



### 3: Same Life, Different Filter

Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 3 of Praise Through It.



This is a podcast where we practice seeing the praiseworthy side of our daily struggles. We stand 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—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. In each episode, I'll offer a perspective that shifts our eyes from our daily grind 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.



So, I think filters, in general, have gotten kind of a bad rap. We begrudge the fact that they make people's digital selves look unlike their real-life self. We lament the fact that they strip us of the "reality" of others' lives as we scroll through social media and want to see what others are up to. We think filters show something untrue, and we think they're only used to cover something we want hidden. A black & white photo to hide tired eyes. A warm filter to hide whatever the heck it is that fluorescent light does to our faces. Well, what if that's still true, *and* what if filters give us a way to look at the same thing in a different way. Not necessarily an untrue way, just different. What if a filter was just a way to bring out something true we didn't see before? Let's see...

Musical interlude (start before end of previous paragraph)

Back in December, I was hanging out with my little family of 4 - one husband, one wife, one daughter, and one dog. We were playing soccer at a local elementary school around the corner of our house. It was a Sunday afternoon, a little rainy and a lot gray. The part of winter in the northeast that is mostly monotone in color. Even when the snow hasn't fallen and you can still see all the grass, it just always seems like the gray colors everything. This particular Sunday, we were alone in a big, open soccer field. Houses dotted the fenceline to the west. To the south was a quiet school that continues to eagerly await the return of its everyday pitter-patter rhythm. Behind us, to the north, was holiday busy-bee traffic of people going here-and-there. And on the

field, my happy family that loves to be outside no matter the snow drizzle (or snizzle, as it is so called) playing tip-tap on our hoods.

My husband grew up playing soccer, so he was teaching our 5 year old daughter how to kick and stop a soccer ball, I looked to the north, toward the traffic. This huge weeping willow stood guard in front of the house at the corner of the school property. I had already been messing around with my camera to take pictures of us playing soccer - because I am a documentarian by nature and I take pictures of \*everything\*. My family can attest to that, and so can my two back-up external hard drives where I keep all my photos, in addition to the cloud service that I use. I swept my phone over from my family and I took a picture of the tree, then I fiddled with the filters at the bottom of my camera phone. It really startled me how dull the grass looked in one filter and how green it looked in another. How vibrant the tree looked in one filter and how lifeless it looked in another.

It was the same exact tree in each shot; it was just a different filter.

Same tree, different filter.

We had a lot of fun that afternoon. We all laughed to the point of tears, I saved some of those photos in the Favorites in my phone. All of that is a gift in and of itself. Every day is definitely not like that. Some days are mundane, boring, and seemingly unfruitful. Other days are full of stress, anger, frustration or upset. Some days are full of big and small adventures.

But all in all, it's the same life, just a different filter. No matter our momentary and fleeting feelings of the day, it is the same life, just a different filter that we're looking through.

When we're dealing with grief, our days go through that filter. Everything we see, say, and do is colored by the loss of something or someone.

When we add a faith filter to that, we still have that loss, but we may find a purpose for the grief. We may even feel like we can stand up on our own for a moment or two. Wobbly, but it's a start.

When we're dealing with a promotion, our days go through that filter. Everything is colored by our hard work and the reward for it.

When we add a gratitude filter to that, we still bask in our hard work but we couple it with recognizing that a little bit of luck and right-time-right-place went into being in the position we're in.

When we're going through postpartum depression, our days go sloooooow. Everything is colored by feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worry, sadness, frustration, exhaustion.

When we add a grace filter to that, we don't feel guilty for those feelings anymore and maybe we seek help or community in this season.

When we're going through something we don't understand--a separation in marriage, a grievance with a child, a moral dilemma at work--we walk around in a state of confusion and frustration, whether or not we say or show it out loud.

When we add what I call a Next Right Thing filter, we accept that we might not know the whole story, but we can live moment to moment, doing the next right thing as best as we know how to do. This is the most practical filter for sure and it comes from one of my favorite podcasts and books, The Next Right Thing with Emily P. Freeman. I'll be sure to link it in the show notes.

When we're a military spouse and we are sitting/walking/running/crocheting/whatever-ing through our first or third deployment, our days are colored by wonder and worry and loneliness. When we add a community filter, our spouse remains front-and-center in our hearts and we also recognize that we are not alone.

In all of those situations, our reality is the same, and we don't love it. Also, we allow our spirits to be lifted by another filter of our same reality.

The grace and the faith and the gratitude and the next right thing and the community, that all still exists. It's just a matter of filtering our experiences through them.

Same life, different filter.

