

Confessional Bible Study



This fall FMC will be offering a Confessional Bible Study (CBS) for adults during the Sunday School hour.

What does “confessional” mean?

Perhaps your initial idea of “confessional” is an uncomfortable image of publicly confessing your sins, but CBS centers around a different theological definition: a personal interpretation of the Word and active application of it to our lives. In essence, this confessional practice is to help us unfold new meanings from the Word and discover new avenues to relate to God.

How is Confessional Bible Study different from routine Bible studies or Sunday school classes?

He tries to remember what the letter said
the first time he read it, which is like trying
to remember the look of the city you live in
before you knew it too well.

- Francesca Abbate, “Envoy,” *Poetry* (June 2001)

Have you ever read a Scripture passage so many times that you slowly forgot to be curious about how it might speak anew and defaulted to a safe but stale understanding? When we read something for the first time, we approach it without expectations, with a mind ready to ask questions, examine the layers, and consider many possible interpretations. We are jolted into engaging with the Word ourselves and actively considering what impact it might have on our lives. This attitude of looking at the Bible with fresh eyes and worshipful hands, unearthing meaning in community and complexity, is at the core of what makes Confessional Bible Study different.

What should you expect in a Confessional Bible Study?

Scripture reading: A session of CBS starts with the Scripture passage. Reading communally, in a fresh translation from Biblical language experts, helps us approach the passage with openness and start asking questions.

Study: In the second component, everyone explores their intellectual curiosity about the passage by using a variety of resources to gather more information. Everyone has an opportunity to share what they learned with the group, bringing more depth and nuance to the discussion.

Artful response: In the third component, participants start distilling meaning from the text by creating something that reflects what has resonated with them. No artistic talent is required! From collages to poetry writing, there are many ways for everyone to engage their creativity. Everyone has the option - but no obligation - to share what they've created.

Worship and application: Finally, each CBS ends with both worship and reflections on how the meanings we all identified and wove together through discussion will go with us into our everyday lives.

Let's try it out together!

There'll be several upcoming opportunities to join everyone in experiencing this new format for approaching God's Word:

- **August 30:** There'll be a small preview of CBS in the worship service.
- **September 13-November 30:** Fall Sunday school begins, with CBS during the Sunday school hour. Feel free to join us for any Sundays that work for you.
- **September 20:** There'll be a congregational CBS retreat, starting during the Sunday school hour, breaking for lunch, and continuing until about 2:30. Childcare will be available after lunch.