the contrast to the limiting feelings of *I must cover this up because the truth is ugly*. Instead, the gray hair and wrinkles tell of the courage to live out loud.

Gray hair and wrinkles are good because they show the goodness, kindness, and mercy of a good, kind and merciful God who has chosen to continue our story.

What's noble about gray hair is what Proverbs 16:31 says: Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness. It means that as we mature, the gray hair shows our wisdom. And so do the wrinkles. Or so we hope.

In terms of what's pure - gray hair and wrinkles are original members of what's pure on our bodies. In our filtered world, gray hair and wrinkles are nothing but pure and simple.

What's lovely about gray hair and wrinkles is they invite authentic conversations and warm engagements as they say from one person to another: *I am me; you are free to be you*.

What's excellent about gray hair is it saves you time and money by not dying it any kind of color, and I'm all about that. Sometimes I call myself Fred Mertz, the old frugal landlord from I Love Lucy. Whether I am or not is up for debate, but saving money is great no matter who you are.

And what's praiseworthy about gray hair and wrinkles is they mean that God really meant it when He said that He is the author and finisher of our faith; if there is more story to tell, rest assured He'll tell it.

So ... when you're ready to take the leap of letting your gray hair and wrinkles tell your beautiful, layered story, I'll be here cheering you on. And before you go, I want to leave you with a song lyric from an Alan Jackson song:

*And I don't mind all the lines  
From all the times I've laughed and cried*

*Souvenirs and little signs of the life I've lived  
The older I get  
The longer I pray  
I don't know why, I guess that I've  
Got more to say  
And the older I get  
The more thankful I feel  
For the life I've had and all the life I'm living still*

May you walk through your day praising God for the souvenirs and little signs of the life you've lived & may you see your gray hair and wrinkles as a testament to the beautiful courage you carry & the hope you hold.

(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. If you're feeling generous or if you've got a moment, I'd be so grateful if you would share this podcast with a friend or leave a rating or review - those things help podcasters in the impossible fight with the algorithms.

Also - we're two weeks into the Friday Crew & it's been so fun! Communication and personality tips. Quick, helpful & entertaining. This week is about becoming a better version of your stressed-out self. If that sounds good to you, head to [elisapreston.com/enneagram](http://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](http://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.