



Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 18 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)

Today's daily struggle is communication. And I know two things to be true: either you heard that word and you thought: GREAT, I AM IN. Or you heard that word and pondered turning me off today.

I'm not a mind reader, just a human who knows there's a spectrum of feelings when it comes to the topic of communication. Anywhere from you love it and thrive on figuring it out, to you're ready to just toss it to the wind and hope it carries well.

If you're in the in-between space, then you probably started at the wind-tossing phase and so you know what your current phase is called?

GROWTH! Isn't that exciting?

Anyway, you know that there are a million things I could talk about when it comes to the struggle of communication. There are entire career fields - vast, deep, broad career fields - dedicated to such a thing. Communication and all the sub-categories. So what can I squeeze into a 20ish minute podcast for you?

How to make your communication successful, no matter who you are. Because you know what communication is a front for? The state of our hearts.

Communication is a necessary event in all of our lives. It happens in a variety of ways; I don't need to go through the list. Every interaction with another living being requires communication. And how we communicate tells how our heart is doing, because from the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

When I communicate a question, sometimes it comes out as a judgment.

When my spouse communicates a joke, sometimes it comes out as a lack of caring.

That doesn't mean my question is wrong & it doesn't mean his joke is wrong; it means that the state of our heart is at play in the sending and in the receiving, and paying attention to that can make all the difference.

There are a myriad of ways we all send and receive messages; nobody is the same as someone else. But there are patterns, and depending on which lens we're looking through determines the number of patterns. In episode 3 of this podcast I talked about filters, and how the filters we look through determine our experience of things. Sometimes it's the filter of grief, sometimes it's one of jubilation. Sometimes it's the lens of gratitude, sometimes it's one of longing. The filter--the lens--determines the experience. The same is true for communication.

We can look at the success of our communication in two ways: the logistics--like, the actual thing that happens after the communication; and the long-term impact--any inside-out change that occurred as a result of the communication. The relationship, the character, the state of the heart.

Changing the outside is easy; it's the inside-out change that lasts. That's where the heart stuff comes in. But when we change from the inside-out, when we do the heart work, everything else that flows from it is better because of that change. I can get my daughter to put her dirty clothes in the laundry by demanding it from her; but if I want her to know the value of responsibility, it has to be taught from the inside-out. I can go a week without cookies, sure. But if I want a health overhaul, it'll have to be an inside-out change; not just a bare-bones logistics of 7 days without chocolate chip cookies.

So how do we change our communication from the inside out? How do we change our hearts so that our communication is pleasing and effective? I have three ideas.

First, we figure ourselves out.

Then, we seek to understand.

Last, we decide what's worth it.

We figure ourselves out - we figure out how we're sending and receiving messages. We look at the state of our hearts. We ask ourselves questions like, "Did they hear what I meant to say?" or "Did I hear what they're saying they meant by their words?" We ask questions like "Did that joke hurt?" or "Is my question really a question, or is a judgment disguised as a question?"

When we figure those things out, then we know better how we're communicating. Because even though we live with ourselves everyday, that doesn't mean we know ourselves enough to know how our communication comes across to others.

And we can't have a knee-jerk reaction here. This isn't a quick answer kind of thing. It involves paying attention to our conversations. Listening to what the people who love us are saying when they ask us to use a different tone of voice, when they mention we sound angry or upset, when they completely ignore something we've said. It involves what the Army calls an AAR - an After Action Review. Did the other person walk away from your interaction deflated or defeated? Or did they walk away encouraged or inspired? Maybe neutral? That counts, too.

Then, we seek to understand. There are a myriad of lenses we use to see the world. They're all so very different, though they all have a powerful ability to share steady common ground - if only we would seek it out.

We seek to understand our friend who is a perfectionist. Yes, she can be nit-picky and have unrealistic expectations. She is driven by what is good and right, and doesn't always know how to communicate that in a way that says, *I'm just trying to make this better; not because you're wrong but because that's all I see.*

We seek to understand our friend who is always meddling. Yes, she is always getting herself into conversations or situations where her help might not be necessary. She is driven by being a support for those around her, and she doesn't always know how to shed that identity.

