

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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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.
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# FOLKS Like Us

## JESUS OF NAZARETH

“Facing the Death of Someone You Love.”

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

# JESUS OF NAZARETH

## *“Facing the Death of Someone You Love.”*

**A** **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – For the Christian, there is a valid place for both hope and grief when facing the death of a loved one.

*“We understand death for the first time when he puts his hand upon one whom we love.”*  
– Anne L. de Stael

**D**eath is the final frontier of certainty for man. We have to reckon with its reality at some point in our lives. Sometimes we challenge its power without fear of reprisal and other times we tremble as its shadow approaches. Perhaps it is the uncertainty of what comes after death that is so unnerving. For most, it is a dark corridor into the unknown, a thief of all that is dear in this life.

But what about the child of God? Shouldn't our perception of death be distinctly different? The resurrection of Jesus Christ in history provides us with the assurance that this life is not the end, but merely a doorway into eternity. So Christians need not fear death.

But how are we to face the death of someone we love—a spouse, child, or dear friend? What is the biblical response to such a tragedy? Fortunately for us, we can observe Jesus as He faced the death of someone He loved. His response is as relevant today as it was in the dusty Palestinian countryside over 2000 years ago.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** John 11:1-44

### **STUDY QUESTIONS...**

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1. What evidence is there in this story that Jesus actually planned on Lazarus dying (see especially 11:3-7,11-14)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. a. What is the assumption behind the comments of Martha, Mary, and the Jews from Jerusalem (John 11:21,32,37)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Do you think *we* ever make similar kinds of assumptions when someone we love dies?

c. What is comforting about Jesus' response to their accusations (see verses 23,25-26,33,35, and 38)? (Note what He *didn't* do, as well as what He *did* do.)

3. Would you describe Jesus' response to the situation from the time He first met the women until He arrived at the tomb as "grief"? Explain.
  
4. Paul often reminded believers that we can place our hope and confidence in the resurrection of our bodies (see Romans 8:11). But after reading 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, does Paul discourage Christians from grieving over the death of others? Should we make a distinction between the death of believers and the death of nonbelievers, when it comes to *why* we grieve? Explain.
  
5. When Jesus met Martha and she blamed Him for her brother's death, he responded with a statement of hope (John 11:23). But Martha saw it merely as a rote statement of theology (11:24). Jesus' next words to Martha (11:25-26) are very significant. What was He trying to get her to see?

## LEARNING FROM JESUS...

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Jesus *allowed* Lazarus to die so that He could teach a lesson on eternal life. But the interim period between Lazarus' death and resurrection also contains valuable insights for us today. We learn from Jesus' dealings with Martha and Mary that God is touched by our emotions in the face of the loss of someone we dearly love. We see in our Lord's response to the trauma and pain of the sisters and their friends genuine empathy and grief over the ravaging effects of sin and death. Jesus wept real tears. He didn't eulogize, or minimize their pain. Instead, He wept with them! If the Son of God showed such deep grief, can we do less?

But, Jesus also spoke words of hope in the midst of their pain. Not the idle recitation of Bible verses and theological doctrines, but a living hope rooted in the Author of Life Himself.



9. Does this principle apply to facing the death of nonbelievers, too? Explain.

10. 10. Based on what you've discovered from this lesson, make a list of things you think should not be said or done to someone who is facing the death of a loved one.

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY** (optional)

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- Death is not the end – John 11:25-26
- Grieving with hope – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14