This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_19\_\_\_. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, *we* are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of.

In the fall of 2019, I began to sense that my word for 2020 needed to be “listen.”

Every year, I ask God to give me a word. One word. One word that I need to focus on and live out in that year. I never know where this journey will take me, but I believe that when the word becomes clear to me, and I choose it, I am stepping out into a scary and uncertain place where I will be stretched in really uncomfortable ways.

It’s like asking God to teach us patience or love, and he puts in a situations where patience is super hard and loving feels impossible.

When I pick that word for the year… I’m asking for it.

I thought a lot about what this episode could be today. I will explain toward the end why I chose to go with this topic, but I am going to let you in a little further, a little deeper into my life today. I want you to hear how I’ve learned to listen this year. I want you to know what this word has meant to me.

Because it has changed everything.

## I’ve learned to listen to others.

I’ve shared before that last November I made a decision to step out of the boat in a HUGE act of faith to join the hope\*writers 2020 Mastermind cohort. The price tag was too big for our limited budget. The time commitment was intense. But something deep in me knew that this was my next right thing, as Emily P. Freeman says. I went in thinking that this mastermind would help me make serious writing progress. And it has.

But I’ve always been a person who prefers to work alone. I hated group projects in school. I did not study well with others. I am an introvert, and all of my writing work up to that point had all been done alone. So I just thought this mastermind would help me get more done on my own. But what I did not realize is how much I needed others with me on this journey. Bc the writing life can be lonely.

I had no idea the power of listening to others’ point of views. I did not know that listening to their struggles would help me in mine. I did not originally want their opinions, but I learned that I could not have a long-lasting writing life without them. And I also began to see that they needed me to listen to *them*, that this writing growth was not just about me, but about them and their growth, too.

I will share a few thoughts from *The Listening Life,* by Adam S. McHugh today to help us move forward as people who listen well. He says this of listening to others, “I suggest we make it our aim to listen *to,* not listen f*or…*To listen for is deconstructive: we are breaking people down into parts. We listen to collect data… When we listen *to* people, we are embracing them as whole, not fractions, even if they offer only a small part of themselves to us… To listen to is an act of construction: we help people find integration of their various parts. It is an invitation to other people to settle in, be themselves and speak freely… [It says] They are welcome in my space.” (P. 138-139)

## I’ve also learned to listen to the Spirit within me.

It has always been my aim to listen to Jesus and do what he says, as my friend and former Pastor Rob Wilton always says. I thought I was already good at this before this year, because I have in the past been able to discern what God was telling me. I did not always follow that voice, and there were consequences that came after that. But I at least knew the voice of the Father, of the Spirit within.

Or so I thought.

But this year, I began working with a spiritual director named Gail. And Gail has taught me what it actually means to listen to the Spirit in me. We begin each session in silent, listening prayer. I had read a lot about this practice, but was never able to successfully implement it in my daily life. It is hard when you’ve got 4 loud humans living with you in your house. But that’s kind of an excuse. I just didn’t set aside time for it.

Gail does not rush me. She waits for me (and silently prays with me). I sit in silence. I listen for whatever comes up in my mind. And it’s crazy what begins to flood in. It’s like God was waiting on me to be quiet so he could have a turn. It’s like my kids spilling out everything they wanted to tell me at the end of the day. They can’t get it out fast enough.

God speaks so much over me in those moments. He speaks in metaphors and sometimes asks questions. And sometimes just reminds me of truth that I already know. He tells me things I need to know. And if I would never be still to intentionally listen to him, I would miss all of that.

This year I needed to listen to him about my job, about where I live, about starting a podcast and next steps in ministry. I needed to listen to him about finances and crazy things that don’t make much sense yet. I need to listen to Him asking me, “Kerrah are you going to trust my leadership or not?” “Are you going to step out of the boat or not?” “Are you going to stop fighting and lean into my embrace or not?” I need to listen. Because I can’t obey without listening first. And I can’t have faith without listening either. (See Acts 14)

Adam S. McHugh says, “ Prayer without listening is not truly prayer… To treat prayer as listening is to acknowledge that God always has the first word.” (P. 81)

## I’ve learned to listen to my emotions.

Some people think we should not listen to our emotions at all, that they deceive us and lead us in the wrong direction. I think this is true sometimes, but not all the time. For much of my life, I was told I was too sensitive, or that I wear my emotions on my sleeve too much. Any Enneagram 4’s feel me there? I thought my emotions weren’t to be trusted or even welcomed because others saw them as an annoyance or a weakness or even a lack of faith.

