

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.

Before you make copies and use the studies...

- **[COPYRIGHT]** – Each of the Bible studies that are a part of *Folks Like Us* is copyrighted. You have permission to make as many copies as you like/need for yourself and/or whatever ministry environment you intend to use them. You do *not* have permission to sell these studies. You may, however, request a small fee to cover the cost of copying, if necessary.
- **[PRINTING]** – The security setting for each PDF allows you to print the study, but not to edit it. When you print these studies, you may want to use the “Print Page Range” feature of your software, and start the printing with Page 3, and you won’t have to print the color cover or this Introduction page. *If you plan to have them printed professionally, you may want to include the cover.*
- **[DONATIONS]** – Although there is no charge for the studies, feel free to make a non-deductible donation to help offset the annual cost of web-hosting, etc. at: [paypal.me/handsofthur](https://www.paypal.me/handsofthur)
- **[QUESTIONS/COMMENTS]** – Email them to: information@fransciacca.com

Other great resources on fransciacca.com

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 APPRENTICE

“Valuing What God Values...People.”

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 APPRENTICE

“Valuing What God Values...People.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – If I am being sanctified, I am seeking to imitate the person of Jesus Christ. His life of humble service and sacrifice for sinful people slowly and inevitably becomes my model, my pattern, and my passion.

“God gave us life to spend and not to keep.” —William Barclay

In the Gospels we learn that the driving passion of the incarnate Son of God was for the glory and honor of His Father. We also learn that we should live in such a way that He might increase and we might decrease. If the driving passion in the life of Jesus was the Father's glory, then we should be able to discern something of how He ordered His life and ministry to fulfill that goal.

Knowing that the span of His earthly ministry was only three years, Jesus would have had to prioritize what was important above what was not. Because our lifestyles are mere reflections of what we value, how we live is the clearest indicator of not only what we value, but in what order. When we examine the life of Jesus Christ in this light, we discover that something very encouraging and yet radically challenging was at the top of His list. We need to know what it was—after all, it must be what God wants us to supremely value, too, as He conforms us to His Son's likeness. Do you have a clear picture of what Jesus valued most?

KEY SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. a. God has a lot to say about systems of values, both His and ours. Read 1 Samuel 16:7; Luke 22:25-27; and 1 Corinthians 1:25-31. What principles about God's “value system” can you distill from these scriptures?

- b. Look carefully at Jeremiah 9:23-24 and 1 John 2:15-17. What characterizes the value system of those who are *not* being sanctified?

- c. What does God say in Luke 16:15 about what you wrote in your response above"? (Note: The word translated detestable here means "to feel nausea because of stench.")

2. Based on what you have discovered, write a summary of what you think should be true of the value system of a person whom God is sanctifying.

3. It is obvious that God feels strongly about what His people value. And because Jesus was the perfect reflection of His Father's heart, we can discern God's supreme priority for us by looking closely at Jesus' life. We can discover what was foremost in His value system in a very obscure place. Read Philippians 2:19-21 two or three times, and then answer the questions below.
 - a. In this passage, whose interests are said to be the same?

 - b. What does Paul say that *Timothy* was interested in?

 - c. What would you say *Jesus* is primarily interested in, based on your answers?

 - d. Although Paul is writing here particularly to the believers in Philippi, we can formulate some valid general applications from this text. What can we say from this passage is Jesus' supreme value? What do you think that means practically? How did Jesus live His life to demonstrate this truth?

