

We are Neighbours



Catholics and Evangelicals in Canada



STUDY GUIDE

Created by

THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA

and

CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Introduction

In 2010, *The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada* (EFC) and the *Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops* (CCCCB) commenced a formal bilateral dialogue. This dialogue, which meets twice per year, brings together Catholic and Evangelical pastors, theologians, bishops and priests to engage in a variety of rich theological discussions about our commonalities and also differences as Christians in Canada. The study guide you are about to embark-on is very much a fruit of this national relationship between Catholics and Evangelicals.

In 2016, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops published a resource entitled: [*Our Evangelical Neighbours – A Catholic Reflection on Evangelical Christianity*](#). This resource intended to provide Catholics in Canada an introduction to Evangelical Christianity by exploring its origins, similarities and differences to Catholicism. In a like manner, in 2019 the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada released a resource entitled [*Our Roman Catholic Neighbours*](#). This resource was intended as a means of helping Canadian Evangelicals become better acquainted with some of the similarities and differences with Roman Catholicism. In both cases, the “Neighbour Papers” were developed with the aim of creating greater familiarity, understanding and even friendship between Evangelicals and Catholics in Canada.

The EFC-CCCCB dialogue has now produced this study-guide based on both our Neighbour Papers. The study-guide aims to harvest the fruits of both “Neighbour Papers” by inviting Catholics and Evangelicals to come together to form joint study groups. The guide includes study questions, suggested ice-breakers, ideas for considering common social action, and



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suggestions for building relationships through faith practice. This guide is a resource which will assist Catholics and Evangelicals, wherever they may encounter each other in Canadian society, to become more familiar with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

On behalf of the EFC-CCCCB National Dialogue, we wish you a blessed conversation between your fellow Christian neighbour, gathered in the name of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Glenn Smith

Dr. Glenn Smith
EFC Co-Chair

Bishop Joseph Dabrowski, C.S.M.A

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CCCCB Co-Chair



PART 1:

Starting a Roman Catholic-Evangelical Study group

The main purpose of Roman Catholic-Evangelical (ecumenical) dialogue is to learn about the beliefs and practices of people from another community of faith. The conversation is not expected to result in agreement about these beliefs and practices. Talking together is not meant to convert your conversation partners to your point of view. In the end you should hope your time together will increase your understanding of the faith of your neighbour—both what you have in common and what are important differences.

This study guide leads you through four steps: Building relationships; Studying the document *Our Roman Catholic Neighbours*; Studying the document *Our Evangelical Neighbours*; and considering action together in your community.

1. Building Relationships

Roman Catholic-Evangelical dialogue is built on relationships. To begin, it is helpful to get to know your neighbours so you trust them. Many activities can build trust. Basic introductions are of course the first step. But following that, it is important to recognize that everyone comes to the conversation with hopes and fears; giving people a way to name them can be a good place to start.

To begin the conversation, we suggest first a question for discussion and then two faith practices that may help increase trust among people in a study group.

A - Discussion Question:

What are your hopes and fears entering this conversation?

As your group starts to talk together, you might ask each person to identify one thing they hope to learn from this conversation and to name any hesitations or anxieties they have. If people are comfortable naming their hopes and fears aloud, this might be a way to open the conversation. You should make it clear that no one is expected to respond.

If some people are uncomfortable sharing such personal information with people they do not know well, each person could write down their hopes and fears and hold on to them for sharing later once the group members are more comfortable with one another. Even if someone doesn't end up sharing their hopes and fears, having them write them down can be valuable for the individual.



B ~ Faith Practice #1: Scripture Sharing

The first faith practice that might help to build trust is to share Bible passages that are significant to the participants in the conversation. Each person present should name a Bible passage or Bible story that has mattered for her or his own faith journey. If they are comfortable going deeper, they could also share with their study partners why that passage or story has been important.



C ~ Faith Practice #2: Prayer

We suggest the groups open and close their time together with prayers. Evangelicals may be quite comfortable praying without preparation, but Roman Catholics may want to choose a prayer from a prayer book or an internet site. It may also be helpful to alternate between meetings and assign a study member from each tradition to be in charge of the prayer time.

Another way to pray is to recite the Lord's Prayer together. Both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are accustomed to praying the Lord's prayer which our Lord taught us:

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

*Protestants usually add:
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.*

Some group members might wonder why there is a difference between Catholic and Protestant versions of the prayer. The additional phrase at the end is not found in the earliest Bible manuscripts. Many scholars think that the church added the last phrase when the prayer was used in worship sometime in the first centuries of Christianity. The form used in worship was then included as part of later copies of the Bible in the Gospel of Matthew (6:9-13). The prayer can also be found in Luke's Gospel (11:2-4).

2. Studying *Our Roman Catholic Neighbours* together

A second phase of the study group will be to study the two documents entitled, *Our Roman Catholic Neighbours*, and *Our Evangelical Neighbours*. It is suggested that the documents be studied one at a time. It will also be important to come to mutual agreement on how many meetings you want to spend on each document. We suggest at least one meeting for each and probably no more than three for each document.

Study questions for studying both of these documents are included in Part 2 of this document below.

