

# The Path

## FAMILY STORYBOOK

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE FOR FAMILIES



**LINDSAY HARDIN FREEMAN & MELODY WILSON SHOBE**  
**ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROGER SPEER**



# **The Path: Family Storybook**

*A Journey through the  
Bible for Families*

**Lindsay Hardin Freeman**

**and**

**Melody Wilson Shobe**

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**Illustrations by Roger Speer**

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Forward Movement

Cincinnati, Ohio

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## Dear Reader,

It's good to see you here. Welcome!

Have you ever been to a family reunion? If so, perhaps your grandparents and great-grandparents were there. You might have hugged them or heard stories about when they grew up. Or perhaps you've never met those people. Perhaps they died before you were born, or they live in a faraway place.

Think of this book as a big family reunion of your ancestors, your spiritual ancestors. Just as important as people to whom you are biologically related, spiritual ancestors are people who lived before us and whose lives of faith helped shape our lives.

Here, you will be part of their stories.

Ride the ark with Noah and his family, and see otters and iguanas scamper down the gangplank after ten long months of being cooped up together. Watch Deborah ride out on horseback, leading 10,000 soldiers into battle. Learn about Samson and how he lost his strength after his famous haircut—and how he died a hero. And stand with the shepherds and angels around Jesus' manger on the most brilliant day of all.

People in the Bible may seem like they lived ages ago. What, you might wonder, do you have in common with people who lived before there were cell phones or electricity or computers or cars?

The answer: Lots. Your spiritual ancestors stood tall against those who tried to hurt them; they fell in love, and they became mothers and fathers. They went to war, they battled illnesses, and they told stories about how God helped them through terrible times.

This book, like the Bible, is a collection of the stories that our ancestors told their children and grandchildren around the fire and when they tucked their little ones into bed each night. These are the memories that kept them strong when they were scared and gave them reason to celebrate when they remembered the happy times.

You stand in this line of people who love God. You stand in this line of people who gathered around Jesus and became his followers.

Wrap up in their stories like you would with a blanket around your shoulders. By doing so, they will become your stories. Bundle up in these memories. Snuggle into them. Count on their warmth and comfort during cold days. In doing so, you'll weave the people of God into your life, and you'll hold them tightly on your heart—just as God holds you.

In Christ,

Lindsay Hardin Freeman  
Melody Wilson Shobe



***The Path: Family Storybook*** can be used as part of a Christian formation program called *Living Discipleship: Exploring the Bible*, which also includes a youth and adult version called *The Path: A Journey through the Bible*. Another resource, an all-ages coloring book called *Pathways of Faith*, is a wonderful companion as well.

*Living Discipleship: Exploring the Bible* takes participants on a journey through the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. One of the main ways that we know and understand the hope to which God has called us is the gift of God's Word, the Bible. By focusing on the vast narrative of the scriptures, we can see the great story of God's love from the beginning of creation, through the life of Jesus Christ, and in our own time, guided by the Holy Spirit. Through the stories of scripture, we can learn that the hope God offered to the faithful in ages past is the very same hope God is offering us today.

Facilitator's guides for the family storybook and for the youth and adult version are available for teachers and leaders at [www.ForwardMovement.org](http://www.ForwardMovement.org). Additional resources can be found at [www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org](http://www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org).

*Exploring the Bible* is part of a three-year, all-ages curriculum designed to help individuals and communities know more fully God revealed in Christ Jesus. *Living Discipleship* is structured in three years: one year on *Exploring the Bible*, one year on *Celebrating the Saints*, and one year on *Practicing our Faith*. *Living Discipleship* is a tool for churches and leaders, a resource for helping Christians come to know the hope, the glorious inheritance, and the immeasurable power of the risen Christ.

To learn more, visit [www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org](http://www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org).



Chapter 1: God Saw That It Was Good  
**Creation: You are There!**

*Based on Genesis 1:1-31*







**S**hould you choose to accept the following mission, you will hear and see something amazing. Today, your task is to imagine being at God’s side for the very first days of creation. It’s easy to take God’s world for granted. We go to sleep at night and we wake up in the morning. Shining in the sky every day is the sun, and waltzing across the night sky each evening is the moon.

But what if there were no sun or stars? No people. No earth. Nothing. That’s what it was like for God a long, long time ago. Nothing breathed or scampered or ran or sang or even cried because there was nothing but God. Nothing.

And God wanted more than emptiness.

God wanted people because God has a huge heart. God wanted to watch whales frolic in the sea. God wanted frisky otters to slide down rocks and chase each other across beautiful streams. God wanted hot deserts and shimmering ice caps.

