

Stories FROM THE Wilderness

A STUDY OF THE ISRAELITES' JOURNEY FROM
EGYPT TO THE PROMISED LAND

By
Erin H. Warren



Copyright © 2022, 2023 by Erin H. Warren
Published by Headley Warren Productions LLC
Orlando, Florida
www.FeastingOnTruth.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-959305-09-5

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For Lynda

Your love of the Word is contagious, and this study exists in part because of the countless mornings spent across the table from one another studying Scripture together. You showed me how to find God in His Word. I'm forever grateful.

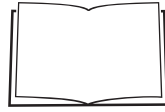
*He makes a road through a sea.
He brings water from rocks and bread from heaven.
He makes slaves victorious against warriors.
He makes a way for holiness to dwell in the midst of unholiness.
He loves even when rejected.
He forgives over and over and over again.
Who does that?*

*"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation.
But take heart; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33*



contents

Start Here	5
Four Simple Questions	11
Small Group Guide	15
Knowing God	17
Names of God	18
Characteristics of God	19
Context	21
Week 1	27
Week 2	43
Week 3	61
Week 4	81
Week 5	97
Week 6	117
Week 7	135
Week 8	151
Week 9	171
Week 10	187
Additional Notes	207
Feasting at the Table	213
About Erin	216



start here

I sat down in the salon swivel chair, excited to finally get a haircut. I mean, haircut days are the best days, am I right?! And I was long overdue. This was my first time meeting my new hair stylist, and she had come highly recommended. As she began talking with me about my hair and prepping to wash it, she tilted her head, and her face turned. “Your hair is dead,” she said. Trying to hide my shock, I played it off and kept talking in that nervous, chatty way. I had been growing my hair out and only wanted a small trim. But my hair was dead. This wouldn’t be a small trim. It wasn’t until I was back in the car, taking that post-haircut selfie, that I realized she had cut off over four inches. I started crying.

The dead hair was just a symbol of how I felt inside. I felt lifeless, like I was living in the valley of dry bones from Ezekiel 37. My family was in the middle of a wilderness season, and even my hair was feeling the effects.

Maybe you’ve been there. Maybe you’re there right now . . . the place that feels stalled, like life is passing you by; like everyone else in the world is moving forward, and you are stuck walking in circles. You can’t take any more bad news. Everything around you feels lifeless. Your dreams are dead. Your future is uncertain. Your pain feels crushing.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *wilderness* as “an empty or pathless area or region.”¹ The wilderness is uncharted territory. It’s the place where we feel lost, not knowing where to go, because there is no path to follow. It’s a place we see often in Scripture. There’s a thread throughout the whole Bible centered around the wilderness, and it starts right in the first chapter of Genesis.

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
Genesis 1:2 (NIV)

¹ “Wilderness.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wilderness>. Accessed 20 Aug. 2021.

The Hebrew word for *formless* comes from a root word meaning “to lie waste; a desolation (of surface), i.e. Desert; figuratively, a worthless thing; adverbially, in vain—confusion, empty place, without form, nothing, (thing of) nought, vain, vanity, waste, wilderness.”² Before the creation of this world, God calls it a wilderness. But while we see a place that is worthless, a waste, confusing, chaotic, and empty, God sees a place to display His glory. And time and time again throughout Scripture, God takes the worthless, seemingly wasteful, confusing, chaotic, and empty places and uses them as a backdrop to prove His character, draw us in, and display His glory.

The first place in Scripture we often think of when we hear the word wilderness is in Exodus. It’s a story many of us are familiar with. God’s people, the Israelites, are enslaved in Egypt. God sends Moses to Pharaoh saying, “Let my people go,” and after a series of plagues, Pharaoh relents. The Israelites leave Egypt bound for the Promised Land, but first they must go through the wilderness.

