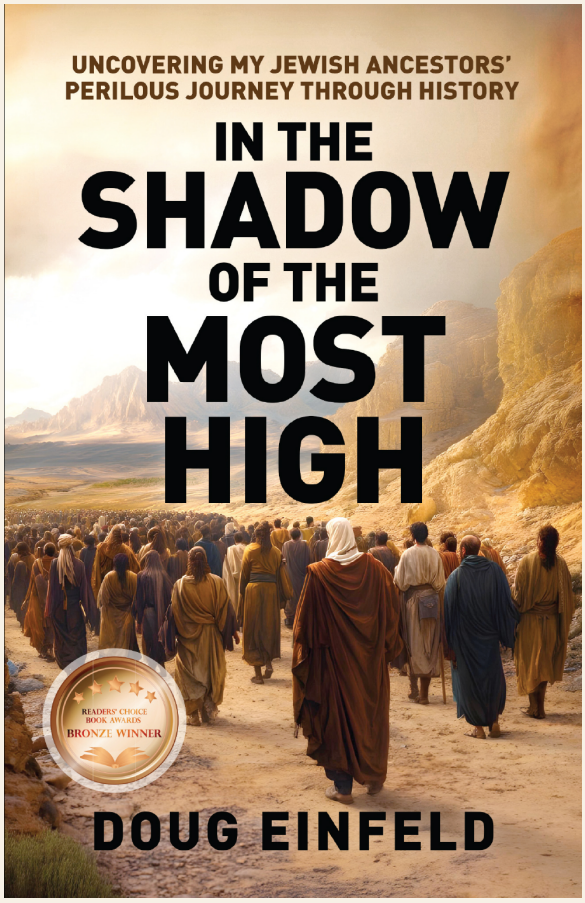
DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR



"I grew up learning the Bible stories...but this book filled in the gaps and gave me so much more understanding of it all." **--Karen V., reader**

A ready-to-use six-session guide for book clubs, libraries, churches, Bible studies, genealogy groups, and reading communities

6 SESSIONS • 25+ QUESTIONS • AUTHOR Q&A OPTION

DOUG EINFELD

Rediscovering Our Roots: Judeo-Christian History Revisited

About the Book

For generations, the truth remained hidden—until Christian pastor Doug Einfeld uncovered a family history long concealed: his paternal ancestors were Jewish. That discovery became the starting point for a much larger journey through Jewish and Christian history.

The book traces the story from the ancient Near East through biblical Israel, Roman rule, the world of Jesus, the emerging Jesus movement, Jewish migration into Europe, medieval anti-Jewish violence, and the eventual migration of Einfeld's ancestors into northern Germany.

It contains twelve chapters: *From Desert Nomads to Village Dwellers; The Rise and Fall of a Nation; Ruled by Foreign Powers; The Rise of Rome; Prelude to the Arrival of Jesus; The Jesus Archives; The Remembered Jesus; The Emerging Jesus Movement; Near-Annihilation by Rome; On to Europe; Surviving Anti-Jewish Terrorism; On to Brandenburg and Ostfriesland.*

This guide combines those twelve chapters into six thematic meetings, and is designed to encourage conversation and reflection.

How to Use This Guide

• Recommended group size: 6–20 participants.

• Recommended meeting length: 60–90 minutes.

• Read the assigned chapters before each meeting.

• Choose 3–5 questions rather than trying to answer every question.

• Groups may invite Doug Einfeld for a virtual or in-person author Q&A;, subject to availability.

Discussion Ground Rules

• Distinguish historical evidence from personal interpretation.

• Allow room for disagreement without turning the discussion into a debate.

• Avoid assuming that one person represents an entire religious or cultural tradition.

• Discuss difficult episodes of Jewish-Christian history with honesty, empathy, and historical care.

Suggested 75-minute Format

- 10 minutes - Welcome and opening reactions
- 10 minutes - Personal connection to the book
- 35 minutes - Choose 3-5 discussion questions
- 10 minutes - What surprised or challenged you?
- 10 minutes - Takeaways and closing reflections
- Optional - 20-30 minute author Q&A

Session 1 — From Desert Nomads to a People

Reading: Chapters 1–2

Theme: Ancestry, beginnings, identity, and the formation of a people.

Opening prompt: What was your strongest reaction to this section?

1. What does the author's family discovery add to the way you approach the historical story?

2. Which aspects of the ancient world most changed or enlarged your understanding?

3. How does a people's remembered story contribute to identity across generations?

4. What is gained when sacred stories are viewed within their historical and cultural setting?

Session 2 — Living Under Foreign Powers

Reading: Chapters 3–4

Theme: Foreign rule, political pressure, Jewish resilience, and the rise of Rome.

