

## Christian Formation: Bible Study

Mix broken hearts, serious health issues, varying degrees of faith and family ties. Add knowing that most will never leave the hospital, coupled with a deep desire to talk about their lives, what they have learned, and the mistakes they have made. Top off with guilt, isolation, 'what ifs', not nearly enough forgiveness and no formal program in place where spiritual matters can be discussed. This is the fertile field Rick Rutledge found at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Beckley, WV when he entered the chaplaincy program last fall and he wondered what God's will was for him in this.



Rick relates that the answer he received was to offer a Bible study. Not an instructional Bible study, but rather a time when a group could share a piece scripture and talk to one another about what it means, get to know one another better and share something of their lives. And it is working, attendance at the weekly session runs between six and ten, including residents, staff and family members.

God is made present to Rick as he experiences "...real people expressing deep feelings of regret, guilt and remorse and needing a full measure of hope and the ability to receive forgiveness. I have never considered myself 'qualified' to lead a Bible study, yet I know I was led to organize this study at the VA. Suddenly I found myself in the midst of individuals asking hard questions. My ETS experience has been a key factor in helping me to be able to minister to this group. It is all about learning to accept the love of Christ, and sharing our personal stories of that love in our own lives. It is learning to live as a witness to that love."