The journey from Egypt to Canaan (the Promised Land) is about an eleven-day journey. *Eleven days!* But instead, the people of God wander for *forty years* through desert. Growing up, I remember thinking, *Goodness. If they had just obeyed, they could have skipped the wilderness part and gone straight to the Promised Land!* I saw the wilderness as a punishment for disobedience, a punishment that could have been avoided. As we will see in this study, yes, there is an element of truth to that statement, but there was a key truth that I missed: God *purposely* led them into the wilderness in the first place.

God often leads by way of wandering. He does not take us on the most direct route. He leads in places that feel aimless and empty, because there are some lessons about God that can only be learned in the fertile soil of the wilderness.

But this story is not just hope for us during hard seasons of life; it’s a picture of this life altogether. We refer to it as the “already but not yet.” Just as the Israelites were saved from slavery, we have been redeemed from our slavery to sin, but we are not in the Promised Land of Heaven yet. We are wandering the wilderness of life in between. Life on earth brings hurt, division, pride, fear, and more. It often leaves us with questions about who God is. But our God has not left us here as orphans.

Every time I read our theme verse for this study, I want to cry. It feels so personal:

For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing.

Deuteronomy 2:7

To be honest, the first time I read it, I thought there was a typo. The grammar nerd in me thought, “*your*” needs to be “*you are*.” In fact, even my graphic designer corrected it to “*you’re*” in the first draft of the cover. Every time I type it, my computer underlines it with a little red line, as if to say, “Classic you’re/your mistake here!” But, come to find out, it’s not a typo. There’s a difference between “He knows you are going through this great wilderness” and “He knows *your* going . . .” The first is passive. He knows you are going through a great wilderness. He knows about it. But the second, the correct one, is intimate. He knows *your* going. His eyes are on you at all times. He is El Roi, the God who sees you, even when walking through desolate, seemingly lifeless places.

Several other translations put it this way: “He has watched over your journey” (NIV), “He has

² Strong’s Hebrew: 8414. Tohu. BibleHub.com, biblehub.com/hebrew/8414.htm.

watched your every step” (NLT), “He has known your wandering” (NASB), “He knows your trudging” (NKJV). His eyes have not missed one thing. There is not one step you’ve taken, one room you’ve walked into, one phone call, one doctor visit, one tear that has spilled over, one plea for help, or one prayer for provision that He has missed. He has seen it all. Your LORD God—Yahweh, the One True God—has never left your side. He goes before you. He goes with you. He goes behind you. He hems you in. His hand is on you (Deuteronomy 31:8, Psalm 139:5). And because of that, because El Shaddai, God Almighty, sees you and goes with you, you have lacked nothing. And that is what we are going to see throughout the next eleven weeks. We are going to see who God is in the wilderness, in our wandering, in the desolate, lifeless, chaotic, seemingly worthless and aimless places of our life.

The God of the Promised Land is the same God in the wilderness.

WHY STUDY INDUCTIVELY?

I classify this study as a Guided Inductive Bible Study because it is designed to give you a foundation and walk you through the inductive study process. When I first heard of inductive study, I was pretty intimidated. But, it’s just a fancy term for studying with your own heart and mind first. I honestly didn’t even know I *could* study this way until a few years ago at a conference. I had the privilege of hearing one of my favorite Bible teachers speak, and the following quote from her talk forever changed the way I look at Bible study:

We cannot be content being curators of other people’s opinions about a book we can’t be bothered to read ourselves. — Jen Wilkin

I realized my entire Christian life I had been a librarian, curating other people’s thoughts and beliefs and study findings. It became my driving passion to not only read and study Scripture for myself, but to help other women do the same.

I’m so glad you’re here! My prayer is that this book helps you:

- Release the bonds of a “perfect quiet time” to find deeper, richer time in the Word
- Build confidence as you learn how to study the Bible firsthand
- Discover truths about God and His character
- Grow in your faith and knowledge in a way that produces life change

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

The story of the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness is a unique story because it spans several books in various pieces and parts. Typically, I love (and encourage women) to study whole books of Scripture at a time, but I want to study the narrative of this story through the wilderness as a whole so we can see the big picture of who God is as He leads His people. This study highlights some of the major events that take places between Egypt and the Promised Land.

