



Small group discussion questions October 2016

Chapter & verse – Neil Thorogood (page 18) Read Ezra 3, followed by Neil Thorogood’s article.

1. Neil Thorogood talks in the first two paragraphs of ‘Chapter & verse’ about the start of term. Is there a time of year that gives you a sense of a fresh start? How does it make you feel?
2. Neil describes Ezra 3 as embodying ‘a sense of newness and ... continuity’. Are there other themes of this chapter? If so, what are they?
3. Ezra 3:1-6 describes the worship rituals of the exiles. Why is this particularly significant?
4. What do you make of the community’s weeping and joyous shouts (as described in the last two verses of the biblical text)? Might the community have felt mixed emotions when the temple’s foundations were rebuilt? If so, why?
5. In paragraph five, Neil says that the exiles’ song of God’s steadfast love was ‘no mean feat of remembering’, considering the context. What makes it hard to believe in God’s enduring love?
6. In paragraph six, Neil suggests that by rebuilding the temple’s foundations, ‘the people are setting out both to recapture something ... and to refashion their ideas about what it means to be the people of God’. What does it mean to be the people of God today?
7. In paragraph seven of ‘Chapter & verse’, Neil describes this passage as ‘a story with real signatures attached’. What significance does naming have in this passage?
8. Neil talks in the same paragraph of those ‘who never made it into the record whose work and passion and faithfulness was every bit as essential as was the role of Jeshua, Ezra etc’. Who are the people whose work and passion and faithfulness have been essential in your own life?

