

Questioning Guidelines

- Use questions to move the class toward the learning goal.
- Avoid yes/no questions.
- Go beyond recall questions (“How many sons did Noah have?”).
- Use clarifying questions (“Explain . . .”).
- Ask “how” or “why” questions.
- Use life-application questions.
- Break up complex questions into smaller, clearer questions.
- Use questions that require students to refer to Scripture.
- Prepare 12 to 15 questions for one hour’s discussion.
- Avoid answering your own questions.
- Don’t settle for only one answer.
- Don’t expect students to guess what is on your mind.
- Help a student modify an inaccurate answer till it becomes acceptable.
- Ask only one question at a time.
- Develop a tolerance for silence.
- If a question is overly obvious, it’s better simply to state the material outright. Although inductive studies rely on questions, they need not consist *only* of questions.
- Patterns of repetition are especially important in the Bible. Asking a group to find patterns or lists of things in a passage is often a productive observation activity.
- It’s better to ask two short questions rather than one long one made up of several parts. Avoid connectives like *and* or *but* in observation questions.
- Be sure that questions relate to the main point of the passage.
- If possible, ask questions that will give several group members opportunity to answer. “What do we learn about the character of Abraham in this event?” will probably yield multiple answers and perspectives.
- Avoid excessive use of the interrogatives *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where*.
- Although interpretation questions may have more than one good answer, they should ask for an interpretation of something *in the text* and should not simply ask for the opinions of members of the group.
- Avoid opinion-poll questions. Your task is to seek the meaning of the passage, not group members’ opinions about a subject.
- Do not let application questions become a detached discussion of ethical principles. Use projects, questions, and exercises to help the group members wrestle with the text’s meaning for daily life.