Devotions

JANUARY

The miracle and ministry of listening

This year our focus is on listening—on learning to listen to God and to each other. We believe that God invites us to listen to Him and, as we do, we experience His goodness. We also believe that we are called to extend the gift of listening well to each other. Helping one another feel heard and understood, valued and appreciated. We recognize that listening is a way that we love each other well but also gain understanding to strengthen our work. Today, as we begin our new theme we are going to look at a few foundational ideas.

God listens to us:

1 Peter 3:12, Psalm 34:17, 1 John 5:14-15, Isaiah 65:24

Take time to ponder the reality that God, who made the heavens and the earth LISTENS to
you. How does the idea that God is listening to you change the way we think of prayer? What
are some of the characteristics of God? As you pray, imagine approaching a God who is
loving, powerful, faithful, kind, patient, etc.)

We are invited to listen to God:

Read Isaiah 55:2-3, Jeremiah 33:3

- What do you think it means that our soul will live? That we will delight in rich food?
- What are some things that you hope we learn this year that will help you grow in your ability to listen? (LEADER PLEASE RECORD THE RESPONSES - NO NEED TO SAY WHO - SO WE CAN KEEP THEM IN MIND AS WE DEVELOP MATERIALS)

The ministry of listening

The first way we serve others in the church is by listening to them. Just as our love for God grows as we listen to His word, we will begin to really love other believers as we learn to listen to them. God also shows His love for us by listening to us. So we are doing God's work when we learn to listen to people. Christians, especially pastors and leaders, so often think they need to say something—that this [preaching and teaching] is how they serve the body of Christ. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.

...There is a kind of 'half-listening' we do when we think we already know what the other person has to say. We listen impatiently, waiting for our chance to speak. It isn't truly loving, because we want to get rid of the other person...Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been given to them by God, who is the Great Listener. He calls us to share in His work. We should listen like God does so that we can speak the Word of God.

an s	peak the word of God.	Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Living Together Full quote <u>here</u> .
•	What stands out to you in this quote?	
•	Do you think that listening can be a way to serve others?	
	What are some of the barriers that you find to listening w	vell?
•	Have you ever had someone listen to you well? How did	that feel? What did they do that made
	you feel heard?	

•	What excites you about the topic of listening this year? What are some of the areas that you hope we explore when it comes to listening to each other? (LEADERS TAKE NOTES)
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