SEO 101: Lesson 4:

Get More Clicks with Optimized Titles and Tags

Boosting On-page SEO Using Copywriting Principles in Page Titles, Meta Descriptions, Headers and ALT Text

With analytics set up and tracking the activity of each page on your website, it's time to begin on-page SEO efforts—then you can watch the difference it makes!

We'll start with a few small, easy modifications.

- **Title Tags, sometimes called the "SEO Title"**
- **Meta Descriptions, or the teaser blurb that appears under a website title in search results**
- **H1 headers that appear as page headlines**
- **ALT tags, or text that makes images searchable**

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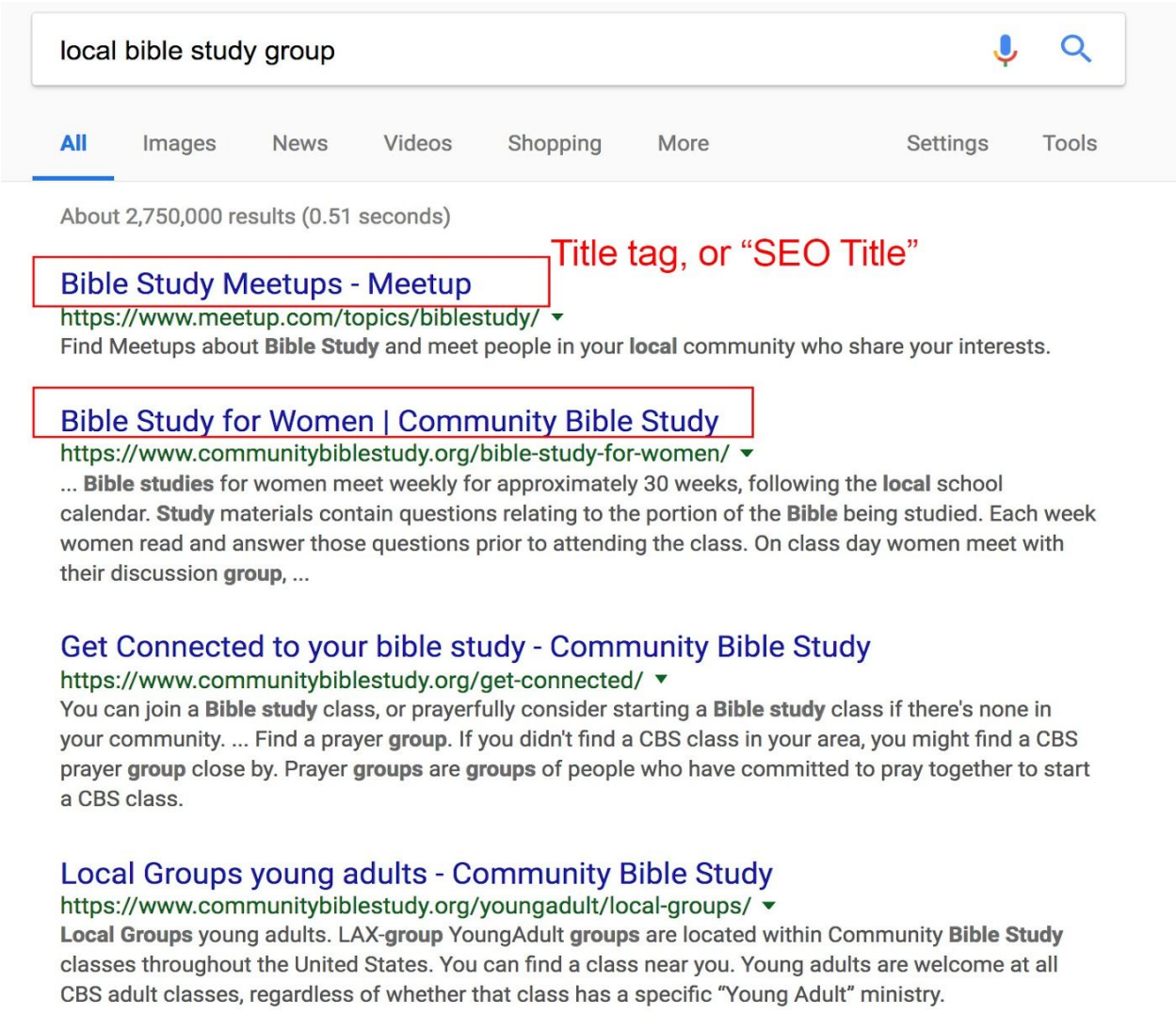
Title Tags

This is what appears at the top of the browser tab, and in search results listings:



Here you want to be clear and straightforward about what your page/site is about. If your site is about Bible studies, make sure those two words are in the first three words of the title. According to backlinko.com SEO experts, Google "puts more weight" on words found at the beginning of title tags.

