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.