



Small group discussion questions December 2014/January 2015

Chapter & verse – Neil Thorogood (p22)

Read Joshua 4, followed by Neil Thorogood’s article.

1. At the start of “Chapter & verse”, Neil says: “Sometimes we stand where history was made”. What historic places have you visited? How did they make you feel?
2. In the same paragraph, Neil says: “And for people of faith, history unfolds within the purposes and presence of God.” How do you understand that statement? Do you agree?
3. In later chapters of the book of Joshua, Joshua and his men slaughter the inhabitants of the land they conquer at God’s decree (for example, Joshua 10:40). Neil, in the second paragraph of “Chapter & verse”, says: “It is a story rich in meaning but dripping in blood”. Is it possible to appreciate the rich meaning of such a bloody story? If so, what meaning do you find in it?
4. Read verses eight to nine of the Bible passage. Here, Neil says, in paragraph three: “Place, people and God are being bound together”. What does it mean for place, people and God to be bound together? Are there places where this is true today?
5. Neil says of the stones: “They want to talk; they are to elicit, from future generations, questions about why they are there.” How good are we today at listening to what the past has to say to us and asking questions of it?
6. In paragraph four of “Chapter & verse”, Neil lists five “narratives stressing different points” that can be found in this passage. Which of those comes across most strongly for you?
7. Read Joshua 4: 10-11, 15-18. What is the significance of the ark of the covenant in this story?
8. In paragraph four of “Chapter & verse”, Neil compares our Christmas and New Year traditions with what happens in this story. What is the connection between them?

Chapter & verse
Neil Thorogood Chapter & verse
“I am utterly captivated by this chapter, especially by its stories of stones”



“Each of you take up a stone on the shoulders, one for each of the twelve tribes, so that you can tell the story of what God did for Israel when they crossed the Jordan River.”

Sometimes we stand where history was made. The crossing of the Jordan River was a pivotal moment in the history of Israel. It was the first time that the twelve tribes of Israel crossed a river together, and it was a moment of great significance. Neil Thorogood explores the meaning of this story in his article “Chapter & verse”.

God calls Joshua to appoint a man from each of the twelve tribes to carry a stone from the middle of the river (vs 15). They are to carry the stones as a memorial, so that future generations will know that God was with them when they crossed the Jordan. Neil Thorogood asks: “What does it mean for place, people and God to be bound together?”

Neil Thorogood also explores the significance of the ark of the covenant in this story. He asks: “What is the significance of the ark of the covenant in this story?”

Neil Thorogood concludes his article by asking: “How good are we today at listening to what the past has to say to us and asking questions of it?”

Memory is reinforced and kindled by place and stone



Small group discussion questions to accompany this article are available at www.reformmagazine.co.uk

All 12 December 2014 | January 2015 | Reform Magazine