For example, say you want to rank for the keyword/phrase “couples Bible study” and you thought of two headline choices:

1) Weekly Couples Bible Study - ThisTown Church
2) Looking for a Bible study that caters to new couples?

Google would rank the first one over the second one simple because it would deem it more relevant and topic-centric. The second one is not a bad headline, but Google favors titles that are more direct.

To set your page title at the code level looks like this:

```
<head>
   <title>THIS IS YOUR PAGE TITLE</title>
</head>
```

Otherwise, most content management platforms have a designated space to add or change a webpage’s title.

*NOTE: **If you already have significant traffic coming to your page with your current page title,** even if it’s not optimized for the intended keyword, you might want to check your analytics before changing it. If visitors that come in through that page are staying on your site and clicking, downloading, buying, etc., you may want to reconsider changing it for the time being, because you don’t want to lose that current traffic. If you notice that people are coming in through this page but then leaving the site, a title change could be highly beneficial.*

Meta Descriptions

This is the approx. 200-character blurb that appears directly below the page title in search results. You can write as long a meta description as you want, but Google will cut it off anywhere between 250-300 characters depending on the amount of pixels those characters occupy (While the recommendation used to be 160 characters, Google recently raised the amount of available pixels as of December, 2017).

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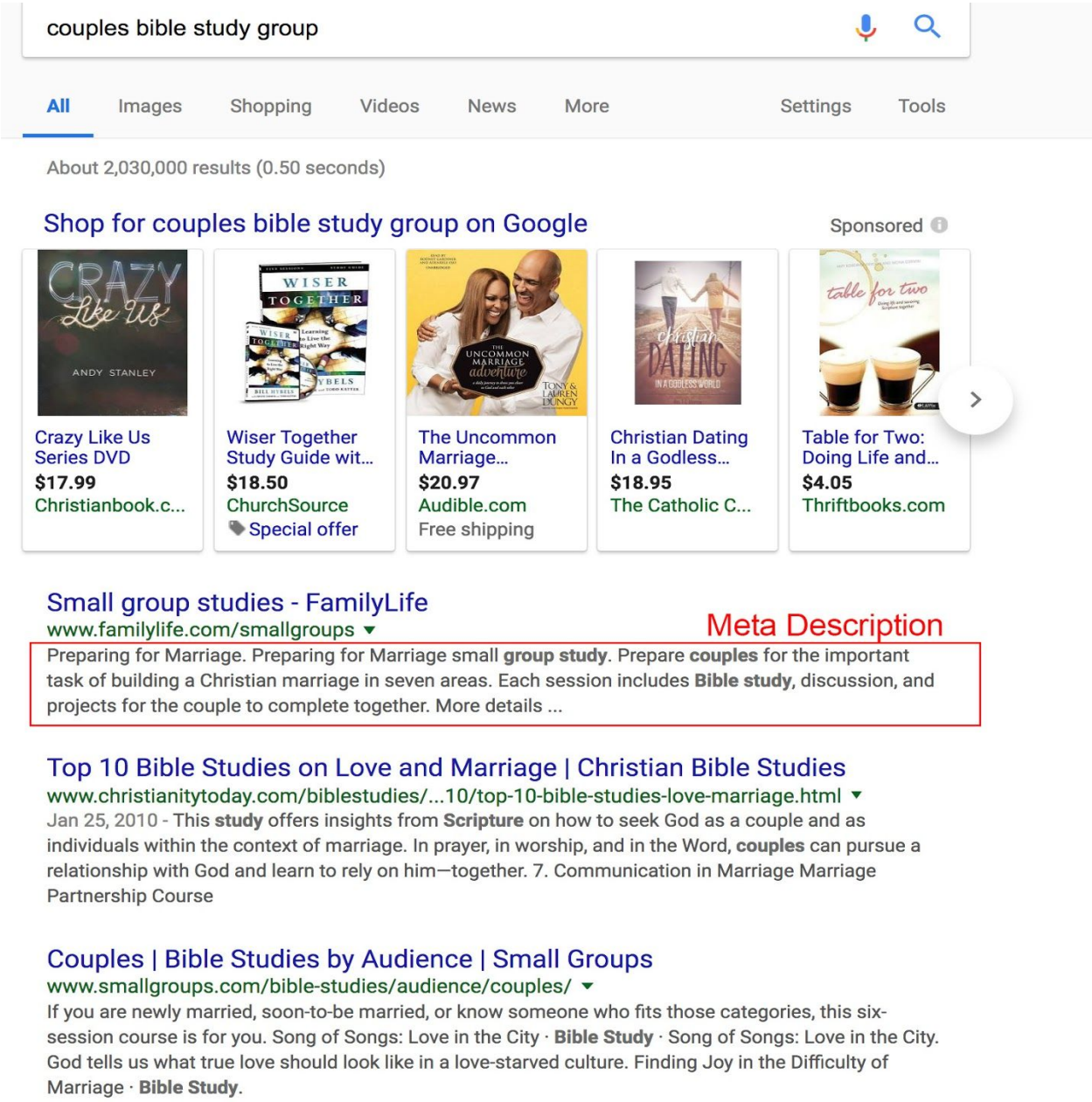