Now, some filters are natural and necessary.

We don't want to push our grief aside, because grief is the natural bridge between a life with something and life without that thing.

We want to be excited for the promotion and recognize our hard work.

Having a baby is hard work, before, during and after. Big, deep, dark, swallowing feelings are normal.

Going through something we don't understand is really stressful.

Being a military spouse and not always having solid ground to stand on is a lot to carry.

All of those filters are natural. All of those perspectives are natural.

Also. Seeing our life and our people and ourselves through just one lens, through one filter, isn't healthy, nor is it actually reality. Our lives and our people, us, our experiences, we are dynamic, three-dimensional, nuanced, and complex. One filter doesn't show the whole of any story.

Adding a filter means that you're still looking at your life, you're just seeing different colors. Adding a filter means recognizing that your life looks exactly like what you see, and that with one swipe to the right or one swipe to the left you could see more or less or just different.

Adding a filter of faith, gratitude, grace, community, or anything else, doesn't mean you're ignoring your life. It doesn't mean you're not dealing with the real, hard things. We don't minimize our hurts and our traumas like that. We don't measure out our burdens like that. We can play the At Least game: "well at least this, this and this..." and that can bring true things to

mind. But we don't brush aside that which hurts our heart. We can, however, add more than one filter to toggle between.

We add that faith filter to remind ourselves that even though our heart is covered with pain and grief, God is God and His presence can be the ground we walk on when we're feeling like we're being swallowed by a black hole.

We add a gratitude filter so we recognize that all we are given is part work and part luck, so we never get so haughty as to say something is 100% ours. That way, when it's time to give it back or let go or move on, the split is maybe a little easier and a little more natural.

We add that grace filter so that we remain kind and gentle with ourselves, and so that we remember that Jesus loves us in all states, and so we give ourselves permission to remember: we are created on purpose and for a purpose, for such a time as this.

We add that community filter so that we remember we are not alone. To remember that we're not alone means that when we get stuck in worry and wonder and fear and loneliness, we can call on a friend to hold our hand. And that hand-hold can be a *life-saver*.

We add the Next Right Thing filter because of something that Jamie B. Golden said. She's a co-host of The Bible Binge and The Popcast with Knox and Jamie. I'll link that in the show notes, too. But she said something that I love so much. She said: God is the lamp unto my feet, not unto my football field. To see through the Next Right Thing filter reminds us that we don't have to see the finish line in order to go one more step. We don't have to see the end of the story in order to turn one more page.

The verse this podcast is based on tells us to think about that which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Those are filters. Every one of them. We stay grounded in our reality so we can see God working in it, so we can learn and grow from it. Also - these filters give us the same life, just an additional lens to look at the details and the big picture.

As we think about what filter we're looking through today, let's consider a few questions: does my filter emphasize the heartache and do nothing to improve my perspective? Is my filter one that lifts the burden from my heart a little bit? Does my filter keep the good and true things in mind, while keeping me grounded in my reality so I can see God working?

Whatever your day looks like, may you be able to filter through faith, grace, gratitude, truth, nobility, rightness, purity, love, admiration, excellence, and praiseworthiness so that in the details and in the big picture, you know that what you see at first glance is not always all there is to it.



Thank you for listening to episode 3 of Praise Through It. Life can be messy and chaotic and hard, and we can see that side, and we can find the glimmers of light that shine through our everyday. No rose-colored glasses, but true things that bring hope and joy and peace.

Today, to help you along in this practice of applying a new filter to your everyday, I've created a set of simple graphics for you, one for each filter I've mentioned this episode. It's linked in the show notes so you can get to it easily. It's also on my website, [elisapreston.com/praisethroughitpodcast](http://elisapreston.com/praisethroughitpodcast). Feel free to use one, some, or all of them. You can print them out and keep them somewhere you look every day. For me, that would be my bathroom mirror or my fridge--where the cookie dough lives. You can screenshot it and set it as a phone background for a time. You can really do whatever works for you, just a simple resource for you to filter through your days as you practice thinking about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

#### Outro music

I'd love to keep connecting with you! I mostly hang out on Instagram in the social media world. You can also find me at [Elisapreston.com](http://Elisapreston.com), where you'll find more about my books, speaking at your event, and some fun extras. On the podcast page, along with the filter resource I mentioned, you'll find a transcript of today's show in case you like to read along or take notes, or you can also always pass the episode on to a friend or family member who maybe doesn't listen to podcasts but you know they'd enjoy the message. Or someone in the deaf or hard-of-hearing community.

That's it for today. Thank you so much for listening, I'll see you next time for episode 4 of Praise Through It.