

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...

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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

BARNABAS

“The powerful ministry of encouragement.”

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

BARNABAS

“The powerful ministry of encouragement.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – Rather than focusing constantly on our own needs and problems, we ought to do all we can to encourage others.
“Encouragement is oxygen to the soul.” — George Adams

In the early days of the first century Church when there was a keen sense of community, personal and corporate needs were openly discussed. Because the Church was so young and vulnerable, its people needed personal support from leaders with wisdom, maturity, and sensitivity. It was during this period that a Levite from the island of Cyprus, Joseph by name, entered center stage. His name was changed to Barnabas, meaning "Son of Encouragement."

Barnabas was a rather obscure figure, whose real life and ministry was often eclipsed in the Book of Acts by the activities of Peter and Paul. A close examination of some key events, however, reveals that Barnabas had certain qualities that improved with age, standing as pillars of godly character for us in our age of impersonal digital relationships. His regard for the worth of individuals is a principle that needs to be recaptured by the people of God at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Barnabas is introduced in Acts 4. What's going on at the time lends us valuable insight into the character of this man. Jot down all that you can surmise about him.

2. Why do you think the apostles changed his name from Joseph to Barnabas? (The word translated, "called" in Acts 4:36 actually means "surnamed.")

What does this tell you about how *others* perceived Barnabas?

3. Jesus had an especially sensitive way of encouraging people. How would you describe it? (Matthew 9:35-38).

4. In what ways did Barnabas encourage others?

SCRIPTURE	WHAT BARNABAS DID OR SAID
Acts 9:27	
Acts 11:22-26	
Acts 13:43	
Acts 14:3	
Acts 14:21-23	
Acts 15:3	

5. Paul's last letter, written just before he was martyred, was 2 Timothy. What evidence is there that Paul was unwilling to do for John Mark the very thing Barnabas had done for Paul? (Acts 9:19-28 and Acts 15:36-41).

Can you think of a similar situation in your own life? If so, describe it.

6. The ministry of encouragement often involves *temporary* relationships that take on a pattern similar to the one in the following timeline:
- a. The encourager sees someone with a genuine need.
 - b. The encourager draws alongside this person with the goal of helping him grow.
 - c. Sustained, faithful help is given.
 - d. The need is met.
 - e. The relationship either slowly dissolves or matures to become a friendship, because the basis of the original relationship—the *need*—is no longer present.
 - f. The encourager spots a new need elsewhere, and the cycle begins all over again.

Can you think of someone who could use *your* encouragement right now? With this outline in mind, write out a rough “strategy” for helping this person.

7. The word "encourage" in the New Testament is the verb form of the word used for "the Counselor," the Holy Spirit. Its *root* meaning, however, has to do with someone "called *alongside*" to stir up an individual to stand on his own two feet and face the rigors of life. Too often the ministry of *exhortation* (same word as encouragement) is confused with *admonishing*, which means to warn someone. There are four different commands in I Thessalonians 5:14. First list them, then after each command, write out what doing it might look like in your *own* life.

- _____ –
- _____ –
- _____ –
- _____ –

8. Summarize what you have learned so far about the nature and the importance of encouragement.

9. The book of Proverbs is bursting with instruction for this powerful ministry of faithful support. Below is a sampling of some of the wealth of insight Proverbs contains about encouragement. Think deeply as you read each slowly a couple of times, and jot down helpful hints for encouraging others.

SCRIPTURE	INSIGHT FOR ENCOURAGING OTHERS
Proverbs 15:4	
Proverbs 16:21	
Proverbs 16:28	
Proverbs 18:13	
Proverbs 18:24	
Proverbs 25:20	

Craft some principles taken from your answers to Questions 8 and 9 for encouraging one or two people in your immediate circle. Perhaps create a brief list of things you will and won't do and say, and some specific activities you might want to do together with the one you are trying to encourage. Use the space on the next page to draft your "Barnabas Plan."

My “Barnabas Principles” —

My “Barnabas Plan” —

Scripture Memory (optional)

- Being others-centered - Philippians 2:20-21
- Having a mouth that encourages J.T. - Ephesians 4:29-30