We Need a Better King
Spend a few minutes brainstorming personality traits that make for a good leader. Write your ideas in the space below.

2 KINGS 25:8-21 (NRSV)

8 In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

9 He burned the house of the Lord, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down.

10 All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem.

11 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon—all the rest of the population.

12 But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.

13 The bronze pillars that were in the house of the Lord, as well as the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon.

14 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the dishes for incense, and all the bronze vessels used in the temple service,
as well as the firepans and the basins. What was made of gold the captain of the guard took away for the gold, and what was made of silver, for the silver.

As for the two pillars, the one sea, and the stands, which Solomon had made for the house of the Lord, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weighing.

The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it was a bronze capital; the height of the capital was three cubits; latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, were on the capital all around. The second pillar had the same, with the latticework.

The captain of the guard took the chief priest Seraiah, the second priest Zephaniah, and the three guardians of the threshold; from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the soldiers, and five men of the king’s council who were found in the city; the secretary who was the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city.

Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

The king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

KEY VERSE: The king of Babylon struck them down, killing them in Riblah in the land of Hamath. — 2 Kings 25:21 (CEB)

INTO EXILE

● What do you think caused this decline?

● What caused God’s people to lose what they were promised?

WHAT LED TO THIS?

● Make notes about sins of omission (things we should do but don’t, either on purpose or not), sins of pride, and examples of idolatry (allowing other things to come before God) in 2 Kings 23–25.
1. Why did the Israelites disregard God and worship idols instead?

2. What makes sin so attractive, both to the Israelites and to us?

3. Why do some people call pride the root of other sins?

4. What are idols in our culture that prevent us from putting God first?

**PAIN AND PRESENCE**

With your class, brainstorm answers to the following questions.

- What thoughts and feelings do you think the people of Judah experienced as they were exiled from their homeland?

- What do you think would have helped these people in their suffering as they were forced to leave their homeland for an unknown country?

**SLOW DOWN, STOP**

Typically, when we talk about fasting, we talk about food. However, you can fast from activities also. Every day this week I will fast ten minutes from this activity:

Sunday: ____________________

Monday: ____________________

Tuesday: ____________________

Wednesday: ____________________

Thursday: ____________________

Friday: ____________________

Saturday: ____________________

Sunday: ____________________

Monday: ____________________

Tuesday: ____________________

Wednesday: ____________________

Thursday: ____________________

Friday: ____________________

Saturday: ____________________
Devotion: God’s Generous Grace

In the earliest chapters of the Bible, we learn how God shaped the water and the land and crafted life itself. We read in the Book of Genesis that God called all of Creation “good.” Finally, God put a cherry on top of Creation by bringing forth humankind and called it “very good.”

Sadly, this very good thing was marred—but not destroyed—by the choices of human beings. At the heart of these choices was a lack of trust in the God who created us. Adam and Eve trusted the serpent instead of God, and a choice was made when the serpent tempted Adam and Eve and whispered, “You will not die.”

Adam and Eve’s choice has echoed through the years, and their sin has been repeated by every generation since. This choice not only damaged our relationship with God and others but also damaged our connection to God’s creation. Even today, in our hesitation to trust God, we allow jealousy, anger, and greed to color our interactions with others, and we see ourselves as not good enough.

Still, no matter how extensive sin’s damaging effects have been, they are overwhelmed by God’s generous grace. Salvation extends to every part of our lives and every part of our world. We can view ourselves as precious children of God and others as bearers of the image of God. Our sin is cancelled and our relationship with God is reconciled. We are cleansed. We are healed. We are restored.

Add your thoughts about this devotion here:

_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________

Focal Scripture Verse

“God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.”
—Genesis 1:31
Scripture invites us into the story of a God who created a good world that was marred by sin. Throughout this story, we are invited to connect with a generous God who, through Jesus, works to put all things back together, including us, and bring us salvation. This salvation is promised by the prophets and made possible by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

LESSON 6
Hearing Jesus’ final words on the cross stirs deep emotion. Also, it’s important to understand the meaning in the symbolism of the temple curtain being torn in two and God inviting us into God’s presence.

LESSON 7
On the third day after his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead and conquered death. This miraculous moment both surprised his disciples and opened the door for us to join him in eternal life.

LESSON 8
The story of salvation did not begin with Jesus. Rather, Jesus was the culmination of God’s promise of redemption and the restoration of all that was lost. The temple was also a symbol of this promise.

LESSON 9
The words of John the Baptist point us toward Jesus and help us understand who he truly is. John the Baptist not only prepared the way for the Messiah but also prepares us for baptism through the Holy Spirit.