

Thank you for your interest in the “*Folks Like Us*” Bible studies by Fran Sciacca. Whether you’re using them for your own spiritual growth and journey, or as a resource for your small group, Sunday school, or homeschool program, you’ll soon discover why these studies originally sold over 600,000 copies in their print editions. The recent decision by the publisher to discontinue print editions and to return the publishing rights back to Fran has given him the freedom to make the nearly 70 individual character studies available to you...at no cost.

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Now that you’ve begun to explore the Bible study resources developed by Fran Sciacca, you will almost certainly benefit from the other things that he has made available:

- **“*The Road to Shalom*” podcast** – thought-provoking and thoroughly biblical, Fran explores what the Bible calls “shalom,”—the way things are *supposed* to be in God’s Kingdom, why they’re not, and how to restore them. All three seasons are available on the website.
- ***Biblical literacy courses*** – Three, 13-week Bible courses covering the entire Bible. Includes individual course books, audio, and optional animated slide supplements. Course books and animated slide supplements may be purchased on the web store.
- **“*What’s Wrong With the World?*”** – A 14-part video series exploring the questions, “*What is the gospel, and does it really matter?*” and “*What is a disciple, and what does one look like?*” Each episode includes a small group handout as well as supplemental leader’s notes. You may take the series for a “test drive” and purchase the series.
- **“*Knot or Noose? - Recovering the Mystery of Marriage*”** – A 9-part video series for singles, engaged, or married couples exploring marriage from a radical perspective. Instead of trying to figure out how to get God into marriage, this series will guide you into how to place marriage into the center of the larger redemptive plan of God. This conference has been presented live throughout the U.S. in a multitude of different settings. Each episode includes everything needed for a small group. You may take the series for a “test drive” and order the series.



FOLKS  
Like Us

THE TEN SPIES

“The Corrosive Power of Negativism.”

Timeless truths from our ancient past,  
for a journey with God in the modern era.

**Fran Sciacca**

## “Folks Like Us” — an introduction

Over the years I’ve written and published a number of Bible studies that collectively have sold well over a half-million copies. They were forged, most of them, in the furnaces of pain, doubt, and loneliness. Maybe that’s why they were well-used, they touched people where they hurt most.

Recently, my publisher decided that they no longer wanted to handle the books that contained these 60 or so individual studies. So, I’ve decided to make them available to any who might benefit from them. At no cost.

I have always believed that because God thought it best to become human in the Incarnation, that perhaps “incarnational truth” was His preferred method of revealing Himself and His purposes to us. I suppose that’s where the basic genre of these studies originated. I wanted to provide believers with Bible studies rooted in our ancestral past. The lives of men and women, who it turns out, are “folks just like us” in so many ways.

So, please take your time and work slowly through as many of these studies as you care to do... there’s a lot of them! And may God use the combination of the struggles and insights of your *ancient* brothers and sisters, combined with those of mine, your modern brother, to help you in your spiritual journey. That is the goal of this project.

Warmly in The Lamb,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fran Sciacca". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fran Sciacca  
Birmingham, AL

# THE TEN SPIES

“*The Corrosive Power of Negativism.*”

**A** **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – When you constantly complain, you poison others' joy and turn their gaze away from God.

“*A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.*” – Oscar Wilde

**T**he story of the Jews' exodus from Egyptian oppression and bondage is saturated with the mystical and the miraculous. From the death of all of the Egyptians' firstborn to the defeat of an entire army at the shores of the Red Sea, God faithfully and dramatically demonstrated His power. Perhaps that is why we frequently find ourselves becoming impatient with the implacable and stiff-necked multitude when we read of their further rebellions in Scripture.

Though their "family scrapbook of failure" is peppered with portraits of ungodly behavior, the best example is certainly their response to God at the very border of the Promised Land. At Kadesh Barnea the the nation of Israel passed the point of no return in their sin and rebellion. In fact, what happened there was ultimately responsible for the death of an entire generation *and* the forty-year postponement of their entrance into the land of milk and honey.

Although most people are familiar with the outcome—death and delay—few are aware of exactly how such a tragedy came to pass in the first place. Understanding the causes of this massive failure and sin is essential, for in the final analysis we may find ourselves more similar to the people of Israel than different!