Opening prompt: What was your strongest reaction to this section?

1. How did successive foreign powers affect Jewish political, cultural, and religious life?

2. What surprised you most about the rise of Rome and its impact on the Jewish world?

3. How can political domination shape the identity and hopes of a people?

4. What connections do you see between these historical pressures and later events in the book?

Session 3 — The World Jesus Entered

Reading: Chapters 5–7

Theme: The period before Jesus, the historical record, and remembering Jesus.

Opening prompt: What was your strongest reaction to this section?

1. Why is the period between the Old and New Testaments important for understanding Jesus' world?

2. What aspects of Jesus' Jewish context became clearer to you?

3. What is gained by considering the historical Jesus, the remembered Jesus, and the Gospel portraits?

4. How did the social and political world around Jesus shape the questions his ministry confronted?

5. Did these chapters change the way you think about Christianity's Jewish roots?

Session 4 — From Jesus Movement to Christianity

Reading: Chapters 8–9

Theme: The early Jesus movement, its expansion, tensions with Judaism, and Rome.

Opening prompt: What was your strongest reaction to this section?

1. What surprised you about the earliest Jesus movement?

2. Why was expansion beyond the Jewish community historically significant?

3. Where do you see continuity between the Jewish world of Jesus and the emerging Christian movement?

4. What tensions emerged as the movement expanded?

5. How does Rome’s destruction and near-annihilation of Jewish communities change your understanding of the later story?

Session 5 — On to Europe: Persecution and Survival

Reading: Chapters 10–11

Theme: Migration, medieval Jewish life, anti-Jewish violence, and resilience.

Opening prompt: What was your strongest reaction to this section?

1. What forces pushed Jewish communities toward Europe, and what opportunities drew them there?

2. Which examples of anti-Jewish violence affected you most strongly?

3. Why do false accusations and stereotypes sometimes become persistent?

4. What enabled Jewish communities to survive repeated persecution and displacement?

5. What responsibilities do later generations have to remember historical injustice accurately?

Session 6 — Brandenburg, Ostfriesland, and Rediscovering Our Roots

Reading: Chapter 12 + Afterword

Theme: The family story comes into focus: ancestry, memory, faith, and the meaning of the journey.

Opening prompt: What was your strongest reaction to this section?

1. How does the author's family story change your understanding of the broader history?

2. What does it mean to move from a family tree to a historical narrative?

3. What does "rediscovering our roots" mean beyond genealogy?

4. How has the book changed your understanding of Jewish and Christian history?

5. Which story, person, or period will stay with you most strongly—and why?

6. What lessons from this history seem especially important today?

Additional Discussion Questions

Use these when a group wants to go deeper or when a particular theme generates strong conversation.

1. How does genealogy differ from history, and where do the two overlap?

2. Have you ever learned something about your family that changed how you understood yourself?

3. Why are some parts of family history remembered while others disappear?

4. How does migration shape family identity over generations?

5. What does survival mean in the context of this history?

6. How should Christians today understand the history of Christian anti-Jewish attitudes and violence?

7. What are the dangers of treating Jewish or Christian history as a simple, uninterrupted story?

8. How did the book affect your understanding of Scripture and historical context?

9. Which part of the book would you most like to research further?

10. After finishing the book, what question are you still asking?

Choose Your Own Discussion Focus

Focus	Suggested emphasis
Faith & Biblical History	Chapters 1–8: the biblical world, Jesus, and Christianity's Jewish context.
Jewish History	Chapters 2–5 and 9–12: identity, foreign rule, migration, persecution, and survival.
Genealogy & Ancestry	Introduction and Chapters 10–12: personal family research as a window into larger history.
History & Memory	Chapters 6–12: how communities remember, interpret, and transmit the past.
Jewish-Christian Relations	Chapters 5–9 and the Afterword: continuity, separation, historical tensions, and shared roots.

Interested in an Author Discussion?

Doug Einfeld is available for presentations and Q&A sessions for churches, Bible studies, libraries, book clubs, and other reading communities.

Presentation: *"When Genealogy Becomes History: Discovering My Jewish Ancestors' Perilous Journey"*
Approximately 45 min +Q&A
In person or virtual

About Doug Einfeld

Doug Einfeld holds an MDiv and ThM from Calvin Theological Seminary and studied history as an undergraduate at Calvin University. He served nearly four decades in pastoral ministry and later devoted his retirement to research and writing on biblical, Jewish, and Christian history. His discovery of Jewish ancestry in his paternal line became the catalyst for the research behind *In the Shadow of the Most High*.

Recognition

- 2026 International Book Awards Finalist — Religion: Christianity
- IndieReader Approved — 4.6/5 review rating
- Readers' Choice Award — Bronze Winner, 5-Star Rated

Contact

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