

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 HOLY SPIRIT

“The Real Change Agent in My Life”

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 HOLY SPIRIT

“The Real Change Agent in My Life”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – God’s intention is to make me less and less like Adam, and more and more like Jesus, through the power of His Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit’s work in my life that produces change and brings glory to my Father, not my own work on myself.

“Before Christ sent the church into the world, he sent the Spirit into the church. The same order must be observed today.” — John Stott

Many say that the Holy Spirit is the “humblest” member of the Trinity. His passion is to glorify the Father and the Son and to minister to those in the believing family. And it seems that He prefers to do it without drawing attention to Himself. We don’t have the same biographical information for this third member of the Trinity that the Gospels provide about Jesus. The Spirit is less like a star and more like a supporting actor in the One Story of the One God. Consequently, two extremes often exist among believers when it comes to the Holy Spirit. We either become *preoccupied* with His power and ministry, or we *fearfully* stifle His inspiration and power, looking instead to ourselves to bring about change in our own lives and our churches.

The Bible contains nearly 150 clear references to the Holy Spirit and His work in the world. So, claiming ignorance about Him isn’t an option. Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in our own transformation will fill us with hope, direction, and humility. It also will spare us from discouragement and disillusionment as we seek to “partner” with God in His work to conform us to the likeness of His Son.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-17 and John 14:15- 15:8

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Reflecting on the enormous idea that God desires to make us less and less like Adam, and more and more like Jesus, what do the following verses teach about *our own efforts* in this process?
 - a. Psalm 127:1 –
 - b. Colossians 1:28-29 –
 - c. John 15:5 –
2. Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8. How do you reconcile Paul’s command to Timothy in light of your responses to question 1?

3. Write out what your thinking is, at this point in your life, when it comes to *God's* responsibility and *your* responsibility in His plan to make you less like Adam and more like Jesus:
 - a. What I think is *God's* responsibility:

 - b. What I think is *my* responsibility:

4. Look over Ezekiel 11:19-20 and 36:25-27. How does God's promise His people relate to what you wrote in question 3?

5. In your own words, try to capture the truths presented about the Holy Spirit in the following verses:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 3:16 –

 - b. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 –

 - c. Romans 8:9 –

6. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2. What do these passages say about this whole arena of our spiritual transformation?
 - a. What do you think this means for your *own* life? –

7. Summarize what the following verses teach about the ministry and role of the Holy Spirit in your life. Begin each response, "*In my life, the Holy Spirit . . .*"
 - a. Nehemiah 9:30 –

 - b. Micah 3:8 –

 - c. John 6:63 –

- d. John 16:8 –
 - e. Acts 1:8 –
 - f. Acts 7:55 –
 - g. Romans 8:13 –
 - h. Romans 8:14-16 –
 - i. Romans 8:26 –
 - j. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 –
 - k. Galatians 5:22-23 –
8. Read Isaiah 11:1-2. This passage describes the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of *Jesus*. List each spiritual provision you see in verse 2.
9. The Bible indicates that the Holy Spirit will not force Himself into our lives. Look up the following verses, and explain how they support this idea.
- a. Acts 5:3 –
 - b. Zechariah 7:12 and Acts 7:51 –
 - c. Isaiah 63:10 and Ephesians 4:30 –
 - d. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 –

10. Carefully read over what you have discovered in this study so far about the role of the Holy Spirit and the transformation of believers. Summarize His purpose and intention for *your* life.

LOOKING BACK...

The clear teaching of Scripture is that we are destined to be prisoners of our own sin unless God Himself works His will in us. The process of changing the image bearers of Adam into the likeness of Jesus is a supernatural work that only God can do. But, the process is not automatic. It involves—perhaps is even dependent upon—*our* cooperation and continual participation with God throughout the process.

We also learn from God's Word that the Holy Spirit empowers *and* guides each believer to become like Christ. This is reasonable since Jesus Himself relied on the same source of power while He was on earth. Our God is a personal God. The Bible teaches that the Spirit's transforming influence can be resisted and thwarted. It can even be snuffed out. Left to ourselves, we are more likely to grieve and sin against Him, than joyfully submit. But, submission to this divine enabler and transformer is the most necessary role we play, if we're ever to become a people who glorify God and reflect the character of His Son.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. According to the following passages, what are some of our responsibilities to the Holy Spirit?
 - a. Luke 11:9-13 –
 - b. Ephesians 5:15-18 –
 - c. Ephesians 6:17-18 –

2. Paul established several direct commands that expose a primary tool the Spirit uses to sanctify His people. Use the following passages to answer the questions.
 - a. In your own words, describe the behavior Paul clearly desires for early Christians and for us (see Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16).
 - b. What attitude does Paul predicts will accompany this behavior (see Ephesians 5:20 and Colossians 3:17)?
 - c. What command does Paul give to his readers in Ephesians 5:18?
 - d. What command does Paul give to his readers in Colossians 3:16?
3. Summarize from these passages what *you* should be doing when it comes to the process of transformation in your life, as well as what the result will be, if you do.
4. Read Galatians 5:16-17. This passage contains a very significant principle about our transformation. How would you describe it, in your own words?
5. What additional insights do you discover about your spiritual transformation, the Spirit, *and* yourself from the following verses?
 - a. Jeremiah 13:23 –
 - b. Romans 7:18 –
 - c. Jeremiah 17:9 –
 - d. Romans 8:5 –
6. The apostle Paul never stopped praying for the sanctification of God's people. Read the following verses, then summarize what Paul longed to see the Holy Spirit do in the lives of all believers.
 - a. Ephesians 1:15-18 –

b. Ephesians 3:16-20 –

c. Philippians 1:9-10 –

d. Colossians 1:9-14 –

7. Think back on your perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit in your own spiritual transformation when you began this study. Place a check at the place on each of the lines that honestly portrays your practice in each area.

What I've Typically Been Praying For

Peace with people _____ Fruit of the Spirit
Tangible things _____ Wisdom/insight
Absence of difficulty _____ Power of God

Where I've Typically Looked for Guidance

Personal Opinion _____ the Scriptures

My Typical Response to the Spirit's Prompting to "Do"

Personal Opinion _____ the Scriptures

My Typical Response When Feeling Convicted About Sin

"Grieve the Spirit" _____ Obey

What I Have Been Depending Upon For My Transformation

Myself _____ Holy Spirit

8. Read the following verses and explain how they enlarge your understanding of God's transforming work in your life through the Holy Spirit:

a. Isaiah 55:9 –

b. Romans 11:33 –

c. 1 Corinthians 2:11-14 –

9. The transformation you've been studying is a *supernatural* thing. It involves the Spirit of God accomplishing what we can't do or even understand apart from Him. Prayerfully and thoughtfully review your responses to questions 5 through 8 above, then answer the following questions.
- a. What needs to change in your prayer life (concerning what you pray about, how you pray, when you pray, and so forth)?
 - b. What is one change you could make right now?
 - c. What changes do you need to make regarding your commitment to knowing the Scriptures?
 - d. How can you begin, to accomplish this?
10. For two weeks, spend a few minutes each day, memorizing/reviewing Ephesians 1:15-18 and Colossians 1:9-12. While you're doing this, quietly *pray* these passages back to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your life in new and fresh ways. Ask Him to show you who *He* wants you to be and what He wants to do in you and through you. The success of this entire Bible study depends on *your* desire for His supernatural work of transformation in your life. Ask Him to grant you success, beginning right now!

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The promise of God to transform - Ezekiel 11:19-20
- A model prayer for your transformation - Colossians 1:9-14