

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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- **[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

ASAPH

“The Quiet Enemy of Distraction.”

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

ASAPH

“The Quiet Enemy of Distraction.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – If we fail to realize that we are aliens and strangers in this life, then we will take on the distorted perspective of being prisoners of our earthly circumstances.

“There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands but nothing of the other life in their hearts — Matthew Henry

When David was anointed king of Israel, one of the first things he did was bring the ark of God back to Jerusalem. It had been captured by the Philistines some fifty years earlier and was away from Jerusalem at Kiriath-Jearim for the majority of that time (1 Sam. 4-7).

When David was making preparations for the return of the ark, which was the symbol of God's presence among them, he commanded the chief Levites to appoint singers and musicians for worship. Asaph was appointed "chief" of this melodious group (1 Chronicles 15:16-17, 16:4-5). He was the leader among the people who sang and played praises to God on that joyous day when the ark finally returned to the city of David.

Asaph's sons followed in his footsteps in this musical service to God (1 Chronicles 25:1-2) and Asaph himself wrote twelve of the Psalms (Psalms 50, 73-83). We can see in his writings that Asaph vacillated in his heart between material wealth and spiritual wealth.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Psalm 73

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. In Psalm 73:3, Asaph described how he almost became a casualty in the war to remain faithful to God. What was his diagnosis of the cause?

2. Asaph used a number of words and phrases to describe the “success” of the wicked. Write out what you see in the various verses below.
verse 4 –

verse 5 –

verse 6 –

3. verse 7 –

verse 8-9 –

verse 10 –

verse 11 –

verse 12 –

4. Asaph made a very sobering statement about what he had concluded about whether it was of any value to have a relationship with God. What was it? (verses 13-14).

How did he come to this conclusion, based on his own words?

What does this tell you about what was occupying a priority position in this man's thought life?

5. Asaph's statement in verse 16 indicates that he was depressed. How did Asaph get victory *over* this depression that was caused by comparing *his* current life with that of the “wicked”?

Change in his “location” (vs. 17a) –

Change in his what he thought about (vv. 17b-20) –

6. Asaph realized that he had abandoned an eternal perspective of life for an earthly one. Paul indirectly addressed these two perspectives (eternal vs. earthly) in Romans 8:5-6, and had a phrase for each of them.

What do you think it means to “set the mind on the flesh”?

What do you think it means to “set the mind on the Spirit”?

Using Paul’s terms, summarize what had happened to Asaph.

7. One of Satan's key tactics is to lure our thinking *away* from gratitude for what we *have* to envy for what we do *not* have. How do you see this principle illustrated in the following passages?

Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6 –

1 Kings 21:1-19 –

8. According to Hebrews 12:1-2, what is to be the proper "gaze" of our soul, our life focus?

How do you think a person can go about this? What would be some of the things to *do* or *not* to do?

9. Paul told the early Christians in 2 Corinthians 10:12 that one of the fruits of ungodly comparison (with other believers), is the loss of ability to think clearly. Describe a present situation in which your thoughts have been led astray by comparison to the life of someone else, believer or unbeliever.

10. Asaph recaptured an "eternal" perspective by changing his location (where he physically *was*), and then changing his thoughts. Schedule a time and a day when you can get away from the noise and routine of your life to spend some time alone with God thinking and perhaps journaling about your answers to Questions 8 and 9. (Matthew 6 is a good chapter to read on such a day.)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The gaze of the soul – Hebrews 12:1-2
- The proper perspective – Psalm 73:25

OPTIONAL

It is worth noting that in Matthew 6, the word translated, "worry," actually means "to be distracted." In our age of social media and online living, we are constantly distracted. Part of the outcome of that is a loss of eternal perspective. Consider taking a "tech sabbath" a couple of times a month when you are away from the "online noise," and "offline" in terms of being interrupted.