



7: Introverts Should Win the Space, Too

Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. Welcome to episode 7 of Praise Through It.



Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 7 of Praise Through It. It is 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, whatever is excellent and praiseworthy -- think about these things. My goal 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. If that's something you're working on or you'd like to be a part of, listen in.



Today, friends, we are going to talk about one of my favorite things: quiet people and loud people sharing the space.

In 2012, social researcher Susan Cain wrote a book called *Quiet: the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. The title drew me in immediately because I have generally been thought of, my entire life, as quiet. In 2018, I handed the book to my husband and I said: Here is your handbook to me. Read it and let me know what you think. Well every night he'd read a little bit and he'd look at me and ask: Uhhh, this is you. Did she go in your head in order to write these words? Did she interview you for this? This is you.

And it really felt that way. Both of us learned a lot about me from that book. I highly recommend it if you're quiet or you want to better understand quiet people in your life. She has Ted Talks, too, if a book doesn't fit in your space right now. But what we really connected with when we read that book was the fact that loud doesn't always equal better. And that's a message that quiet people have heard, implicitly and explicitly, our entire lives. And it's a message that loud people have given and heard, implicitly and explicitly, for a really long time.

And so today I want to talk about how quiet people, or people who are thought of as quiet, or introverts, hold just as much power and just as much value as the loud people in our lives.

When I was 16 I got my five-year-get-me-through-college job. It was at a large national retailer. It paid well, better than any other job I had applied for, well over minimum wage at the time, and it was the only one that offered me a job aside from a chocolate retailer. I know, why didn't I just work for the chocolate place? Well I tried. But as it turns out the smell of chocolate, even to a chocolate lover, can be pretty nauseating when you're inundated with it all the time. So, this national retailer it was.

I need you to understand that if I wasn't with my parents or my grandparents or my cousins or my brother, I was a quiet, timid young lady. Well at this job I had to speak into the phone, which doubled as the loud-speaker that would go over the whole store, all 86,000 square feet of it, when I needed someone's help with something or if someone other than me needed to pick up a call on lines 1-4.

Full stop for me right there: WHAT?! I have to speak into the receiver and then my voice will go over the entire store?

No. So many NOs there. So many.

Well, it had to be a yes because I was quiet but I was also responsible and I did my job. I wanted my own car and I knew I would have to pay for it so I had to do it. I found out after a couple years that when I started my voice was so quiet over that loudspeaker they couldn't really hear me. Not only did it annoy them but they had no clue how to help me. So if they heard some kind of abstract muffling over the loudspeaker, they'd have to come to where I was working and see what I needed. Bless them for not telling me then how annoying it was. My 16-year-old self might have died of humiliation. I learned and by the end of my time there I was answering questions left and right and had zero issues talking over that loudspeaker. And now I have a podcast so clearly I've moved past the microphone timidity.

I am generally what you would call an introvert. There is a spectrum of this introversion / extroversion, but I land farther on the introvert side. You might not be able to tell by this podcast, and if you get me in certain places or on certain topics my introversion would be confusing to the casual observer for sure. But introversion and extroversion is so much more than a momentary view of a person's behavior, so much more than she's quiet and he likes to talk. The traits actually show up all the way into the far recesses of our neural pathways. And though we can turn certain pieces of each trait - introversion or extroversion - on or off depending on our choices, our environment our social training, and our preferences, the base of what we prefer, the base of who we are on that introversion or extroversion spectrum lies deep inside of our makeup and comes out in a variety of ways.

An introvert might also be considered an internal processor. An extrovert might also be considered an external processor. They aren't always synonymous, but their traits tend to go together.

For example...

An internal processor, an introvert, might be watching a sunrise and think Oh, how gorgeous. And then continue reflecting on the inside on how beautiful that sunrise is, why it's beautiful, what it means to them, and more.

An external processor, an extrovert, on the other hand, might be watching a sunrise and say out loud, Man, this is so beautiful. Look at all those colors. Look at how it reflects off the water. Man it's early. Most people miss this... And then keep going, with their thoughts, but out loud.

We can see how those two expressions might rub up against each other when they're in the same space. The internal person is thinking Sssshhhhh. The external person is, well, being external and talking through the experience and might be wondering why the internal person isn't talking so much. Two very different approaches to life, and when the two are in a relationship of any kind, they can be completely misunderstood and frustrating for both sides.

When the pandemic started here in America in March 2020 there was a lot of talk about how the stay-at-home orders were an introvert's dream. Stay inside? Have an easy out from social gatherings? Sounded perfect for the surface-level knowledge of what an introvert wants and needs.

However, we shouted from our living rooms and our keyboards: NOPE. Because we're trapped in the house with people who don't stop talking. That's especially true for me. If you know me and my family in real life, you know that's true. And you know that I wouldn't trade it for the world.

What I would trade is this: I would win the space more than I do. Introverts around the world would win the space more than they do. What does that mean?

Well, I and other introverts often share our messages in a different way than our extroverted counterparts. We might choose some form of writing, choose not to share every thought, or simply wait longer before speaking. If we do choose to share a message out loud, we've usually thought about it quite a bit. Because that's what we do. We think about our words, the words we might say and the words we said and the words we could say. And because we process the world on the inside, sometimes that gives the impression that we don't want to share or that we have nothing to share. I one hundred percent promise you from a lifetime of experience being an introvert: that is not the case. Introverts *always* have something to share. It's just a matter of believing it's worth sharing and then having the space to share it.