I have learned so many deep truths about God’s character and who He is in my wilderness places. I am so excited you are taking this journey too. I pray that these truths will encourage you in your own wilderness places.

For each week of study, you will have two to three stories to read. For each story, you will

find space to answer four simple questions (see pages 11–14 for more on this), as well as some additional study questions to help get you started. Each week also includes blank pages for you to add your own study notes, a response page, and space for teaching and small group notes.

Before your first meeting, take some time to answer the context questions on page 22. Context is crucial when studying Scripture. While this ancient book has not changed and is relevant for us today, we must remember it was written during a different time period and to different people groups. Understanding the cultural context is key to interpreting Scripture. Answering these questions and keeping them at the forefront of your mind as you study will help you better understand what you are reading.

One of the most life changing aspects of Bible study for me has been asking the question, “What does this say about God?” as I am studying. This is not a book about us; and particularly in the wilderness, we learn so much about who God is when we ask that question. With each passage you study, you have space to record the names and characteristics of God from that passage. (See pages 17–19 for more information on this.) At the end of each study week, there is a page to record a prayer to God as well as a fill-in-the-blank sentence to help you take His character and apply it to your own life. When we view our life and our circumstances through the lens of His character, we will see lasting change.

The teaching for this Bible study is available on Season 5 of the Feasting on Truth podcast and on YouTube (www.youtube.com/c/erinhwarren). For more information on this study, go to FeastingOnTruth.com/Wilderness.

Here are some more tips to help you as you study:

Move Slowly

Many Bible studies plow through Scripture, covering a chapter (or sometimes more) a day. There’s certainly a time and a place for that, but I’ve found when I move through Scripture slowly, reading small sections or focusing on one aspect of the study over the course of one week, the Word of God soaks into my heart and mind deeply. I remember it more easily. I memorize it more effectively. What I love about this particular way of studying is that if I feel the need to stop and let a particular verse sink in, I can do so without feeling like I’m falling behind. It also leaves room for the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do. Which leads me to . . .

Let the Holy Spirit Guide You

Jesus gives us this promise in John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” Anytime I sit down to study, I start with prayer. I ask the Holy Spirit to teach me all the things and to help me remember all the things. That’s His job. He’s there to help, so invite Him into your time.

Take the Pressure Off

Our time with the Lord doesn’t have to be this picture-perfect composition of Bible, notebook, and a cup of coffee (oh how I do love me some good coffee though). The words “quiet time” are not in the Bible, and I’ve found one size does not fit all. Our time in the Word will change with our stage of life. I tend to deep-dive study about twice a week, but I meditate on it every day. You may sit down and do all of your study in one day or you may devote an hour a day. Find what works for you and stick with it!

Don't Do This Alone

Some of my deepest relationships are ones built on the Word. They are women who gathered around a table or in a living room or online, and we had hard conversations with the Word of Truth between us. Invite a few girlfriends to do this with you. I even included a fun recipe in the back of the book you can make when you get together!

I recommend completing all of the homework on your own before listening to the teaching for the week. You can either listen on your own time or watch together with your group.

Finding time is hard. Women often tell me that they need to put their families first, that work is too crazy, or that they just don't have time to get together with other women for Bible study. Can I challenge you a bit? Is there any time more well spent than investing in our relationship with God? It's hard to pour out from an empty cup. We need to be constantly filled with Jesus, so we can pour out Jesus to our friends, family, and to God. Yes, this may look different in different seasons of life, but you won't regret making it a priority to spend time in the Word with other women.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first five books of the Bible are known as The Torah in Hebrew (Pentateuch in Greek) or The Books of Law. They were written by Moses in the wilderness, and the purpose was to tell the people of Israel their story. As they were preparing to enter the Promised Land, these stories, poems, laws, and genealogies told them not only who they were and where they came from, but also taught them who their God was. These books taught them His name and His character.