As the study of *Our Roman Catholic Neighbours* proceeds, evangelical readers should expect to have uncertainties and misconceptions about Roman Catholicism clarified. Both Evangelicals and Catholics should be able to identify which Roman Catholic beliefs and practices they have in common and the ones on which they differ.

3. Studying *Our Evangelical Neighbours* together

As the second document is studied, Roman Catholic readers should expect to have uncertainties and misconceptions about evangelical Protestantism clarified. Both Evangelicals and Catholics should be able to identify which evangelical beliefs and practices they have in common and the ones on which they differ.

4. Considering common action

In the course of the study, participants will discover there are practices of faith and worship that Roman Catholics and Evangelicals would have difficulty doing together—notably the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. There are also important differences in the practices of Christian baptism, confession, etc.

There are, however, many ways that Roman Catholics and Evangelicals can serve together in their community. We suggest that as a final outcome of studying together to prayerfully consider what might be done together in your community.

As an example, during the COVID-19 lockdown, one effective ecumenical practice was the recording of a musical blessing. Many examples can be found on the internet. The Canadian blessing song can be found at: [Canadian Blessing Song](#). St. Benedict, Halifax, a Roman Catholic church, participated in singing the blessing.



It may be though that acting together is a step further than you want to go. In that case, it is our hope that you part ways having become better friends than when you began and more knowledgeable about the faith and practices of the other group.

If, however, the group wants to do something together, the following ideas are meant to get members started on thinking about things they can do together from relatively low commitment of time and resources through to projects requiring greater time, resources and commitment.

Fellowship

- Start a breakfast club where you meet periodically at an agreed upon time and place just for fellowship. It could be at a restaurant or alternating homes.
- If you are located geographically close, cooperate in planning a street or block party to invite neighbours on the street to attend.

Pray

- Commit to carrying on your group, meeting together periodically (once a month, etc.) to pray for issues in your families, community, and country.
- Form a regular ZOOM meeting where you meet to share needs and pray for one another.
- Start a closed Facebook prayer group where you share prayer items.
- Use the materials from an organization that focuses on the needs of the persecuted church around the world and pray together for different countries (e.g., [Open Doors](#), [Catholic Near East Welfare Association \(CNEWA\)](#)).



Learn

- Plan to attend together a church service from the tradition not your own and then reverse the visit. Debrief with one another after each visit over a meal or coffee and talk about your experiences.
- Continue meeting together to read and study the Bible together. You might wish to identify someone who has theological or ministry training to help you, or select a curriculum that focuses on understanding the Bible in some way not directly about your tradition. E.g., a Bible study that looks at the geography of the holy land; a Bible study that looks at the broad overview of the Biblical books; a Bible study that examines historical backgrounds to the Gospel stories, etc.

- Read a church history text that reviews the basic history of each other's tradition. E.g., A history of the Catholic Church in Canada, a history of evangelicalism in Canada, etc.
- Work through a section of the Catholic Catechism or the evangelical doctrinal statement of a member's church and explore what both traditions teach on matters of common concern, e.g, the authority of the Bible, the nature of the person of Jesus Christ, the nature of the Church, the nature of ordinances or sacraments, etc. A widely used and concise doctrinal statement that most Evangelicals would affirm is that of the World Evangelical Alliance ([World Evangelical Alliance](#)).
- Continue meeting together as a group and study a book of common interest together. Perhaps you could read a book from a Roman Catholic author and then an evangelical author.
- Plan a public event where Roman Catholic and evangelical speakers are asked to address a question or topic of interest to both. Be sure to include coffee and fellowship time afterward!
- Find out what ministries are happening in your community or city that may overlap. You might want to consult a website like [Waybase](#) which allows you to locate ministries of many denominations in a particular geographical region.
- Study documents from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and/or invite an Indigenous leader to come speak to you about the effects the church has had on Indigenous communities.

Volunteer

- Go together to visit seniors and shut-ins. Go for walks or take them shopping.
- Choose to spend time volunteering together with people from the tradition not your own at a pregnancy care centre, a soup kitchen, or a clothing drive.
- Cooperate on a fundraiser for a ministry of common concern, e.g., pregnancy centre; homeless shelter, drug rehab centre, etc.



- Survey your neighbourhood for households or areas that may need help, e.g., seniors who need some yardwork done; houses that may need repairs; a playground that needs cleaning up, etc.
- As a group, commit to co-sponsoring a child in need from a developing country using an organization like World Vision, Compassion, or Chalice.

Innovate

- If there is not yet a Roman Catholic-Evangelical dialogue group in your town or city, plan and co-found one with the cooperation of congregations and parishes.
- Gather together as Catholics and Evangelicals to spend intentional and focused time discussing a pressing need or issue in your community. Begin to form a strategy on how your communities might cooperate to solve the issue. E.g., Getting lighting installed in dangerous area of city; creating a network of individuals who will help people get to medical appointments; create a fund to support an ongoing community initiative that may have lost government funding, etc.
- Envision, plan and launch a jointly sponsored palliative care or hospice centre or other badly needed ministry. Get both Catholic and evangelical communities supporting the initiative and invite political officials to get involved.