Think about it: the ones who get your attention are the out-loud ones. The loudest kids in your class or in your house, the loudest complainer on staff, the loudest laughter in the room, the loudest family member at Christmas, the loudest outfit in the room. We're drawn to people who are attractive, and what's attractive in our mainstream out-loud culture is exactly that: being OUT LOUD about ... everything. And it seems like this has given the allusion that the one who always processes out loud is the only brave one. It's given the allusion that the out-loud ones, the external processors, are the only ones who have something real and good to say because they're the ones who say it first and say it loudest. And it's given the allusion that the external processors hold more value than the internal processors, simply because they're the ones we hear.

I'm going to propose those allusions are untrue. Those of us who are introverts and internal processors, we just process the world on the inside. We work out our mess on the inside. And to get from the inside to the outside takes a whole lot of energy and/or courage that we're often working up to on the regular. Everything we say or do out loud feels like asking for attention, and we generally don't love attention. Or we want to be incredibly selective about what we get attention for. And if it has to do with a social cause, like changing a systemic problem or standing up against an atrocity, we definitely don't ever want anyone to think we're sharing our heart for selfish reasons. Introverts tend to feel like we're putting ourselves in front of our message and we have to work to remember: we are the vessels for our message since words can't walk and talk on their own. But we need regular reminders of that.

So what do introverts need in order to have the space to be ourselves and to share? Well, an introvert having the space to share depends on two things: him or herself and the other people in the room.

Introverts: we need to make our needs known. We need to retrain our brains to speak up. Not every time, I don't want to scare you, but more than we do. Just like at my job when I was a teenager, they couldn't hear me so they didn't know how to help me. We need to remember that even though the extroverts in the space are loud and tend to take over by default, not only do we matter, too, but usually our people really care about what we want and what we like. We've just been quiet for so long that we've been part of creating the pattern of them talking and us not. We have the power to break that pattern. But we have to speak up so our people can hear us. And extroverts of the space: we need you to give us some breathing room. We need you to do a time check on how long you've been holding the room, or before you answer a question that's asked to the room gesture to your quiet partner or your quiet friend and offer them the space first. Because honestly, we don't want you to stop talking. It's just that sometimes we want you to be quiet or quieter so we can say some things, too. We understand that you process the world out loud. That's part of why we're attracted to you. Also, if you could share some air from time to time, we'd appreciate it.

I don't think it's healthy to expect each other read each other's minds and to know exactly when an introvert wants to be an introvert and when she wants to be an extrovert; that's not fair to anyone. What we can do, though, is take a note from Jesus. He paid attention to the set-aside, the ones others didn't see. And not only can we take that note as an example to see the marginalized and tend to them, but we can look for the set-aside in our own homes and social circles, the quiet ones who don't ask for a lot of attention but would love our love.

Because generally, introverts hope what our extroverted friends hope: that what we offer is enough. (mWe hope that what we offer is seen as beautiful and good and beneficial to our people. And we don't always want to work so hard against the grain of extroversion to say the thing or do the thing out loud. Sometimes we just want people to see it without us having to point it out.

I think one of the biggest points lost in the this-or-that conversation is the fact that there is usually a spectrum of things. And we absolutely need people from one end of the spectrum to the other and every kind in between for this world to run well. We need the loud ones and the quiet

ones; we need the background ones and the front-and-center ones. We just need to make space for each other.

(music fade-in)

What's true, good, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy in this conversation is to acknowledge that being quiet doesn't equal a lack of bravery, and that being loud doesn't always equal truth or rightness. We acknowledge that and we look around our little corner of the world. We think: Who are the quiet ones? The ones who might do happy dances in their living room and nobody notices. The ones who might write in their journal more than they reach out in text but connections still matter to them. The ones who are still working up the courage to speak up and to speak out because they're just not used to asking for the attention. Find those individuals and go encourage them in exactly who they are. Let them know you'd love to hear about something in their day. Ask them how a specific thing in their life is going. Compliment them on something they put out into the world. Let them know that living quiet in an out-loud world is an asset, not a liability. It is a strength. It is seen. It is appreciated. And it is loved.



Thank you for listening to episode 7 of Praise Through It about one of my favorite topics: introverts & extroverts sharing the space. For more, head to my website, elisapreston.com. Under the blog there's a Lenten Shorts devotional series. Day 35 has a little more about this. Also head to Lindsayhausch.com – L-I-N-D-S-A-Y and bookmark her site for a guest post I wrote called I'd Rather Be With My Dog: Showing up as your introverted self for your loud people. It'll be the first in a series and it will publish Thursday, April 8th.

And hey, if you are enjoying this podcast and you have found it helpful or hopeful or encouraging, I would really appreciate if you went over to Apple podcasts and left a review. It really helps our podcasts when you do that. It helps get them in the algorithm and it helps get them in front of people who otherwise might not see them. If you want to do that, I would be so grateful, as I always am when you take time and spend some of it here with me.

I love connecting here with you every two weeks. If you ever want to connect beyond your speakers or your earbuds, I'm mostly on Instagram as myself, Elisa Preston. I love one-to-one chats so you can always send me a DM there or if you ever want to say hi or tell me about something an episode made you think of in an email, you can send a message to hello@elisapreston.com – I am always up for that.

(music)

Today I'm going to leave you with a blessing after I read a quote from the novel I'm currently reading, *Dearest Josephine* by Caroline George. One of the main characters, Elias, is a character who believes the library is the pinnacle of social interaction. As you can imagine, an internal processor such as myself, I understand him deeply. In the novel he's writing to his one true love, Miss Josephine De Clare in the 1820s. In one of his letters he hopes to eventually send, he

writes: a place is good if we keep good company there. No amount of rain or fog could dim that goodness, for the good is not contingent on circumstance, rather on the people who fill it.

May we be people who fill a space with room for each other, room for the loud and room for the quiet, room for the reserved and room for the front-and-center. May the extroverts share the space more often. May the introverts win the space more often. And may we all share the space with one another, leaning on and learning with one another as we grant each other grace, kindness, and mercy.