For this study, we will read through passages in Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua and move with the Israelites from Egypt into the land of Canaan. Technically, we are jumping into the middle of the story of God's people, so it's helpful to also understand the Scriptural context of the wilderness story.

The book of Genesis closes with the story of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph, sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, spends years facing trouble and hardship before rising to second-in-command in all of Egypt. It's the stuff of Hollywood movies—famine spreads across the land and Joseph's brothers, desperate for food, go to Egypt for help. What ensues is a reunion for the ages. The book ends with God graciously providing for His people through the wisdom of Joseph, and all of his father Jacob's household moves to Egypt and is saved.

The book of Exodus begins with God's people growing in great number while in Egypt. They increase and multiply at such an alarming rate, Pharaoh makes them slaves for fear of an uprising. He makes several proclamations in hopes of keeping the people of God down. But God raises up an unlikely leader: Moses. It's a remarkable story, and I encourage you to skim through Exodus 1–11 before we start this study. This will help refresh your memory about Moses and the people of God as we begin to study their incredible journey.

COMPANION TEACHINGS AND OTHER RESOURCES

I am committed to walking alongside you as you study Scripture inductively. I know you can do this, and I want to help you be successful. I have personally curated and put together a valuable study resource for you called *The Alongside Guide*. Each week, you'll receive an email from me with helpful insight, links to that week's teaching video and podcast, study notes with cross-references, quotes,



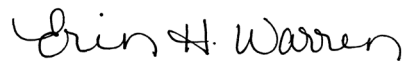
characteristics of God, small group discussion questions, and more. It's everything you need to be successful in your study, and it gets delivered right to your inbox. Scan the QR code or visit FeastingOnTruth.com/Wilderness to sign up.

LET'S FEAST!

Eugene Peterson wrote a book titled *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. I love that title, and I think it perfectly captures what walking through the wilderness, the in-between, the already-but-not-yet looks like. We likely won't often see overnight life change or radical transformations, but instead a slow, steady plodding. It's taking step after step, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, year after year in the direction our God leads. It is my prayer we will do just that.

I pray this study emboldens your steps, reveals the truth of who God is, and encourages you to keep walking, even through the hard seasons of your life. I can't wait to take this journey with you!

Because of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin H. Warren". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Erin" being more prominent than the last name "Warren".

Stories FROM THE Wilderness



WEEK 1

EXODUS 12

EXODUS 13



READ EXODUS 12

WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

Write a 2-3 sentence summary of this passage. _____

Who? What? Where? When? _____

List any repeated words or phrases. _____

List any transitional words. _____



WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT GOD?

What characteristics of God do you see in this passage? _____

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Passover (vv. 1-28, 43-51)

Describe in detail what the Lord told the Israelites to do to save them from the tenth plague.

Stories
FROM THE
Wilderness
WEEK 1 NOTES

How often were they commanded to celebrate this feast? Why? _____

How is the Passover a picture of Jesus? (see Mark 14:12; John 1:29; John 19:28-37; Romans 5:11; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 9:14, 18-22; 1 Peter 1:19.) _____

The Exodus (vv. 29-42)

List everything the Israelites took with them out of Egypt. _____

Stories
FROM THE
Wilderness
WEEK 1 NOTES

How many Israelites were there? _____

Why was the bread unleavened? _____

How long had the Israelites been in Egypt? What is significant about the day they left? _____

DISCUSSION: Why were the Israelites able to leave with so much? What does this tell us about God's ability to provide for His people? (v. 36) _____



READ EXODUS 13

WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

Write a 2-3 sentence summary of this passage. _____

Who? What? Where? When? _____

List any repeated words or phrases. _____

List any transitional words. _____

Stories FROM THE Wilderness
WEEK 1 NOTES

WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT GOD?

What characteristics of God do you see in this passage? _____

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 1-16)

What did Moses command the people to do in v. 3?

List all of the inhabitants of Canaan. _____

In what ways were they to memorialize the Exodus out of Egypt?

Stories
FROM THE
Wilderness
WEEK 1 NOTES

DISCUSSION: What does this tell us about the importance of remembering what God has done?