4. Read the following verses and explain how each supports the guiding principle that the thing Jesus Christ valued most on earth was people.
 - a. Matthew 20:25-27 –

 - b. Mark 10:45 –

 - c. Luke 22:27 –

 - d. John 21:15-17 –

5. Read the following words from the apostle Paul, written to believers in many different places. What do they tell us about Paul's value system regarding people?
- a. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 –
 - b. 2 Corinthians 7:4-7 –
 - c. Galatians 2:10 –
 - d. Philippians 2:1-4 –
 - e. Philippians 4:1 –
 - f. 1 Thessalonians 2:6-8 –
6. The following passages deal with people's needs and what God has to say about them. Read each one slowly. What area of a person's life is being addressed? How does investing in that area demonstrate that people are valuable?
- a. Isaiah 58:6-11
Area of life addressed:
How it expresses value:
 - b. Matthew 25:31-45
Area of life addressed:
How it expresses value:
 - c. Romans 10:1
Area of life addressed:
How it expresses value:
 - d. Colossians 1:28
Area of life addressed:
How it expresses value:

- e. Colossians 3:13
Area of life addressed:
How it expresses value:

- 7. How do the following passages support the idea that people should be of supreme value to those who are being sanctified?
 - a. 2 Corinthians 8:12-15
 - b. Hebrews 6:10 –
 - c. James 1:27 –
 - d. 1 Peter 4:10 –
 - e. 3 John 3-4 –

LOOKING BACK...

We tend to boast about, or at least affirm, that which we've accomplished or accumulated. And both of those commodities are the tangible reflections of what is important to us; they are the currency of our labors. But God states unequivocally that what impresses us nauseates Him! He makes it clear that what matters most to Him is *people*. And that is encouraging, because that makes us objects of His affection! However, it also stands as the sobering standard by which our own value system is measured and judged.

If we are among those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:14), then we must value what God values. The inescapable truth is that God supremely values people.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- 8. a. If someone were to look over your calendar, bank account, and all the places you've driven or traveled to in the past month, what would be the top five things he or she would conclude that you value most? Be honest!
- b. How do you feel about your answer in light of what you have learned in this study so far?

9. a. When you think in general terms of your own faith in Christ (what it means to be a Christian), do you tend to think of it in terms of yourself, or of others? Explain.
- b. Has this changed as a result of this study? If so, how?
10. The main types of people that Jesus gave Himself to for the most part, were unbelieving “sinners,” the poor, the helpless, and young, growing believers. Paul followed a similar pattern. Do a quick audit of *your* investment in people from the same four categories. Indicate whether you've had contact with them and how you've invested in their lives, or how you plan to *begin* investing in their lives.
- a. “sinners”(unbelievers) –
- b. The poor –
- c. The helpless –
- d. Young, growing believers –
11. Look back over your responses to questions 1 through 3 on pages 4-5. Reflecting on everything you've discovered in this chapter, where would you put a mark on the line below to represent your present investment in people?
- “Heart of Stone” _____ ”Heart of God”
12. Below is a partial list of ways to invest in other people. If you’ve come to the realization that other people have not been as important to you as they need to be, prayerfully pick one idea or agency and determine to find out as much as you can about it this week, with the goal of personal involvement. (Hint: You may want to involve a friend or family member! Also, the ideas involving children are not limited to those in your own household; there are many opportunities to get involved in the lives of children.)
- Visiting someone in a nursing home or assisted living space
 - Joining a Habitat for Humanity project
 - Grocery shopping for someone
 - Reading to people with visual impairments
 - Prison/Jail ministry - being a pen pal or visiting with inmates
 - Volunteering at a children's hospital
 - Teaching Sunday school

- Working in the church nursery
- Baby-sitting (for free) for a single parent at church or in your neighborhood
- Volunteering at a women's shelter
- Volunteering in a soup kitchen
- Leading a Bible study
- Encouraging and helping single parents
- Counseling at a crisis pregnancy center
- Mentoring a child
- Praying with your own children before bed each night
- Beginning family devotions with your own children
- Walking, running, or hiking with child
- Writing to adult child
- Writing to grandchildren
- Short-term mission trip with child
- One-on-one Bible study with child
- Including your child in something on the list in question 10

13. Perhaps you are already ministering to people's needs. Think of someone who isn't that you could include in what you're doing, with the vision of encouraging them to invest with you in the needs of others. Write that person's name below, along with what you intend to do:

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Ministry to others is an avenue of encouragement – Isaiah 58:10-11
- Ministry to others is pleasing to God – Luke 14:13-14