Advocate

- Invite experts to a joint Catholic-Evangelical meeting to learn about a public policy issue (e.g., abortion, medical assistance in death, drug rehab programs, freedom of religious education, environmental policy, public housing, etc.). After this, begin a letter writing campaign to political officials to advocate for change.
- Identify a marginalized or vulnerable group in your community which you together can advocate to public officials on their behalf, e.g., immigrant housing, Indigenous clean water.
- Co-host an all-party forum during an election time (local, provincial or federal) in which you ask candidates to speak to issues of unique concern to religious communities.
- Consider co-sponsoring a Refugee family in your community under Canada's Refugee settlement program. You may want to consult a 2020 resource developed by a group of ministries on Refugees. See *Welcome the Stranger* available at: <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/Resources/Documents/Welcome-the-Stranger-A-Canadian-Church-Guide-to-W>

There are many places online to find various kinds of resources that might touch on some of the issues mentioned about. We would recommend beginning by looking at the websites of the *Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB.ca)* and the *Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (TheEFC.ca)*, both of which have many resources.

PART 2:
Study Guides

It may be helpful to get a study group going by doing some ice breakers at the first meeting. The following are some suggested activities. Feel free to use these or invent your own.

Following that are two sets of study questions for use with both resources. Groups do not need to feel restricted to these questions and discussion will inevitably lead to questions not included below. It would be good therefore to designate a leader for each meeting to help keep the discussion moving and not getting too far off track.

Ice Breakers

- 1 (For Evangelicals):** *When you see Evangelicals portrayed in popular media, how do you feel and why? Can you give some examples? Are there positive and negative examples?*
- 2 (For Roman Catholics):** *When you see Roman Catholics portrayed in popular media, how do you feel and why? Can you give some examples? Are there positive and negative examples?*
- 3 (For Evangelicals):** *Have you ever been struck by the portrayal of Roman Catholics in popular media? How so?*
- 4 (For Roman Catholics):** *Have you ever been struck by the portrayal of Evangelicals in popular media? How so?*



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Study Questions for *Our Evangelical Neighbours*

For Evangelicals:

- 1** *Did you feel yourself and your faith accurately represented in Our Evangelical Neighbours? Is there anything you would want to correct, change, or tweak in the document? What else would you want your Catholic neighbour to know about you and your faith?*
- 2** *Did you learn anything new about your own religious tradition from Our Evangelical Neighbours? Did you learn anything new about how Catholics think about Evangelicals?*
- 3** *What did you learn about your Roman Catholic neighbours from reading Our Evangelical Neighbours?*
- 4** *How do you feel about the prospect of dialoguing with Roman Catholics? What is one question you would like to ask a Catholic neighbour after reading Our Evangelical Neighbours?*
- 5** *How might you work together with Catholics? Serving your communities? Political Activism? Proclaiming the gospel together?*



For Catholics:

- 1** *Did Our Evangelical Neighbours resonate with your experience of evangelical Christians? Are there other questions you have about evangelical Christianity that were not dealt with in the document?*
- 2** *Did you learn anything new about evangelical Christianity from Our Evangelical Neighbours? What did you find most surprising or enlightening? Did you find anything confusing?*
- 3** *Did you learn anything about your own, Roman Catholic, faith in reading Our Evangelical Neighbours?*
- 4** *How do you feel about the process of dialoguing with Evangelical Christians? What is one question you would like to ask an Evangelical neighbour after reading Our Evangelical Neighbours?*
- 5** *How might you work together with Evangelicals? Serving your communities? Political Activism? Proclaiming the gospel together?*

Study Questions for *Our Roman Catholic Neighbours*

For Roman Catholics:

- 1** *Did you feel yourself and your faith accurately represented in Our Roman Catholic Neighbours? Is there anything you would want to correct, change, or tweak in the document? What else would you want your Evangelical neighbour to know about you and your faith?*
- 2** *Did you learn anything new about your own religious tradition from Our Roman Catholic Neighbours? Did you learn anything new about how Evangelicals think about Catholics?*
- 3** *What did you learn about your Evangelical neighbours from reading Our Roman Catholic Neighbours?*
- 4** *How do you feel about the prospect of dialoguing with Evangelicals? What is one question you would like to ask a Evangelical neighbour after reading Our Roman Catholic Neighbours?*
- 5** *How might you work together with Evangelicals? Serving your communities? Political Activism? Proclaiming the gospel together?*



For Evangelicals:

- 1** *Did Our Roman Catholic Neighbours resonate with your experience of Roman Catholic Christians? Are there other questions you have about Roman Catholic Christianity that were not dealt with in the document?*
- 2** *Did you learn anything new about Roman Catholic Christianity from Our Roman Catholic Neighbours? What did you find most surprising or enlightening? Did you find anything confusing?*
- 3** *Did you learn anything about your own, Evangelical, faith in reading Our Roman Catholic Neighbours?*
- 4** *How do you feel about the process of dialoguing with Roman Catholic Christians? What is one question you would like to ask a Roman Catholic neighbour after reading Our Roman Catholic Neighbours?*
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