Picture yourself in those dark days, standing next to God, in that vast darkness. Remember there is nothing to see, nothing to hear. Suddenly, you hear a simple command: **“Let there be light!”**

In that moment, the gloom rolls away, and you are surrounded by beautiful, magnificent light—light that reaches up and twists away from the darkness, separating itself.

**“Let this darkness be called Night, and this light be called Day,”** God says.

You have witnessed the first day of creation. Wow. But somehow you’re a bit tired. You close your eyes and sleep, nuzzled into God’s side; when you wake up early the next day, God is just getting started.

**“Look over there,”** God says. **“Look where it is dark and murky. Look where the earth is covered with nothing but water. Let there be a firmament in the midst of waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”**

What? Separate the waters from the waters? What does that mean? And then you realize that the ocean and sky are taking shape before your eyes. God is turning chaos into something firm, something you can see and touch and smell. Both sea and sky are huge; they reach as far as you can see, farther than you can imagine. Once again, you sleep.

Progress continues. The next morning, on the third day, you hear God's strong and tender voice: **“Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.”** From the murky depths of the ocean emerge amazing land forms: mountains, rivers, hills, deserts, plains, lakes, volcanoes, and glaciers. Colors spring up before your eyes as trees and plants begin to dot the landscape.

Apples fall from trees. Dandelion seeds blow into the wind. Pomegranates and watermelons sprout before your eyes.

One day turns into another, and soon it is the fourth day. You look up and see the sun, its beautiful, blazing rays shining to light the day. God has put it there just this moment, set in the sky to mark days and seasons and years. And as the fourth day passes into night, God shapes the moon and flings stars across the great black expanse of sky. As the moon and stars twinkle with delight, you are comforted by the light shining through the darkness, and you fall asleep full of joy.

The morning of the fifth day brings a lovely surprise: you look at where God is pointing—the oceans—and they are strangely silent. And then you see great whales leaping and breaching and jumping. Birds are cawing and hooting and kerfuffling, and the skies are soon full of eagles and hawks and tiny little chickadees. Once again, you snuggle down by God's side to sleep.

The sixth day comes, and you wonder what God will create. The skies and the waters are teeming with life, but the land is quiet and empty. Then suddenly all around you see cows and sheep and goats. And over the horizon peek the long, sloping necks of giraffes, the giant flapping ears of elephants, the scaly, shining skin of chameleons. You have taken them for granted before but no longer. Bleating and mooing and snorting fill your ears. This is fun!

But God is not done, for there seems to be something missing. You hear God sigh, much like you do when something isn't quite right. And then you wonder: Could God be lonely, in spite of all the signs of life around you?

In that moment, God gently scoops some dirt from the earth and blows on it with the breath of God's spirit. You gasp with wonder as you see what God has made: two human beings, man and woman. You watch as they take their first breath of the bracing, clean air.

**“Take good care of everything that I have made.”** says God. **“And be fruitful and multiply; the earth is to be filled and treated lovingly, as I would do.”**

You awake early the next morning to sounds of life. God looks at you, and you look back, somehow knowing that today is a day of rest, both for God and for you. Today, there will be no activity on God's part except to love you and all of creation. And that is enough.

It is more than enough, and you give thanks, remembering these words: **“This is the day that the Lord has made: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”**

## Reflection Questions

- What comes to your mind when you visualize God creating the earth and all that is in it?
- What is your favorite part of creation? Do you think God might have a favorite part? What might that be?
- Why is it important to know that God rested on the seventh day? What might that say to us?
- God so loved this world and continues to love it. God asks human beings to love and care for the world. How can you help God take care of creation?



Chapter 2: The Sign of the Covenant

# Noah & the Ark: Riding the Waves!

*Based on Genesis 6-9*





**It's hard to keep anything bright and shiny for long, and that's what it was like with creation. As much as God wanted everything to run smoothly in this new creation, there were some problems, almost from the start.**

Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman, made a mess of things. Surrounded by lush beauty and peace, they broke the one rule that God had given them: Don't eat the fruit from the Tree of Life. Sadly, they didn't listen, reaching out and munching on that fruit like it was a giant candy bar. God ordered them out of paradise, out of the beautiful Garden of Eden that he had so lovingly made.

Things soon went from bad to worse. Fights broke out between Adam and Eve's children. One of their boys, Cain, actually killed his brother, Abel. Other relatives fought without end. Meanness, stealing, and murder seemed to have taken over.

God's heart was broken. Somewhere between sadness and anger, he vowed to rid the earth of human beings and animals.

