

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

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

“The myth of nostalgia.”

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 style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Fran Sciacca
Birmingham, AL

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

“The myth of nostalgia.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – Whenever we compare our present difficulties with our past circumstances, we will be tempted to become fearful of the future, *and* paralyzed in the present.

“If we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future.” — Winston Churchill

God seemed to have a perennial problem with the people of Israel: they continually forgot Him! The Lord summarized both the reality and the absurdity of this chronic forgetfulness in Jeremiah 2:32: *“Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.”* God made this profound statement just prior to the destruction and consequent captivity of the Southern Kingdom early in the sixth century B.C. We have ample evidence from Scripture that the people of Israel had indeed forgotten Him “days without number.” Probably the best example of this tendency is found in their trek through the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt.

KEY SCRIPTURES: Exodus 16:1-8; Numbers 11:1-6 and 13:21- 14:4

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. One of the inherent dangers in comparing the present with the past is the myth of nostalgia. That is, our circumstances seem to take on a distorted pleasantness when compared with our present difficulties. In fact, our recollection of the past when we are facing a present struggle is usually far from what really happened. In the following chart under the **Nostalgia** column, record what the Israelites recollected about their bondage in Egypt. Then, under the **Reality** heading, record what Scripture says about their actual situation while they were in Egypt.

NOSTALGIA	REALITY
Exodus 16:1-3	Exodus 1:13
Numbers 11:4-6	Exodus 2:23

2. Think of a present struggle that tempts you to compare your life now to your life in the past. It might be in regard to finances, job, marriage, family, friends, housing, or free time. Below, record what nostalgia says about your past. Then thoughtfully record what it was *really* like.

NOSTALGIA	REALITY

3. A crucial error in the myth of nostalgia is the transfer of our central focus from God to our past circumstances. In other words, who God *is* and what *He has* done is eclipsed by what we had.
- How do you see Israel doing this in the passages in Question 1?

 - Looking back at your own response in Question 2, how have *you* done the same thing?
4. God's prescription for this malady is for us to be intentional about trying *not* to forget Him. In the book of Deuteronomy God commands His people to "remember" eleven times, and to "not forget" nine times. Using the events from Israel's past in the passages below as examples, what are some of the events from *our past* that we should make a great effort to remember?
- Deuteronomy 15:15 –

 - Deuteronomy 7:17-18 –

 - Deuteronomy 8:2-3 –

 - Deuteronomy 8:17-18 –
5. How might remembering these things help you face a present difficulty?
6. Comparing the present with the past is especially tempting when for some reason God diminishes what we have. Examine the attitude of the older Jews toward their new temple. God

had graciously allowed them to return to Palestine from captivity to rebuild their temple from ruins to reality. What was their response? (Ezra 3:8-13, Haggai 2:1-J).

7. According to God, what should have been their *focus* while they were rebuilding the temple?
8. What principles about comparing the present with the past can you glean from the above passages? (See also Exodus 33:16.)
9. What attitude do you think best characterizes the *older* Jews in this incident? (Check only one.)
 - repentance selfishness
 - anger ingratitude
 - resentment covetousness
10. In Romans 1:19-32, Paul described as sort of “graveyard spiral” of humanity. A step-by-step regression *away* from God. Why do you think ingratitude is one of the first steps away from God? (Note especially Romans 1:21.)
11. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul stressed *verbally* giving thanks (1:12, 2:7, 3:15-17, 4:2). How can this emphasis keep you from *becoming* ungrateful?
12. Paul made a profound statement about nostalgia and Christian growth in Philippians.3:12-16. What is it?
13. Summarize the main things you’ve learned about the kind of discouragement that is caused by comparing the present with the past.
14. Describe one area of your life in which you have been unrealistically comparing something in your past to your present circumstances. How can you can use insights gained from this study to regain a spiritual victory in this one area?

15. In Numbers 14:4 we see that the Jews *complained* to each other, but in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 we are told to *build up* and *encourage* each other. Think of someone who can help you deal with the problem of grumbling and complaining. Strive together to encourage, edify, and strengthen each other.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Grumbling nostalgically - Exodus 16:8
- Looking ahead resolutely - Philippians 3:13-14