

Context-Specific Suggestions for Small Group Bible Studies

This document is a supplement to the HOW FAQs about Small Groups and is available on our [Resources, Free Downloads](#) web page.

- **In-person small group (any size group)**
 - Have a **designated prayer notebook** available for requests and thanksgivings.
 - Describe the prayer notebook the first week, then pass it around while the study is happening each week.
 - At the end of the time together, someone can say a prayer on everyone's behalf, reading through what was written down and mentioning other things that came up during the small group discussion.
 - Select a volunteer who can send each week's prayer notebook contents to the rest of the women (email, WhatsApp, text summary, or other group messaging app). It allows for everyone to stay in prayer for each other and connected.
- **In-person small group (3-8 women)**
 - The suggestions shared in the Facilitator Guide and the IRSM Bible Study Books Format on the [website](#) are designed to accommodate this small group size. Therefore, the fewest modifications are needed in this context.
 - See the "FAQs of Small Groups" for ideas that answer the six question words on our [Resources, Free Downloads](#) web page.
- **In-person larger group (10+ women)**
 - If your group is larger than eight women, more reserved women will be less likely to share.
 - For larger groups, to facilitate a deeper connection with one another and with God, it can be important to create mini-groups (2-3 people) that can participate together, then rejoin the larger group for a wrap-up. This can be done multiple times within a week's study.
 - The mini-groups can discuss a portion of the lesson or pray over the Common Threads, for example.
 - Be sure to communicate the time allotted for the mini-groups before they return to the main session.
 - Leading a short, well-known song can be a good transition strategy back to the larger group.
 - The mini-groups can be accomplished by simply turning their chairs.
- **In-person group (30+ women)**
 - Sometimes a large ladies' class wants to continue to meet together but recognizes that they are lacking the deeper connections that can be built via smaller groups.
 - One idea is to gather everyone at the beginning for fellowship, singing, corporate prayer, and announcements. Then, break into small groups (3-8 women) for the rest of the time. All would be studying the same series of lessons or chapters in a book.

- **Virtual small group (Zoom)**

- Begin with a simple ice-breaker question that is easy for anyone to answer but may be relevant to the topic of the meeting. We are building connections with one another.
- Be sure to budget time for prayer. We are deepening our connection with God.
 - Before you begin, assign someone to pray over everyone's requests and thanksgivings at the end of the study so that she can make note of what is shared in the chat.
 - Invite women to share prayer requests and thanksgivings in the chat so that they do not occupy the entire time.
- Foster an environment that denotes a small group of comfortable conversation and open sharing rather than one of a person lecturing.
- Teaching via Zoom can be more challenging because you are less able to gauge others' reactions or read their body language. Therefore, it is helpful to pause occasionally to ask questions or solicit feedback. It is acceptable to call on someone to specifically ask if she has any thoughts on the matter.
- Keep an eye out for women who want to join in the discussion of the material by inviting them to physically or digitally raise their hands or mention something in the chat.
- For an in-person small group, it is helpful to count to 10 after asking a question so that women have ample time to think about their answer. However, via Zoom, it is best to count to 15 in case someone wants to share but is having trouble unmuting herself or turning on her camera. A follow-up question asking if anyone would like more time to think about her answer can be a good idea during those last five seconds.
- Invite women to create a group for texting, emailing, or messaging updates on prayer requests, encouragement regarding the Common Threads, or inspiring Scriptures. This creates connection beyond the more impersonal context of a virtual meeting.