

FAQs of Small Groups

The WHO of Small Groups

The apostles were an eclectic group of 12. My sisters and I are a diverse group of four. Who do you have among your group of Christian sisters? Do you have a lot of things in common, or are you a unique group?

A rose bush does not have all of its roses budding at the same time. Part of the beauty of the bush is the bud barely blooming next to the full-bodied rose in full bloom.

Which rose are you in your community? In our Christian community, there are people of different ages, stages, and walks of life. And therein lies the beauty.

Another beautiful facet of a diverse community is that we can grow and learn from one another.

Don't forget to invite non-Christian friends! Small groups are an excellent entry point for women to get to know other women and be introduced to a Bible study in a more relaxed format.

The small groups with whom I have participated, and through which I have been blessed the most, are the ones that have a varied group of women gathering together to deepen their relationships with God and with one another. I like to call them Iron Rose Sisters.

What is an Iron Rose Sister?

An Iron Rose Sister is a Christian sister who serves as iron sharpening iron (Pr 27:17), encouraging and inspiring others to be as beautiful as a rose in spite of a few thorns.

So, in answer to the question of WHO for small groups? The answer is anyone! We grow most when we are stretched out of our comfort zones, and when we hear the perspectives of others. We are blessed when we are given the opportunity to bless others.

Find a group of women and start a small group today!

The WHAT of Small Groups

WHAT is a small group? A group of people (women in our case) whose purpose is to gather for encouragement, Bible study, and prayer.

To allow for depth of discussion and opportunity to share, it is optimal for the group to be made up of 3-8 women. Research affirms that the ideal group size is 5-6 people.

When there are only two people, we think of it as a mentoring relationship. However, small groups facilitate mutual mentoring relationships amongst the women. The book of Titus highlights the importance of the older women teaching the younger (2:3-5), but mentoring is not strictly age-based.

Jesus Himself modeled mentoring relationships by the way He invested in the lives of twelve or three to make a greater impact in the community at large. Paul highlights the same teaching to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”* Teach to teach—makes it easy to remember that it's 2 Timothy 2:2, two by two by two.

The teaching and mentoring aspects of small group relationships are important. Here are a few more clarifying **purposes of Iron Rose Sister Relationships in a small group context:**

- Encouragement and inspiration
- Prayer
- Understanding and affirmation
- Confidentiality
- Spiritual audit (IRS = Iron Rose Sister)
- Mutual call to holy living
- Spiritual friendship and conversation
- Iron-sharpening-iron relationships (Pr 27:17)

Whether you are considering starting a new small group, or redefining the one you are in currently, I encourage you to evaluate the purpose of your group. Is God the center of your conversation? Are you being an encouragement one to another? Is there confidentiality and accountability?

The WHEN of Small Groups

“We need to get together for a cup of coffee!” I have lost count of the times I have said that to someone. And I have learned that if I don’t put something on the calendar in that moment, even if we both have the best of intentions, the time over coffee (or tea) will never happen.

The same is true of other things that are important. They lose their urgency amidst our other responsibilities and commitments. One of the prime examples of something we want to do, but that will never happen if we don’t schedule it, is a small group gathering with other women. We have to make it a priority.

There is no magical time that works for everyone. However, I do recommend that you set aside a scheduled time that is designated specifically for your small group women’s Bible study.

Here are some of the times I know that women have gathered as a small group.

- Tuesday mornings (for some, this is the sacred gathering time for women’s studies)
- Mondays on the way home from work
- Wednesday night class
- Tuesday/Thursday nights
- Sunday morning Bible class
- Twice a month/every other week

I think you get the idea: **There is no perfect schedule!**

My other recommendation for when you gather is that you **allow for an hour and a half meeting time, when possible.** We’re women and we like to talk, but this extended hour also allows for prayer time and depth of conversation and discussion. We could spend the entire time sharing prayer requests and updating each other on life—neither of which are bad things, but it can take away from the meat of what we know we need to remain strong and encouraged as a child of God: time in the Word!

So, WHEN? Anytime, but pick a time and make it happen!

The WHERE of Small Groups

The comfort of your own home, a coffee shop on the way home from work, the church building, a Zoom room... WHERE you meet as a small group is the least important of the FAQs for small groups.

I consider Jesus to have been hospitable. Yet during His three years of ministry, He never had a home in which to lay His head.

The physical or virtual place of our small group meeting is not as important as the spirit of hospitality we create where we do gather.

There is a small group of women in Florida that gather at a local park weekly so that the children can play while the women study together (a great opportunity to meet new women, too). Another group of women meet at a coffee shop so that no one feels the pressure of cleaning her house to host. Church buildings offer a well-known, often centrally located place to gather.

Be creative in your location. Remember, WHERE is the least important of all the factors we are considering.

Post-pandemic, more people are aware of virtual gatherings. While nothing replaces being in person, the obstacles of busy schedules or physical distance can be overcome by facilitating a virtual small group. Specific tips for that context are shared in the HOW section.

Where does your small group meet?

The WHY of Small Groups

WHY is the most important question. If we know the “why,” all other questions are answered without obstacle.

Small groups are where the transformation happens. It is where we can most deeply connect to God and one another, exploring His Word and learning personal and practical applications from the perspectives and experiences of others.

How many one another verses can we put into practice when we are sitting side by side in a Sunday morning assembly? Now think about how many one another verses we can put into practice when we are engaging in deeper relationships, face to face, or around a table, in the context of small groups.

To answer the “why” of small groups, we are going to go straight to Scripture and recognize the power of small groups for realizing the teaching of these verses.

Notice the one another and each other language in the verses listed below. This is not an exhaustive list, but a top 12... I couldn't pick just one or two!

1. John 13:34-35 – love one another – by this you are my disciples
2. Romans 12:10 – be devoted to one another; honor one another
3. Galatians 6:2 – Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
4. Galatians 5:13 – serve one another in love

5. Ephesians 5:21 – submit to *one another* out of reverence for Christ
6. Colossians 3:16 – teach and admonish *one another*
7. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – encourage *one another* and build each other up
8. Hebrews 3:13 – *encourage one another* daily
9. Hebrews 10:24 – spur *one another* on to love and good deeds and encourage *one another* [by meeting together]
10. James 5:16 – therefore confess your sins to *each other* and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
11. 1 Peter 4:9 – offer hospitality to *one another*
12. 1 Peter 5:5 – clothe yourselves with humility toward *one another*

The HOW of Small Groups

To answer the HOW questions, three key resources are available under [Resources, Free Downloads](#) on our website:

- Facilitator’s Guide for IRSM Bible Study Books
- IRSM Bible Study Books Format for Books Written by Michelle J. Goff
- Context-specific Suggestions for Small Group Bible Studies

The principles in these documents apply to any small group context: studying an IRSM book or a book of the Bible, a book by a different author, or a topic-based series.

Consistency is key! Even if only one or two women show up for the study, persevere and share in a rich time in the Word and in prayer together, as planned. You will deepen your connections with God and one another.

If you are interested in starting a small group using an IRSM interactive Bible study, you can order books through our [website](#), or contact us for more information.

Do you have any suggestions for women meeting in small groups?