Using keywords in the meta description can give a small boost in search engine optimization, but the primary purpose of meta descriptions is like a teaser to get the Googler to click on your site. This is where you expand on your page title, pitching why your website has what the Googler is looking for.

For example, if you're selling vegan gluten-free granola bars, you might want your meta description to say something like:

> **VEGLUFRE—A fast, tasty, healthy breakfast option! Our vegan, gluten-free granola bars are packed with protein, fiber, vitamins & minerals. A great snack, too! Order in bulk and save! Choose from 5 flavors.**

Make sure to connect the benefits of your product, service, or idea/cause with the needs and interests of those you hope will click on your link. List a key selling point or two, then describe what they'll find on the page and why it matters to them.

Most content management platforms will have an area for you to enter the meta description for each page, or you can install a WordPress plugin like Yoast that allows you to edit the entire snippet, or area that shows in search results under your link.

To enter a meta description straight into the HTML, the <meta> element will always go inside the <head> element. It will look similar to:

```
<head>
<meta name="description" content="THIS IS YOUR META DESCRIPTION"/>
</head>
```

Remember: Each page of your website should have its own, *unique* meta description. Google notices if multiple pages have the same meta description, and many SEO auditing software programs note that as an SEO error.

H1 Tags

This tag doesn't typically show up in search engine results, but it is the first thing Googlers will see after clicking on their page. To make sure they stay there, make sure this headline spot tells them exactly what they'll find there and why they will be interested to read on.

Our blog has covered several headline tips, which can help you craft a great H1. Throw a keyword in there somewhere, pinpoint a benefit, and a brief hint at what the content covers. For example,

Can't decide which Bible translation to use? Learn the history and differences.
or
7 Ways to Simplify Complex Recipes for Easy, Healthy Dinners

In this example, "Coping with Depression" is the H1 tag, and a keyword is used in the first three words. The subtitle, "Tips for Overcoming Depression…" is designated as H2, as is the subhead "How do you deal with depression" lower on the page.

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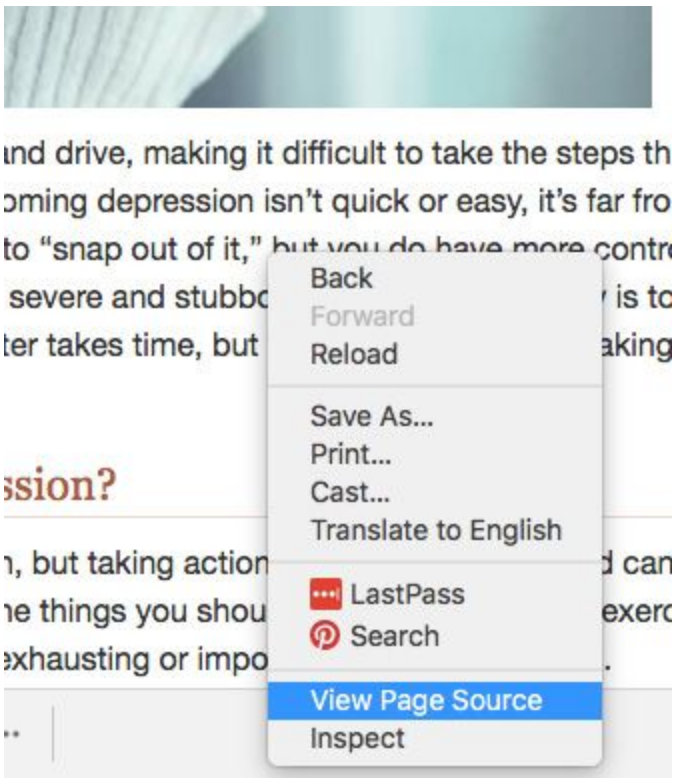
You designate your text as H1 by adding the <h1> tag to the code, or by selecting “Headline” or “H1” or similar from your content management platform in the “Style” section.

