

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

THE GOOD SAMARITAN “Who Is My Neighbor...Really?”

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 GOOD SAMARITAN

“Who Is My Neighbor...Really?”

ABIDING PRINCIPLE – Those whose hearts and minds are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus will discover that they have a noticeably growing interest in the kinds of people He came to seek and to save.

“The honest poor can sometimes forget poverty. The honest rich can never forget it.”
— G.K. Chesterton

Possibly one of the most well-known characters from the Bible is the "good Samaritan." He has found a permanent place in the world of anecdotes about compassion. It is also rare to find any discussion of this ethereal character without the adjective "good" as a prefix, even though Jesus never gave him that "title"! Yet, something deep within all of us seems to demand that this Samaritan man be christened "good." We instinctively sense that what he is, we should be. Yet this story is robbed of its original impact because we cannot appreciate how offensive it would have been to those who first heard it. The Jews of Jesus' day would not have seen this Samaritan's act as one of selfless service. Instead, it would have been received as a howling reproach. And one of the most significant aspects of this entire account is often overlooked: In telling this parable, Jesus gives us a glimpse into His own heart. And for those of us who are seeking to cooperate with His Father in molding us to be more like Him, this story should have a sacred place.

KEY SCRIPTURE: 2 Kings 17:1-24; Luke 10:25-3

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Look carefully at the question-and-answer exchange that Jesus had with the "lawyer" ("expert in the law," NIV) in Luke 10:25-29. Use this passage to answer the following questions.

What was the lawyer asking Jesus?

Jesus makes the lawyer answer his own question in verses 26-28. What are the two requirements for eternal life?

- 1.
- 2.

Based on the lawyer's final question, in verse 29, what must he be assuming about his own life and the first of these two requirements?

2. Jesus' intention in this story is to lead the lawyer to discover that he does not truly love God. He does this subtly but firmly. The skillful rebuke is in the change of questions that Jesus brings

about. Look at the lawyer's original question (verse 29) and Jesus' final question (verse 36). What did Jesus accomplish by so artfully changing the focus?

The stinging rebuke in this parable is the choice of Jesus to use a Samaritan as the champion. In order to understand the impact of the parable, we need to understand the history of the Samaritans and their relationship to the Jews of Jesus' day. Read 2 Kings 17:1-24 and answer these questions.

Verses 1-2 Who is inhabiting the area known as Samaria in these verses?

Verses 3-17 What characterized the behavior of these Jews?

Verses 18-23 What did God do to His people and how did He accomplish it?

Verse 24 What did the Assyrian king do after removing the Jews from Samaria?

3. These non-Jews intermarried with the Jews who were allowed to remain. Over the next several hundred years they eventually built their own temple on Mount Gerazim in Samaria and established their own system of worship. Hostility and hatred grew. What can you glean about the relationship between Samaritans and Jews from the encounter Jesus had with a Samaritan woman in John 4:2-42? *(As you read this account, keep in mind that the conflict in this story is nearly seven hundred years old!)*

Verse 12

Verse 20

John 4:25

John 4:9

Luke 9:51-54

4. What effect does this have on your understanding of how the parable of the good Samaritan would have been received by the lawyer and those listening?

Has this changed your understanding of Jesus' main point in this parable? Explain.

5. This parable is also a portrait of the life and ministry of Jesus. He too was "despised and rejected by men" (Isaiah 53:3) and did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). If we are to become like Him, it is important that we know what the people were like who He ministered to and associated with. We need to know what Jesus said and what He did. Read the following passages and describe who Jesus ministered to and why it was significant.

Matthew 9:10-13 (see also Luke 18:13)

Matthew 19:13-14

Mark 5:24-34 (see also Leviticus 15:25-27)

Luke 4:16-21

Luke 5:12-13 (see also Leviticus 13:43-46)

Luke 7:21

Luke 7:36-47

LOOKING BACK...

To first-century Jews, listening to the parable of the good Samaritan could have been perceived as a condemnation of their religious beliefs. In a typical turn of events, Jesus elevated the enemy of the story to the status of a hero. In so doing, He rebuked the Jews for their hardness of heart toward others and toward Him. But His message has modern implications too. A brief study of the life and ministry of Jesus reveals an attraction to the people in society who are often overlooked or judged, even in our own day. Jesus' command to the lawyer, "Go and do likewise," should echo in our own ears and hearts as we enter into the flow of people that populate the world around us each day.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

6. Read Matthew 18:23-35. There is a profound principle in this parable that actually explains what should be at the heart of a Christian's willingness and desire to meet the needs of people. How is this parable related to the parable of the good Samaritan?
7. Jeremiah 24:7 contains one of the most exciting promises in the Bible. What is God's promise here and what do you think it means?

Look at Jeremiah 22:16. Compare it with 24:7 and your response above. What is the relationship between these two verses?

8. Read Isaiah 58:5-10. In this passage, God reveals what a truly religious and spiritual person does who is seeking to worship Him in an acceptable way. What is the relationship between these verses and what you've learned in the study so far?

Has what you've learned challenged the ideas you had about ministry when you began this study, especially in regard to purposefully ministering to people of other ethnicities? What have you learned about yourself?

9. Review your answers to question 5. In the following chart, write a one- or two-word description of the kinds of people Jesus was ministering to in the "Then" column. In the column marked "Now," explain who would be an equivalent people group in our world today.

Then	Now

10. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus makes a sobering statement about the relationship between ministry to others and the final judgment. While theologians debate significant points of interpretation in this passage, a number of truths are inescapable. Read the passage carefully and then answer the following questions.

What are the six categories of needy people Jesus mentions in this passage?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

What phrase does Jesus use in verses 40 and 45 to describe these people?

What added identification does Jesus attach to these people in verse 40 that is significantly different from the other people groups you've studied in this chapter so far?

Think of who these people are in your world. *Who* are they and *where* are they?

How many of them are you ministering to? (If you have no ministry with any of these people, you may need to repent of your negligence, and perhaps repent of any prejudices you may have about people Jesus Himself called "brothers of mine.")

11. Perhaps this study has revealed your willingness or unwillingness to cooperate with God in a vital way that He can make you more like Jesus. Take a few minutes right now to consider who the "least of these" are in your city—believers and unbelievers alike. How can you minister to "Jesus" in a way that is consistent with what you've learned in this study? Write a short paragraph explaining what you would like to do. You may want to discuss this with your small group, a Sunday school class, or with the members of your family. Stepping into this type of ministry with others has a greater chance of success. Perhaps you can begin to get involved with a phone call or a letter to an individual or agency working with the people groups Jesus sought out when He was on earth. The larger truth is, He is still on earth . . . and *we* are His Body.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Knowing God means meeting needs – Jeremiah 22:16

Compassion to the oppressed – Matthew 25:40