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Numbers 13:1 - 14:38

## STUDY QUESTIONS...

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1. Though the spies entered Canaan as a single group, after forty days they returned as two distinct groups with conflicting stories from their journey. From Numbers 13:26-33, describe:
  - Joshua and Caleb's conclusions —
  - The other ten spies' conclusions —
2. Look at Numbers 13:30 and 14:6-9. What did Joshua and Caleb seem to possess that the others lacked, which was responsible for the different conclusions the two groups came to?
3. Trace the impact that ten men had on an entire nation of newly emancipated slaves from Egypt. Use the verses on the next page to reconstruct this *digression* of behavior:

<b>Verses</b>	<b>Behavior of Key Characters</b>
13:1-2	
13:21-27	
13:28-29	
13:31	
13:32	
14:1	
14:2-3	
14:4, 10	
14:26-31	

4. Ten men were able to influence a nation by their negativism. What do you think may also be a natural tendency of people in general that explains why the negativism spread so effectively and quickly?
  
5. The impact of a person's attitudes and comments on those around him is something God is very concerned about. Examine the Scripture passages below and write out one central truth from each that relates to negativism.
  - Deuteronomy 20:1,8
  
  - Proverbs 18:21
  
  - Matthew 12:36
  
  - Hebrews 12:15
  
  - James 3:2
  
  - James 3:5
  
6. God makes an interesting statement about Caleb in Numbers 14:24. What is it, and how is it related to Paul's command to *all* Christians in Philippians 2:14-15?

## LEARNING FROM THE TEN SPIES...

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**A** dozen men heard the same instructions, made the same journey, and saw the same sights. Yet they returned deeply divided over what it all meant. Ten were convinced that they would soon be dead, along with their friends and families. Two saw difficulty overshadowed by God's promised blessing. Joshua and Caleb had "a different spirit" from the other ten spies, who seemed content to falter and constrained to complain.

The negativism of the ten not only eclipsed the message of hope proclaimed by the two, it spread quickly like spilled oil over the outlook of an entire nation! Soon the very people who had witnessed one miracle after another since they had left Egypt were actually extolling the benefits of their former bondage!

What happened at Kadesh Barnea is tragic. But an equally serious issue there is that the murmuring and complaining of ten men eventually poisoned the hopes of millions. And that poison didn't perish in the Palestinian desert. It's still with us today!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS...**

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7. Before the ten spies began their grumbling, they had to first let go of their understanding of God's character. Below are a number of possible areas where *you* might habitually grumble or complain. Check all that apply, and in the space provided alongside, write out what you've had to ignore (or forget) about God's character in order to embrace your complaint.

Area	What I've Ignored or Forgotten About God
<input type="checkbox"/> My health	
<input type="checkbox"/> My vocation	
<input type="checkbox"/> My income	
<input type="checkbox"/> My looks	
<input type="checkbox"/> My weight	
<input type="checkbox"/> My age	
<input type="checkbox"/> My friend(s)	
<input type="checkbox"/> My boss	
<input type="checkbox"/> My spouse	
<input type="checkbox"/> My children	

<input type="checkbox"/> My pastor	
<input type="checkbox"/> My church	
<input type="checkbox"/> My status	
<input type="checkbox"/> My success	
<input type="checkbox"/> My free time	
<input type="checkbox"/> My past	
<input type="checkbox"/> My current circumstance	

8. Look back over your answers above. If you've checked more than four, it is possible that you are a negative person. Ask a close friend:
- If he or she perceives you as a negative person.
  - If so, if he or she would be willing to help you eliminate the negativism.
9. According to Ephesians 4:29 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18, what should characterize your attitude and speech?
10. Like the ten spies, we too have the power to "poison" the outlook of others by our negative attitude and comments.
- Is another person "poisoning" your opinion of something or someone by his or her continual negative comments? Perhaps you need to politely ask that person to stop.
  - Are *you* "poisoning" others' opinion of someone or something by *your* continual negativism? You need to stop. Write out below what you need to do and how you plan to go about it.
11. Perhaps you find it easier to talk about what's *bad* in your life more than about what's *good*. Write out ten things about your life right now that are positive. Pick two, and talk about them today to your normal daily associates.
- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  - 6.



7.

8.

9.

10.

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY** (optional)

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- Don't complain – Philippians 2:14-15
- Be thankful – 1 Thessalonians 5:18