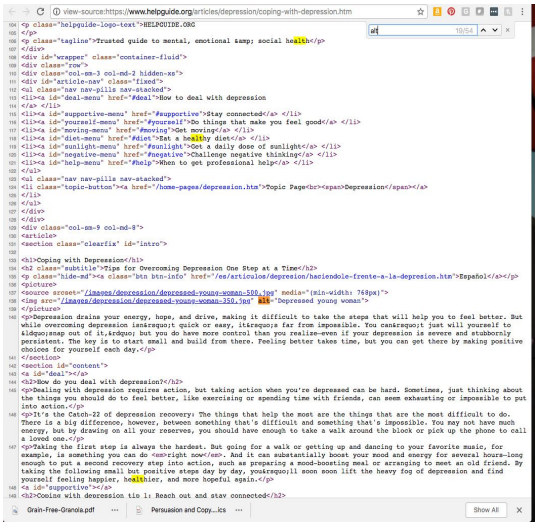
This will typically make the text larger and bolded, possibly a different font, depending on the theme or template you're using.

Each page should have only *one* H1.

For subtitles or subheadings, which are excellent for breaking up long text blocks and making the whole post more skimm-able, can use H2 or H3 tags, which will typically appear smaller than H1-designated text. H2 and H3 tags do not have an SEO impact, but can work well with your style template.

If you can’t get into your content management platform at the moment and want to check how a certain paragraph is designated, right click on the page and select “View Page Source” to view the code. You can also highlight the area, right click, and select “Inspect.”





ALT (image) tags

Also known as an “alt attribute” or “alt description,” this HTML tag is applied to the code of an image on your webpage. It doesn’t show up on the page, but Googlebots pick it up and can use that to help determine the topic depth of your page.

While Google can determine several aspects about images, Google won’t always “see” the message it’s intended to illustrate or support. To help Google do that, it relies on ALT tags to determine what the picture is and how well it relates to the topic of the page.

Additionally, ALT tags also provide the image information for:

- **Visually impaired Googlers using screen readers**
- **Those who can’t see images in their email or browser (if images or HTML is disabled)**

When writing your ALT tags, include a 2-3-word description of the image in relation to a keyword. For example, if your page is about sermon tips and you have a picture of a megaphone to illustrate a point, you might use the description, “megaphone; project voice during sermon.”

Don’t make it too long, and make sure not to “keyword stuff,” an old “black-hat” SEO practice that Google will not favor. For example, for the same image described above on the “sermon tips” page, keyword stuffing might look like: “megaphone sermon tips project voice sermon audience sermon strategies public speaking presentation methods”

Add your ALT text into your content management system, or into the HTML by editing the source code:

For example, in the picture on the previous page about coping with depression, this is how the ALT text appeared in the source code:

```
<h2 class="subtitle">Tips for Overcoming Depression One Step at a Time</h2>
<p class="hide-md"><a class="btn btn-info" href="/es/articulos/depresion/haciendole-frente-a-la-depresion.htm">Español</a></p>
<picture>
<source srcset="/images/depression/depressed-young-woman-500.jpg" media="(min-width: 768px)">
<img src="/images/depression/depressed-young-woman-350.jpg" alt="Depressed young woman">
</picture>
<p>Depression drains your energy, hope, and drive, making it difficult to take the steps that will help you to feel better. But
```

(Learn more at: https://moz.com/learn/seo/alt-text)

These seemingly small text modifications can not only improve SEO, but also user experience, as the content will clearly and enticingly direct users to click on your site to find relevant information to their search.

In short:

- Your **title tag** answers the “what” questions to Googlers.
- The **meta description** answers “why” they should click on it.
- The **H1 tag** answers a combo of “what” “why” and “how” by introducing the topic in relation to what it will do for Googlers or how it will help them.
- **ALT text** helps Google know that images relate to the subject matter as well, making it a more complete page, AND also help visually impaired people understand what your page is about and what the images are, as they can be read by text readers.

Thank you for using Lesson 4 to optimize your website’s tags and boost your on-page SEO!

Miss the previous lessons? Find them here.