**“I will destroy my own creation!”** God said. **“I will destroy the human beings, as well as the animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”**

Ouch. Even the stars winced. God had never talked like this before. Everyone—everything—seemed to hold their breath...waiting...waiting...to see what he would do.

Sighing, God's eyes roamed up and down the earth. Was there anything good in all of creation? Were human beings beyond hope? Was it a good idea to have created them in the first place, to have given them freedom to make their own decisions?

And then God saw a man whom he knew to be good: Noah. Like a calm lake in the midst of spine-crackling thunderstorms, Noah peacefully went about life. He worked, and he prayed, and he loved his family—and they loved him.

*I can't destroy Noah, thought God. Noah is what I had in mind when I created human beings: good, strong, healthy, and able to turn away from evil. Noah is righteous.*

**“Noah,”** said God. **“Listen up. I have to make a few adjustments to my original plan. There’s lots of trouble out there, and I need you to help me straighten things out.”**

**“You and your family will be saved, but I am going to have a flood destroy much of what I made. So build a big ark for you and your family and make sure they are safe on the ark. Then take pairs, mating pairs, male and female, of all the animals and birds and reptiles on the earth, every living thing, and put them on the boat with you.”**

*Whew, thought Noah. That’s a big order. Build a boat? A huge boat?? Put two of every kind of animal and bug and bird and reptile on the boat and sail away? And watch the earth flood?*

Being the good man he was, however, Noah got right to work, following God’s surprisingly detailed plans about how to build the ark. **“The length is to be three hundred cubits...its breadth fifty cubits...its height thirty cubits...make a roof for the ark...put the door high up in the side...make a first, second, and third deck.”**

Years and years went by, but Noah faithfully continued working. Noah was 600 years old when the ark was finally ready. And then, after Noah loaded two of every living thing into their own cages and burrows and stalls and stables, God began to flood the earth. All the creatures left in the flood waters drowned. But Noah and his family lived, as did the chickens and horses and beetles and pandas and moose that rode along in the ark, clucking and neighing and bellowing and snorting.

For forty days and nights, it rained and rained. Sealed tightly, the great boat slowly rose until it sailed on top of waters that were even higher than the tallest mountains on the earth.

Month after month, like a surfer riding the waves, the ark rode the water. Finally, at the end of ten months, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Opening a tiny porthole, Noah sent one of his two doves to see if land could be found. The exhausted dove flew and flew, but it found no land, so the dove returned to Noah’s outstretched hand. Seven days later, Noah sent the dove out again—and this time it returned with an olive branch in its beak. Signs of life! In seven more days, Noah sent the dove out again. And this time it did not return, for it had found dry land on which to perch.

**“Come out of the ark, Noah!”** God said. **“And let everyone else out, too, your family and all those animals that have been cooped up for so long.”**

Thrilled to be free, Noah’s family glided down the ark’s ramp. Then came all the animals and bees and fish, snorting and slithering and gallumphing, finding their new home in water and on land and in the skies. Finally, Noah, captain of the ship, came last. His job—to bring all of God’s creation to safety—was done. And God had a surprise for Noah and his family, one that thrilled and delighted them.

**“Look in the sky,”** God said. **“It is there that I have set my bow as a sign that never again will I destroy the earth with flooding waters. I give you my word, and the rainbow is a sign of the Covenant that unites us. You are safe, and I will always watch out for you and every living creature of every kind that is found on the earth.”**

## Reflection Questions

- Why does God choose Noah and his family to survive the flood? What about them is different?
- How do you think Noah and his family feel while they are on the ark? How do you think the animals feel?
- What does God want us to think about when we see a rainbow? Why is that important?



# Resources

If you have enjoyed *The Path: Family Storybook* then we have great news: this is only the beginning! *The Path: Family Storybook* features twenty-four stories, selected to tell the overarching narrative of the Bible. But these are not all (or even most!) of the wonderful stories in the Bible. There is so much more to read and discover about God's story of love for all of us.

If you want to keep reading, there are some suggestions below for Bibles that do a great job of continuing the journey. They will contain many of the stories that you have read and loved in *The Path: Family Storybook*. But there will also be new and wonderful stories of God's love that we didn't have room to include here. If you have younger children or are looking for more stories that are easy to read and understand, then it would be best to start with one of the Storybook Bibles. Like *The Path: Family Storybook*, these include stories that are adapted to be especially accessible to kids. They also include some beautiful illustrations that bring the stories to life.