But here’s the thing. Our emotions are not always lying to us, but they are always communicating something. And sometimes that something is truth.

Depression comes and goes in my life. It took a long time to name it, but there it is. And 2020 has not been immune to my depression. I’ve learned this year to pay attention to my sadness. To not step over it or ignore it or tell it to be quiet by trying to find all the things I’m thankful for. Just to listen to it, and let the tears come when they need to. To be honest with others that I’m sad. To grieve things that are ending (and that has been a lot for me this year). To grieve the “not yet, Kerrah’s” and the transitions and the things COVID has stolen from me. Pushing my sadness away only relocates it; it doesn’t actually make it better. My sadness is telling me to connect with safe others. It’s telling me to remember hope. It’s telling me that there is a time for mourning, and this is that time.

Adam S. McHugh says it this way, “We ought to listen to our emotions before we start preaching to them. Let’ not tell them what to do before they tell us what they are already doing.” (P. 185)

## And finally I’ve learned to listen to my body.

2020 has been brutal to my body. And I’m not great at paying attention to it. This year I’ve struggled to exercise consistently, and I’ve had to push myself way beyond my limits. I’ve had to work on weekends quite a bit this year, and I’ve never really had to do that.

When my body was screaming at me to rest, I kept working.

When my body was screaming at me to make time for exercise because I barely had any energy, I ignored it and kept working.

When my body was like, “Hello! I’m starving.” I would ignore it sometimes to keep working.

When my head was pounding, I kept working.

People keep asking me how I do it all. How are you a counselor, a writer, a mom, a coach, run a business, keep up with the podcast… Well… I did not listen to my body. I pushed it too far this year.

And it has been completely worn out these past few weeks. And I think it’s telling me, “Kerrah, you’ve got to rest. You need to eat well and drink your water and get your exercise in.” You are crashing.

And I am.

Adam S. McHugh says, “We do not glory in exhaustion, but those moments of dangerous tired force us to give an honest and sober listen to what our body is telling us.” (P. 194)

Enter music

So I am ending this episode today to share with you how I am deciding to listen to my body…Well and to all of the above… during these next few weeks. If I don’t listen, this girl right here may find herself in the middle of a breakdown.

I’m choosing to honor my limitations and my exhaustion and burnout. And I am resting during the season of Advent this year. For the month of December, there will be no podcast episodes and no weekly emails. There will be no social media posts or videos or stories. I need to rest my brain and my body. I need to rest from my work.

And I need to be present with my family, with Jesus. I need to re-center. To take an extended Sabbath. And to not think about what you need so much right now— and instead come back and think about what I need for a while.

I promise I will return in the New Year. The podcast will be back and the emails and the social media. I won’t forget you. But for now. I need to remember me.

Thanks for understanding, and I cannot wait to sit with you again in the New Year.

Here is my prayer for you:

May this be a season of listening in your life.

May you listen to others.

To God.

To your emotions.

To your life.

To your body.

May your Thanksgiving be a hopeful perspective shift to see what is beautiful in your life.

May your Christmas be a reminder that we are waiting for Jesus to return, that this suffering won’t last forever.

May your New Year be full of anticipation.

May you reflect on what you’ve gained and lost this year.

What you are grieving and what you are welcoming.

May you see ahead and be able to consider what you hope for in 2021.

May you honor what you need and what others need.

May you discern the voice of God for your next steps toward wholeness.

And may you come out on the other side new.

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that \_\_\_learning to listen\_\_ will help you make one more step toward wholeness so that you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

You can find me on Instagram @kerrahfabacher (in the new year) or at my website, [www.kerrahfabacher.com](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com).

The transcript for this episode is on the podcast page on my website.

Don’t forget to subscribe so that you never miss an episode! I would also be so grateful if you would rate and review the podcast so that more can listen in.

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And a big thanks to my friend, Robert Hargrove, for creating the music for our podcast, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson for editing the show.

Until next time, friend.

I’ll see you soon!