

# Overview of BibleGrapes Topics

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## Coping with Life

Most people miss the Bible's practicality. This is particularly true when we consider how to deal with life's daily challenges. We find our relationships marred by anger, fear, hurt, and frustration. How do we cope? We live in a world that often disappoints and sometimes seems empty. Where is the joy? We encounter a God who does things that we don't understand and that He doesn't explain. How do we trust Him? These posts explore our concerns.

- **Grappling with Your Identity:** What we believe about ourselves profoundly shapes what we do, how we feel, and how we relate to others and to God. When we doubt our own worth (or the worth of others) we end up handcuffed to condemnation, shame, and self-consciousness. The reality of our unsavory thoughts and behaviors seems to firmly contradict God's words about worth and newness and glory. These posts are intended to help you understand and hold on to God's view of the people He has made.
- **Marriage & Parenting:** Intimate, yet different. Drawn to each other, yet sometimes wary of our contact. The person-to-person oneness called marriage adds both intrigue and complexity to our lives. How do we cope with the challenges such closeness brings? And how do we experience that oneness if children are given to us? I hope the following perspectives will help. They're gleaned from many years of wrestling to coordinate God's understanding of marriage and parenting with my own.
- **Personal Stories:** These stories chronicle real-life encounters with God. In them you can see how He carefully unveils our hearts, clarifies our thinking, and brings new life with His words.
- **Struggles & Joys:** As we journey through life, we experience unpredictable struggles and unexpected joys, and both transform us. How do we cope with the hard times? And how do we open wide to joy? Read here my thoughts on life's varied experiences.

## Exploring the Bible

Take a careful look with me at the Bible and at the God behind the pages of this book He has crafted. In these posts we'll uncover what God reveals about Himself, explore His startling pairing of sexuality and worship, gain increased understanding of biblical texts, and discover how Eden's events underlie every biblical truth that follows.

- **Encountering God:** What is God like? Think of God as an artist. We learn a great deal about artists (and authors) from observing what they create. God also creates . . . remember Eden? That first undistorted world, with its undistorted garden, shows us an undistorted God. Jesus also reveals God: He shows us the Father-in-action and speaks the Father's mind. Think of Him as the Father made visible and audible. And the Spirit? Think of Him as the author who breathed out God's words and now whispers them to our hearts.
- **Sex & Worship:** I have long been mesmerized by God's use of marital intimacy as a picture of our intimacy with Him. Here you'll find excerpts from a book I'm currently writing: *Sex & Worship: The Presence of Intimacy, Passion, and Pleasure*. I would greatly appreciate your feedback as you read my thoughts on this fascinating topic.
- **Studying the Text:** While excellent translations of the original biblical languages exist, most people could use some help noticing details not obvious to our modern eyes. A present-day word may not capture the meaning the earlier author intended; literary patterns obvious to early bible readers may now go unnoticed. I hope the posts in this section will open your eyes to such hidden nuances. Do let me know if you have a word or passage that puzzles you, and I'll see if I can help.
- **Visiting Eden:** Typically we form our opinions about God from what we see. And there's some validity to our method – the visible world does reveal God's presence and power. But the visible world also deludes us; what we now see is not God's original work. The original happened in Eden. And in Eden that original was warped. These "pre-fall and post-fall "garden chapters" introduce us to foundational truths on which the rest of the bible depends. Join me for a close look at this introduction to God's Word.

## Helping Others

In these posts we'll explore practical skills, perspectives, and wisdom essential to the art of helping others as we walk with them through the issues we all face. We'll look at psychological disorders through a biblical lens, compare and contrast Jesus and "the shrinks," learn what God says about skillful interactions, and gain wisdom and confidence in our battle against evil.

- **Disorders Re-Examined:** The word "psychology" means "matters of the soul." The bible also concerns itself with matters of the soul. Don't expect your bible to teach you psychopharmacology – that's not its focus – but do expect it to show you connections between spiritual and psychological realities. God (who made our souls) understands them quite well. We need to avail ourselves of His expertise. I hope that these posts expand your horizons and bring clarity to this frequently muddled subject.
- **Jesus & the Shrinks:** Let's, just for fun, apply a psychotherapist's approach to a biblical scene. Watch Freud deal with the woman caught in adultery, and you'll easily notice differences (and some similarities) in his and Jesus' views. Set Jesus side by side with Fromm or Rogers or Maslow or Glasser, and the same thing will happen. The point here is to help you be discerning and base your counsel on what is true.
- **Skillful Counsel:** Christians often feel inept when they interact with someone struggling with unruly emotions or skewed thoughts or hurtful choices. We're unsure how (or if) God addresses such troubles ... so we back off and turn soulish issues over to the experts. God, however, encourages us to come alongside others in the midst of their struggles. Read in these posts how God equips us to offer practical help with wisdom and skill.
- **Spiritual Warfare:** The evil one does not always attack directly. His undermining of truth takes many forms: sometimes a blatant, direct attack, more often (at least in our culture) a more subtle distortion of God's character and promises. Whatever form the warfare takes, Satan's weapon of choice is the lie. We, then, must learn how to counter lies with truth instead of swallowing them without question. May these posts give you wisdom and confident courage in this battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

## Reviews

Many voices – authors and speakers, shrinks, and preachers – advise us on how live productive and meaningful lives. Some of these people realistically weave together issues of the spirit, mind, and body. Their perspectives have deeply enriched my life and ministry. Others address mental and physical issues but neglect, minimize, or distort deeper – and more basic – spiritual concerns. Some address spiritual concerns but disregard physiological or mental realities. Here's a chance to read my reviews of various approaches to personal change.

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