Then, when you and your family are ready, move on to a complete children's Bible. These books include the full text of the Bible. The ones suggested below also have helpful boxes and sidebars with additional information, reflection questions, and action points. Storybook Bibles are a great start, but there is no substitute for reading the whole story of the Bible, the epic of God's great love for us. So continue your family's journey with the Bible, and discover all that God has in store for you!

## Suggested Storybook Bibles

- *The Bible for Children* by Murray Watts. Good Books, 2002.
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* by Sally-Lloyd Jones. ZonderKidz, 2007.
- *The Spark Story Bible: Spark a Journey Through God's Word*. Sparkhouse Family, 2015.
- *The Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton. Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

## Suggested Children's Bibles

- *Kids Spark NRSV Bible*. Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2009.
- *CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*. Common English Bible, 2015.
- *NIRV, Adventure Bible for Early Readers*. ZonderKidz, 2014. and *NIV Adventure Bible*. ZonderKidz, 2013.



## About the Authors

**Lindsay Hardin Freeman** is a Minnesota-based Episcopal priest, author, and mother. She has won over thirty awards for journalistic excellence and is the author and/or editor of eight books, including *Bible Women: All Their Words and Why They Matter*, published by Forward Movement, and *The Scarlet Cord: Conversations with God's Chosen Women*. She also has written two children's books, *The Spy on Noah's Ark and Other Bible Stories from the Inside Out* and *Meet the Saints: Family Storybook*, published by Forward Movement. She is married to Leonard Freeman, a poet, priest, and teacher, and has two sons and four stepchildren.

**Melody Wilson Shobe** is an Episcopal priest who has served churches in Rhode Island and Texas. A graduate of Tufts University and Virginia Theological Seminary, Melody is currently working on curriculum development for Forward Movement. She served as the editor for *The Path: A Journey through the Bible* and is a coauthor of *Transforming Questions*, both published by Forward Movement. Melody, her husband, and their two daughters live in Dallas, Texas, where she spends her spare time reading stories, building forts, conquering playgrounds, baking cookies, and exploring nature.

## About the Illustrator

**Roger Speer** is a lifelong servant of The Episcopal Church. He has served with mission, congregational, diocesan, national, and international formation initiatives during an exciting tenure as a youth minister. At heart, Roger is an artist and craftsman. He holds degrees in art education and graphic design, as well as various training certifications that he uses to produce new ways to express the gospel with as much innovation as possible. He is husband to Fran and father to Fynn.

The images are available as coloring pages in *Pathways of Faith*, an all-ages coloring book, available at [www.ForwardMovement.org](http://www.ForwardMovement.org).

## About Forward Movement

Forward Movement is committed to inspiring disciples and empowering evangelists. While we produce great resources like this storybook, Forward Movement is not a publishing company. We are a ministry.

Our mission is to support you in your spiritual journey, to help you grow as a follower of Jesus Christ. Publishing books, daily reflections, studies for small groups, and online resources is an important way that we live out this ministry. More than a half million people read our daily devotions through *Forward Day by Day*, which is also available in Spanish (*Adelante Día a Día*) and Braille, online, as a podcast, and as an app for your smartphones or tablets. It is mailed to more than fifty countries, and we donate nearly 30,000 copies each quarter to prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes. We actively seek partners across the Church and look for ways to provide resources that inspire and challenge.

A ministry of the Episcopal Church for more than eighty years, Forward Movement is a nonprofit organization funded by sales of resources and gifts from generous donors. To learn more about Forward Movement and our resources, please visit us at [www.ForwardMovement.org](http://www.ForwardMovement.org) (or [www.VenAdelante.org](http://www.VenAdelante.org)).

We are delighted to be doing this work and invite your prayers and support.



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## JOIN THE JOURNEY FROM CREATION TO REVELATION.

**RIDE THE ARK** with Noah and his family. Watch Deborah gallop on horseback, leading 10,000 soldiers into battle. Learn about Samson and how he lost his strength after his famous haircut—and how he died a hero. And stand with the shepherds and angels around Jesus' manger on the most brilliant day of all.

*The Path: Family Storybook* shares the major stories of the Bible in a dynamic and fun way for children and those who love them, with original illustrations that delight the imagination. Learn about and experience God's love for you and for the world!

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*The Path: Family Storybook* can be used as part of the Christian formation program *Living Discipleship*. The program offers resources for exploring the Bible, celebrating the saints, and practicing our faith. *Living Discipleship* is a tool for both individuals and congregations to know and grow in faith and relationship with God in Christ. Visit [www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org](http://www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org).

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More resources for the journey at  
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