We seek to understand our friend who is always performing--in her home, in her work, in her relationships, in her hobbies. Yes, she is super-intense and doesn't slow down and can run over people in the process. She is driven by action and has a hard time remembering her inherent value.

We seek to understand our friend who values being a unicorn. Yes, she feels like nobody really understands her because she considers herself so unique. She is driven by the idea that there must be something wrong with her, so she doesn't always know how to say or do or be the right thing at the right time.

We seek to understand our friend who is always asking a million questions. Yes, she can sound judgmental. She is driven by a desire to know as much as she can so she's not afraid to ask the question, and she doesn't understand why that puts people on edge. How's she gonna know if she doesn't ask? So why not ask?

We seek to understand our friend who is always worried about what is safe, who displays an insatiable need for predictability. She is driven by anxiety and fear of the unknown and she just wants to know she'll land on her feet, and she doesn't always know how to curb those fears enough to communicate well.

We seek to understand our friend who avoids pain and boredom at all costs. She is driven by a strong sense of adventure and experience, so sitting with us in our boredom and pain can feel like nails on a chalkboard and she's not always sure how to be different than she's always been. She's always brought the party and people have always loved it, so what needs to change, right?

We seek to understand our friend who is a bulldozer with a teddy bear heart. It's so confusing because she's the kindest and the fiercest person you know, and that's because she's driven by promoting justice and escaping weakness and vulnerability. That means that when a tear might leak out or a power struggle might be on the horizon, the bulldozer wins and you might as well get some tools for the clean-up because it can get pretty messy.

We seek to understand the peaceful mediator who is so nice but so hard to figure out. She's driven by a strict avoidance of conflict; it hits her real hard so sometimes it's hard for her to decline an invite or just say plain no. She's not being non-committal because of anything wrong with her character; her insides turn at the thought of a possible conflict, especially if she might cause it.

So, we seek to understand our people who fit into those lenses. We check our defenses at the door and we seek to understand. We approach with curiosity rather than judgment. We set aside the personal offense and we hear the thing behind the thing - the question behind the judgment, the fear behind the accusation, the struggle behind the sarcasm. We remember that we have two ears and one mouth for a reason. I used to tell my students that all the time - you have two ears and one mouth. If you're listening, you're not talking. If you're talking, you're not listening. So we use those gifts--our mouths and our ears--wisely. We listen before we seek to be heard.

Then, last - we decide what's worth it. Here's my thing - I truly believe that God's love language is PEOPLE. He sent us a savior so that we would be free from the old law and embrace his final word of grace, and to me that says that people are pretty important to him. One way to honor that

is by honoring his love language, honoring people. Which we can do when the goal of our communication is true, right, noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

We decide what's worth it. We decide on our boundaries, we decide on our limits, we decide what limits should be pushed and we decide what's worth it to pursue. We consider that PEOPLE is God's love language and that there is a way to honor that, to honor Him, and to have healthy, clear, kind, life-giving relationships here on earth.

Everything I've just gone over is part of the Enneagram, which, if you've been around here a little bit you know I've been studying it more and incorporating it more into my writing & my work. One thing I love about the Enneagram is how it transcends every label we give ourselves & give others and it just shows how vast the Kingdom of God is and can continue to be, especially when we give others a chance to see the light that His kingdom, Jesus' upside-down kingdom, is meant to be. One way to be and shine that light? Communication that has the end goal of being true, right, noble, lovely, pure, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. It's not always easy - in fact, I think it's difficult more often than it's easy - but it's worth it. And it's possible.

So today, I leave you with a blessing for your communication.

May your communication today be the sweet, healing balm to a hurting soul.

May your communication today hold space for understanding.

May your communication today be the honest grace your neighbor needs.

May your communication today hold the love and light of Jesus, who sought to understand his friends.

And may your communication today have the end goal of being true, right, noble, lovely, pure, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

(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, I'd love to meet you in your Inbox! I send emails on Mondays and Fridays - we start our week with encouragement & blessings, and we end our week with adulting tips going into the weekend so that when you're home with your people you all continue to get along. Head to [elisapreston.com](http://elisapreston.com) for those.

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