

City Gates : Lesson 3 Homework

Day 1: A new spiritual discipline, Remember!

The Bible, as we have learned, was given to us in a particular context – to a particular people, in a particular place, at a particular time and in a particular language. In some ways, we could say that although it was certainly written for us, it was not originally written to us. So, in order to get into the mindset of the original recipients, we have to do a little bit of cross-cultural learning. One of the main areas of difference between us and the original recipients is the way we think.

We are westerners. This means we easily embrace a western way of thinking. Western thought is propositional, linear, concrete and based on logic. Many of the New Testament books and letters were written in Greek which is birthed out of this line of thinking. This is one of the reasons that we are so comfortable in the New Testament and perhaps why the old testament at times is intimidating or feels more foreign to us.

In contrast, the Old Testament was written to a totally different culture and way of thinking. We would call this the Eastern mindset. Hebrew is an Eastern language and is built to express Eastern thought. Eastern thought is based on story, narrative, pictures and metaphors.

The chart below will help explore the differences:

Western	Eastern
Ideas are expressed via propositions and linear logic	Ideas are expressed via story, narrative and discussion
Learning happens via propositions and linear logic	Learning happens via story, narrative and discussion
Based on the individual	Based on the community
Self-Improvement	Group achievement
Studies objects in isolation	Studies objects holistically, in relationship to its surroundings
Understands before believing	Believes before understanding
Numbers represent quantities	Numbers represent quantities but also have symbolic meanings

זָכַר (zakar) : to remember, recall, call to mind

When we (western) think of and use the word remember, we might equate it with simply recalling something, someone or an event from our past. In the Hebrew (eastern), remembering is a concept that is more robust. To remember is not to simply recall but it is to **recall something from the past to bring it into the present to have it change the future**. This is how the word remember zakar (to remember) is used in our Old Testament.

“In the Bible, ‘remembering,’ particularly on the part of God, is not the retention or recollection of a mental image, but a focusing upon the object of memory that results in action.” - Nahum Sarna

Look up the following verses and fill out the chart as you take note of the word zakar:

Reference	What was to be remembered?	What action was to be taken or what was commanded in light of what they remembered?
Genesis 9:15		
Exodus 20:8		
Numbers 15:39		
Deuteronomy 7:18		
Judges 8:33-34		

Day 2: Journaling and Remembering

It might surprise you to know that the word Zakar or Zachor! in the imperative is one of the most frequent commands in the Bible. It is used over 250 times and if you include all conjugations of the word, that number jumps to over 500.

One of the most saturated uses of this command relates to Israel and their time in the desert. God desperately wanted them to remember the time when He led them, when He fed them, when He provided water for them, when He intimately walked with them. In the desert, Israel had nothing but lacked nothing because God became their everything.

Why would God ask them and so many others in the Bible to remember? Our lives are so busy, scattered and distracted. In the midst of remembering the details of our calendars, the endless items on our various lists, perhaps we have become forgetful of the most important things. We are a forgetful people. God asks us to remember what He has done. God asks us to remember His teaching, guidance and instruction. God asks us to remember His love for us, His provision for us and His redemptive activity in our lives. This act of remembering should then spur us on to a greater faith in who He is and a better understanding of what He asks of us. Ultimately, what He has done for us in the past fuels us to be better disciples.

Let's live into this discipline and take some time to remember one of our personal, metaphorical deserts. A desert season can be a time of physical suffering but it is not limited to that. It can also be a season of spiritual or mental struggle. It can even simply be a time when you were discouraged or dissatisfied with your circumstances or disappointed with unmet expectations. Take some time to return to that season and sit in that space. Find a quiet place with as little distraction possible. Use the following prompts to remember and journal your thoughts:

- What were the circumstances of that season?
- What were the prominent thoughts, feelings and perspectives in that place?
- As you remember, do you recall God's hand or his presence with you in that season? Record the role that He played in that place.
- As you remember, do you see God's hand or His presence with you in that season through His people? Record how God met you through others in that place.
- Conclude by committing to an action, a posture or a mindset that you will take into the rest of the week because you Zakar...because you remember.

Day 3: Scripture Reading + Studying

As we remember this past week's video, let's lean into the discipline of living in meditating on God's word. Begin by reading through Genesis 18 but before you dive in, ask God to teach you and transform you by the reading of His word. A copy of Genesis 18 is at the end of Week 3 homework for your convenience.

After you have read it once, read it again. This time, utilize the color coding system below to underline and interact with this passage:

Blue: What is God like? How does He work? What is His character?

Green: What does God promise?

Pink: What is worthy of prayer and pursuit in your own life?

Days 4+ 5: Prayer

As the week comes to an end, take the opportunity to live into the spiritual discipline of prayer.

Begin by praying Scripture and focusing on God and who he is. Create space to ponder some of the things He might be asking of you. Here are some prompts that may help:

- Thank God for His character (maybe the things you underlined in blue). Thank Him for the ways in which He works in our lives.
- Recall His promises and pray them back to Him (Did you underlined anything from this passage in green?). Ask Him to bring His kingdom for you and your community in keeping with all He has promised.
- Pray over the things He has revealed to you (the things you underlined in pink). Ask for His help in all He has ordained for you.

Conclude by praying for the requests of your small group or other people you love that God brings to mind.

Genesis 18

1 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. **2** He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth **3** and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. **4** Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, **5** while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." **6** And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." **7** And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. **8** Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." **10** The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. **11** Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" **13** The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' **14** Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." **15** But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

16 Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. **17** The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, **18** seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? **19** For I have

chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” **20** Then the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, **21** I will go down to see whether they have done altogether^[q] according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.”

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

22 So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. **23** Then Abraham drew near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? **24** Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? **25** Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” **26** And the LORD said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

27 Abraham answered and said, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. **28** Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?” And he said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” **29** Again he spoke to him and said, “Suppose forty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of forty I will not do it.” **30** Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.” **31** He said, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.” **32** Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.” **33** And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

journal

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.