

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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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

DANIEL
Staying True When The Stakes Are High

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,



Fran Sciacca
Birmingham, AL

DANIEL

Staying True When The Stakes Are High

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – Convictions, that handful of truths we would die for, are the hidden foundation on which all of our lives rest. When they are tested, it will be demonstrated what, and how deeply, we actually believe.

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Six centuries before Christ, the known world tremored as Babylon conquered Egypt and became the "heavyweight champion" in world politics. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, at that point claimed authority over the vast territory between the Euphrates River and Northern Africa. As a first step, he began his twenty-year assault on the region surrounding Jerusalem by deporting a handful of Judah's most promising young men to his capital city, Babylon.

Among them was a teenage boy who was to land the leading role in the next Act of God's redemptive Story. Daniel's life stands forever as one of the clearest examples in the Bible of what solid convictions really consist of, and the powerful ways they find expression in the lives of those who love God. The life of Daniel also shows us that what is most precious to God is often very costly to us.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Daniel 1, 3, and 6

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. The city of Babylon contained over forty pagan temples. The “collection” of young men Nebuchadnezzar kidnapped to serve him were gathered from the corners of his vast empire. Daniel 1:6-7 tells us that the Hebrew names of four young Jews from Judah were changed because they all contained a reference to the God of Israel. New names were assigned, and they were tied to the pagan gods of the Chaldeans. This is how their captivity began! What sorts of challenges and temptations do you imagine likely lay ahead for these teenage boys in Babylon regarding their faith and loyalty to Jehovah?
 - a. What do you think might be a *modern* equivalent of the situation they found themselves in?

2. Perhaps the clearest statement about the foundation of Daniel's life that never weakened while he lived in Babylon is found in Daniel 1:8. What is the main verb in this verse and what does it actually mean?
 - a. What can you surmise about the young man Daniel from this verse?
3. Daniel's first test of his convictions involved something as “innocent” as his diet. It’s likely the food Daniel and his friends were required to eat consisted of items that were “off limits” to Jews, according to Old Testament regulations. It’s also like they may have previously been offered to the pagan gods in the city. Look carefully at how Daniel went about maintaining his convictions in the face of unbelievers who were in authority over him (1:8-16). How did Daniel seek to avoid an unnecessary conflict and still hold to his convictions?
 - a. How do you explain the fact that Daniel's ideas were eventually accepted by those who initially disagreed with him?
 - b. What principles about staying true to your convictions in a difficult situation can you see in this story?
4. Daniel was likely in his *eighties* by the time Darius the Mede became king (5:30-31)! There is a richness of insight in Daniel 6:3-5, showing the nature of Daniel's heart and life. What were the two most notable features of Daniel's reputation?
 - a. Daniel 6:3-4 –
 - b. Daniel 6:5,16 –

5. What were the various responses of *others* to the character demonstrated by Daniel holding fast to his convictions?
 - a. What do you see in this incident about the difficulties associated with being a person of conviction?
 - b. Read Psalm 119:109-112 and 1 Kings 8:46-51. This occurred nearly 500 years before Daniel lived!). In light of these verses, what must have been true about Daniel's spiritual life in Daniel 9:1-2?
 - c. What role should this factor play as we seek to build convictions?
6. The English word that describes Daniel's remarkable character is our word "conviction." In the New Testament, conviction means to be virtually filled up to capacity with one thought, or to constantly wear or bear that thought. What was the "one thought" that Paul carried with him everywhere? (see Philippians 3:10-11 and 1 Corinthians 2:2).
 - a. What was David's "one thought"? (see Psalm 27:4).
 - b. What do you think was Daniel's "one thought"?
 - c. What about you? Do you have a "one thought"? If so, what?

7. There is a significant distinction in the Bible between "commitment" and "conviction." Commitment is normally *verbal*. It's something we say or affirm, often to others. Conviction, on the other hand, tends to be internal, nonverbal, and motivational. It moves us to act! Or in some cases *not* to act. As a result, we tend to live out our convictions and merely talk about our commitments. Peter's life is an excellent example of the difference between the two. He had many commitments before the Resurrection. Unfortunately, he didn't live them out at the time. Below are a few of them. What did Peter *say* he believed?
- a. Matthew 26:33
 - b. Matthew 26:35
8. By the time he wrote his two epistles many years later, Peter had developed a number of very significant *convictions*, things he *truly* believed. The following passages point us to just a few.
- a. 1 Peter 1:13 –
 - b. 1 Peter 3:15 –
 - c. 1 Peter 5:8-9 –
9. What do you think caused Peter to develop these genuine convictions?
10. Look over the list below. Pick three or more concepts from each group and write out what you believe about each as it relates to you.

Group 1	Group 2
the Lordship of Christ in my life	my career
discipleship	marriage
personal holiness	children

Group 1	Group 2
sharing the gospel	ministry to others
prayer	my possessions
the Scriptures	money
personal accountability	divorce

11. Now, which of the above items would you honestly *die* for? Things you believe to be true or so important that if forced to choose between them and life itself, you would choose them? Mark these with a check mark.
12. Look at your answers to questions 10 and 11 above. Things worth dying for are also worth living for. Does your *life* reflect your convictions? Perhaps some of the items are actually "commitments." Mark an asterisk (*) next to all those that you can say are genuine *convictions*.
13. Daniel *maintained* his convictions by means of a faithful relationship with God through Scripture reading and prayer. Consequently, his convictions were not mere opinions. How many of your answers to questions 10 and 11 are rooted in the Bible? Put a "W" next to all of them that you know for certain agree with God's Word.
14. Look over your answers to questions 10 and 11 one last time. How many have *both* an asterisk (*) and a "W" next to them? What have you learned about yourself from this study regarding your convictions versus your commitments?
15. Daniel's ability to stay true to God in the face of pressure and the temptation to do otherwise was partly due to the fact that he was friends with three others who shared the same convictions. Who are the "friends of Daniel" in your life? Who are the "friends of Nebuchadnezzar" in your life? What relationships do you need to strengthen? To weaken?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The proper *basis* of convictions – Psalm 16:8
- The *need* for convictions – Ephesians 4:13-14

OPTIONAL

The Book of Daniel also contains additional insights on the power of convictions manifested in the lives of his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Slowly read Daniel 3 one more time. In their story, these men make a profound statement about the firmness of their convictions. It is here that we, too, should “stand and not be moved.”