

**BIG IDEA**

To have emotionally healthy relationships, listen with empathy to the words, and nonverbal communication of others.

**SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 22:37-39; John 1:1-3,14; James 1:19

**ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT**

1. When was the last really great conversation you had?
2. We tend to talk more than we actively listen to our friends and family. When we focus on ourselves or what we're going to say instead of hearing what people are saying, conversations tend to end in a feeling of disconnection or discontentment. How would you rate your significant other as a listener? Your parents or children? Yourself?

**BIBLE DISCUSSION**

3. Read John 1:1-3, what stood out to you? How might this passage about God's incarnation in Jesus help us be incarnational listeners in our relationships?
4. Read John 1:14 in the Message version. Now read it in another version, what could scripture be trying to show us about Jesus' actions here?
5. Read James 1:19, what wisdom does this have for our lives?

**LIFE APPLICATION**

6. Have you ever known someone who was a great listener? Who was it, and how did it make you feel?
7. Read the quote from David Ausberger below and discuss what it brings to up for you around connection: "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable."
8. When we look to Jesus' example, we see that Jesus – 1) left his world and 2) entered ours, yet 3) held onto himself even to the point of 4) hanging between the two worlds. Of these four stages of incarnational listening that Jesus modeled, which one is the easiest for you, and which one will require more practice?
9. Question: A common reason we could avoid listening incarnationally is that it can lead to discomfort if we genuinely seek to understand people who are different than us. What are some ways we can begin to see that tension as an opportunity to love instead of avoid?

**CHALLENGE**

It's easy to live in our own echo chambers, where those around us amplify our opinions and preferences, but what would it take for us to consciously bridge a gap and make a connection with someone else? Who in your life do you need to connect with emotionally through listening this week? Make a plan to connect with them over the phone, FaceTime, Zoom, or in person.