

# How to Successfully Explore The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings

Exploring *The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings*, the book of *Genesis*, is very different from having a Bible study. Bible studies are usually led by someone who does most of the talking, while others listen. Exploring is a team activity in which everyone is an actively involved participant. However, we acknowledge that each of us approaches the words of the Bible with the knowledge we have acquired up to that moment. We view this as an asset because it makes it possible for us to see things we wouldn't have seen by ourselves.

The biblical text is not self-interpreting and does not explicitly provide rules for how to read it, so we must learn those rules from more experienced explorers. We recommend that you find at least one person to *Explore the Biblical Text* with. If you can't do it face-to-face in the same place, use the phone or interact through social media.

The next step is to create a relationship that establishes specific rules required for achieving success in your explorations. This is done by each person agreeing to follow the **BHC Explorer's Guideline**:

*My belief system will be large enough to include all facts,  
open enough to be examined and questioned,  
and flexible enough to change if errors or new facts are discovered.*

1. Beliefs and Facts must be viewed together.
2. Explorers give each other permission to examine and question their belief system.
3. Explorers are committed to having the most accurate belief systems possible.

**BHC's Exploring Our Biblical Heritages Educational Emails** and **BHC PACKS Wisdom of the Day** guide explorations and provide information about ancient languages and cultures required to discover ancient wisdom embedded in biblical texts. *The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings (Book of Genesis)* is a unique text that teaches foundational ideas that are found throughout other books of the Bible. The insights below will help guide you through the words of ancient text of *Genesis*.

1. There is a **coherent order and plan** embedded in the text. It begins with **the order of days** in the *first story* and then expands into the **order of the stories** that follow.
2. **Every Hebrew word** counts. Always remember that English words are not the ancient words. *Exploring requires having an awareness of those Hebrew words.*
3. **Juxtapositions** are very important -- *things are placed close together differ and create a "contrasting effect."* Always be aware of *what precedes and what follows words, sentences, and stories.* **Spotting conflicts and contradictions in this text is crucial for discovering the wisdom embedded in the ancient texts.**

4. Approach the text in *a spirit of inquiry* – ask the **obvious** questions!
5. Understand that the stories of *Genesis* are **too rich, too complex, and too deep to be captured fully, once and for all.** They require **re-reading** many times. **With every reading new questions arise that lead to new wisdom insights and ancient truths.**

That the primary factor in understanding the meanings of any words is the **culture** of the **source of the words.**

- A culture is more than a set of rules to guide behavior; it is a **comprehensive worldview and way of relating to one's fellow human beings.**
- Like all complex cultures, Jewish culture does not spell everything out literally, but **leaves much to inference.**
- A culture's strength lies not only in what it says, but also **in what it chooses not to say,** and this too must be learned.
- The **cultures of characters in the stories** must also be considered.

As you gain experience in exploring this ancient text, you will come to **expect** challenge to your interpretations and beliefs. Those challenges will transform you from being a passive observe outside the text to **becoming an active participate in the story.**

- You will see the story through the eyes of the different characters in the stories and discover wisdom you were not aware of before.
- Pondering, analyzing, and discussing the text with other explorers provides multiple points of view that pull you even deeper into the story.
- The ancient text comes alive as you catch glimpses of timeless and transcendent wisdom and truths **about yourself and each other.**
- This ancient text makes it absolutely clear no person or institution has the “**one final and indubitable interpretation**” of its words.

The skills you acquire exploring this ancient text can be used to explore all belief systems – **including 21<sup>st</sup> century religious, political, or economic beliefs.**

Shalom and Good Exploring,  
Jim Myers

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