Pillars of Cloud and Fire (vv. 17-22)

Why did God not lead the Israelites on the fastest route?

DISCUSSION: Look back on your life. Have you seen God purposely lead you into a desert? Why do you think He may have led you there?

How did God guide His people? Why?

Think about a desert. Why do you think a cloud during the daytime and a fire at night would be beneficial to the Israelites?

WEEK 1 NOTES

God led the Israelites into the Wilderness, but He also went with them and guided them. How does He still do this for us today? How can you actively trust His character in your wilderness places?

I can:



about Erin

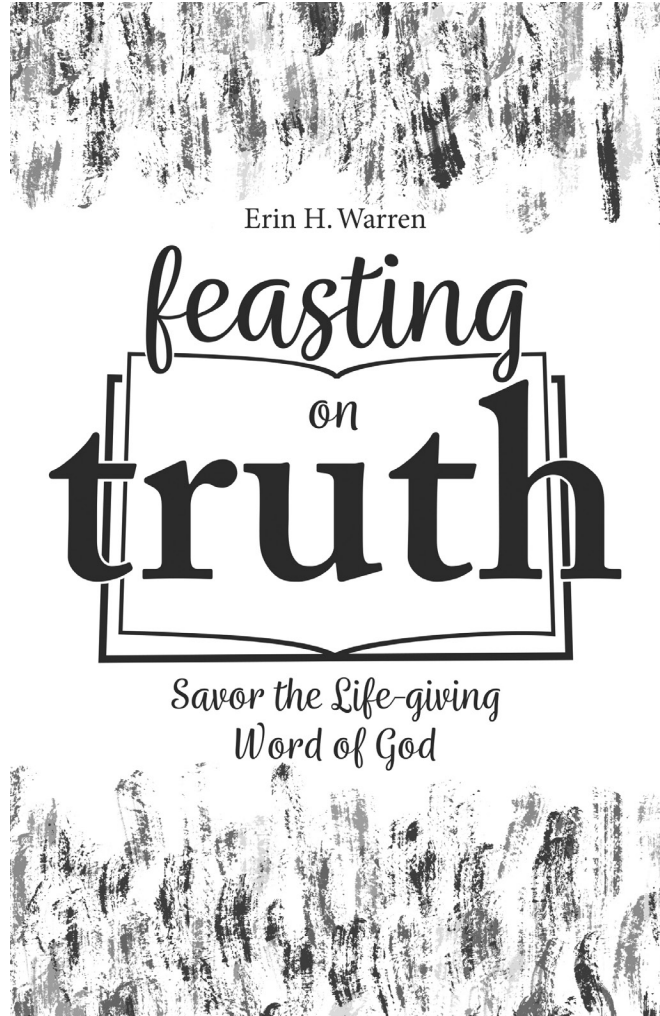


Erin H. Warren is passionate about equipping and encouraging women to discover God's truths for themselves. She leads and teaches Bible Studies, speaks, and writes. She and her husband, Kris, have three littles (who aren't so little anymore), and they live in Central Florida. She loves coffee, a house full of people and a table full of food, and hopes tacos never go out of style. Here's where you can keep up with Erin:

Website: www.ErinHWarren.com

Instagram: @erinhwarren & @feastingontruth

YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/erinhwarren



FEASTING ON TRUTH
SAVOR THE LIFE-GIVING WORD OF GOD

The Word of God is our very life, but Erin Warren felt anything but alive. Her husband was sick. Her world was falling apart, and she had questions. Feel-good faith was not enough; she needed deep, sustaining truths.

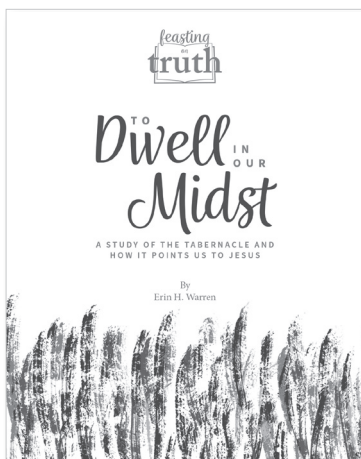
Through her own wrestling, Erin Warren addresses the obstacles that held her back when it came to Bible study and how she discovered to savor the life-giving Word of God.

