

Seeking Unity by Engaging Scripture Together:

Do you:

- **Want to work with the church down the street, but don't know where to start?**
- **Want to build relationships with other Christians, but are having trouble getting started?**
- **Want to enrich your understanding of the Bible by learning from other traditions?**
- **Want to lead an important and interesting Bible study for your church or church group?**

Then keep reading to learn more about ecumenical Bible study—the whole household of God seeking unity by engaging Scripture together.

Illinois Conference of Churches

2160 S. 6th Street, Suite D2
Springfield, IL 62703

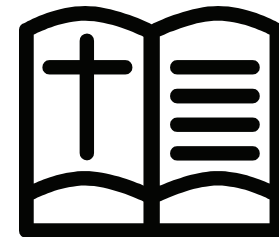
Phone: 217-522-7099
Fax: 217-522-7105

Email: awilson@ilconfchurches.org
Website: www.ilconfchurches.org

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ECUMENICAL BIBLE STUDY

*The Whole Household of
God Seeking Unity by
Engaging Scripture Together*



One in Christ—Together in Mission

Prepared by the ICC Unity and Relationships Commission

What is Ecumenical Bible Study?

The Christian faith community in all its diversity looks to the Bible as source and guidance for life in relationship to God. The Bible reveals God's action of reconciliation in human history. In the Biblical narrative there is variety in description and interpretation of God's actions, but always there is eagerness to share the Gospel. That variety never loses sight of making Christ known.

Thus, we affirm the following:*

- Ecumenical Bible Study is reading the Bible together.
- Ecumenical Bible Study is reading the Bible for messages of unity.
- Ecumenical Bible Study is reading the Bible from the perspective of another.
- Ecumenical Bible Study is reading the Bible for the universal reconciling task of the church.



Studying the Bible together:

- ⇒ Brings us closer together in the midst of the rich diversity of expression of our oneness in Christ.
- ⇒ Increases the power of our witness both for outreach to those who don't know Christ and to meet human need.
- ⇒ Builds our sense of needing each other in the journey of faith.
- ⇒ Leads us to live our faith.
- ⇒ Enables and educates us to see the familiar from a different point of view.

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How Does One Do Ecumenical Bible Study?

I. WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Christian laity and clergy who come together to focus on the Bible from the perspective of the churches' common search for unity.

II. WHERE CAN IT TAKE PLACE?

Ecumenical clusters of churches, local councils / associations of churches, ministerial associations, Church Women United, church groups (e.g. Christian women, men, youth), community organizations, individual parishes.

III. WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTED MODELS OF STUDY AND DIALOGUE?

The model chosen should represent the style and purpose of the group that gathers together.

- One model is the traditional lecture and discussion format where a designated leader presents a passage giving background and perspective. A group discussion is conducted by the leader.
- Another model involves shared leadership. All members take responsibility for reading designated passages or chapters. An open, informal discussion focuses on group participation.
- In larger groups, one effective model might include an introductory commentary by a designated individual followed by dividing participants into groups of 5-7 for dialogue. Afterwards, the larger body gathers to share ideas generated from small group dialogue.
- Interactive learning requires good listening skills which value diverse points of view. Some may choose drama, role playing, painting, drawing, individual or group writing, and music as other means of expression.



What Are Some Suggested Texts and Resources for Ecumenical Bible Study?

Here are some texts that relate to Christian unity. The four groupings represent the progression we all need to experience in ecumenical relations:

Recognizing Division:

- 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 18-25
- Genesis 11:1-9
- 1 John 1:6-10

Seeing God's Promise:

- Isaiah 56:3-8
- Galatians 3:27-29
- Revelation 7:9-17

Undergoing Conversion:

- Isaiah 58:1-7
- Luke 3:7-14

Living in Unity:

- Philippians 2:1-11
- Ephesians 4:1-6
- John 17:18-24

These resources may be helpful for ecumenical Bible study participants:

- **The Access Bible** (Oxford University Press, about \$24) NRSV Biblical text with good, introductory level notes.
- **The Serendipity Bible for Leaders** (Serendipity House Pr., about \$17) NIV Biblical text with group discussion questions and some notes.

And these may be helpful for leaders:

- **Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching** (John Knox Pr., \$15-\$30 per volume) A full series on each book of the Bible (individual volumes are simply named after the Biblical book they treat).
- **The New Jerome Biblical Commentary** (Pearson Pr., about \$60) Commentary on the whole Bible in one volume.
- **The Bible Comes Alive: New Approaches for Bible Study Groups**, by Hans Rudi Weber (Judson Pr., \$11) Helpful, practical insights on ecumenical Bible study based on many years of experience around the world.