The word *feast* is rooted in abundance. That is what awaits us in the pages of Scripture: a table laid out before us, not only for our essential nourishment, but for our enjoyment.

FeastingOnTruth.com/Books

TO DWELL IN OUR MIDST

A STUDY OF THE TABERNACLE AND HOW IT POINTS US TO JESUS

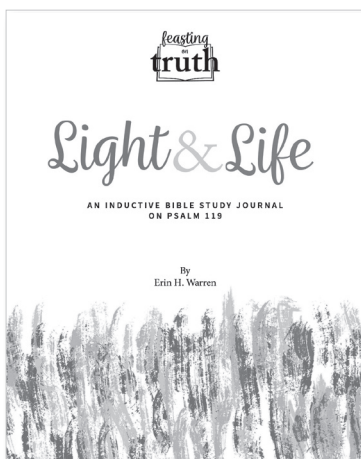


Why study this ancient tent? What does knowing about the Tabernacle have to do with our faith on this side of the cross? Everything. This tent is not merely ritual or history or good information—it's essential to understanding our salvation. Our detailed and deliberate God gave us the Tabernacle because one day, He would give us Jesus. It's an invitation into a relationship with our Holy God. Discover God's plan to dwell in our midst through Jesus Christ.

FeastingOnTruth.com/Dwell

LIGHT & LIFE

AN INDUCTIVE STUDY ON PSALM 119

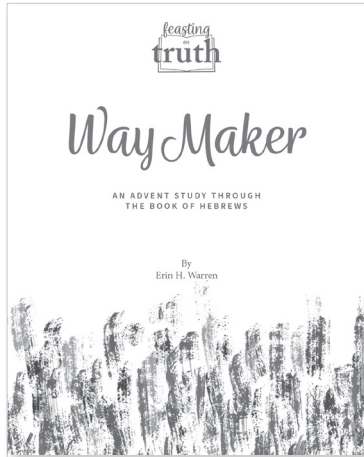


We hear it all the time: we need to read the Bible every day. But why is it so important that we know, understand, and apply this ancient book to our lives today? What's in it for us? In Psalm 119, we see over and over that God's Word brings life, and it's a light to guide us. If we truly knew the power the Word of God has in our lives, we wouldn't be able to put it down.

FeastingOnTruth.com/LightAndLife

WAYMAKER

AN ADVENT STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

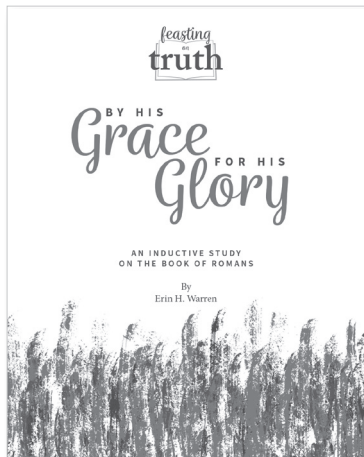


Jesus' coming was more than giving us forgiveness of sins or to part the way before us. He came to part the divide between God and us, between us and heaven. Jesus is the One who made a way to a restored relationship with God. No other book gives us a more comprehensive view of Jesus as our Way Maker than the book of Hebrews.

FeastingOnTruth.com/WayMaker

BY HIS GRACE FOR HIS GLORY

AN INDUCTIVE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS



Romans is foundational yet deep. It's hard to understand yet simple. It is an incredibly powerful book that has been changing lives for centuries, and the truths in these sixteen chapters have the power to change our faith too. There are many familiar verses in Romans, and we associate this book with evangelism. But it is so much more! Discover what it looks like to live by His grace for His glory.

FeastingOnTruth.com/Romans