

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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- **[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

JOB

“When the lights go out.”

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

JOB

“When the lights go out”

ABIDING PRINCIPLE – Sometimes our most painful trials of faith, during which we are tempted to despair, are due to a *deliberate* silence on the part of God.

"The child of the light is sometimes found walking in darkness, but he goes on walking." — Martin Lloyd Jones

Job probably lived sometime before Solomon. His actual lifetime is unknown. But, what is known is that he was a man of great material wealth and social status. He was also a blameless and upright man “in the sight of God.”

As a result of a dialogue between God and Satan, and yet well within the sovereign plan of God for his life, Job lost his health, wealth, and reputation- but his life was spared..Job suffered some of the most intense afflictions in Satan's arsenal. But by far his greatest foe was the apparent void in his experience where God once dwelt. Job's most painful trial was his temporary inability to sense God's presence in his life.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Job 1- 2, Job 23:1-17

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Three of Job's “friends”—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—felt quite certain that *they* had figured out the cause of all Job's troubles. And they were very confident and “generous” with their advice. What had they concluded was the reason that Job’s life had fallen apart?

Eliphaz (Job 4:7-8, 17-18) –

Bildad (Job 8:3, 8-13) –

Zophar (Job 11:1-6, 13-15) –

2. Were their assessments correct? Why or why not? (Job 1:8, 2.3:11-12).

3. Taking into consideration your answers to the two previous questions, do you think it's a good idea to tell other Christians “why” certain things are happening in their lives? Why or why not?

4. Job's *greatest* battle wasn't the physical pain and suffering. It was the warfare waged between his feelings and the facts. Record some of the emotions Job experienced under the *Feelings* column; then record what Scripture says (and what Job struggled to remind himself of) under the *Truth* column.

Job's Feelings	The Truth
Job 23:2	Psalm 142:1-2
Job 23:3	Isaiah 57:15
Job 23:8-9	Psalm 139:7-10
Job 23:13-15	Jeremiah 29:11

5. According to God, what should be the basis of our hope during dark and painful times? (Isaiah 50:10).

What do you think “the name of the Lord” is? And how is that a solid basis for hope in difficulty and pain?

6. Psalm 77 commemorates God's miraculous deliverance of his people at the Red Sea. Try to imagine yourself there, with the Egyptian army closing in and your back to the Red Sea. What amazing assurance is in verse 19 for those times when everything's crashing in? (See also Isaiah 43:1-3.)

7. Sometimes God's purpose in "hiding" Himself is to *remind* us of our need to utterly depend on Him. Look at David's thoughts in Psalm 30:6-10. There's a danger for believers that is in verse 6. What is it?

What do you think will likely happen to a Christian who does *not* do what David did? (verses 8-10; see also Jeremiah 17:5-6)

8. See if you can distill some "big picture" ideas from your answers to Questions 5-7 about: (1) God's *purpose* in "hiding" Himself, (2) our responsibility *during* those times, and (3) the inherent dangers of running *from* God instead of *toward* God.

(1) God's purposes in "hiding" –

(2) My responsibility when he does –

(3) The dangers of running *away* from him –

9. Knowing that our our sinful nature will seek to push us *away* from God during crushing times, what might be some safeguards to take to prevent yourself from giving in to the temptation to push God away?

10. There are almost certainly people in your life who are facing this temptation because of something painful that's come into their lives. Write out a couple of practical ways to you could sensitively help. You might want to use Job's "friends" as examples of what *not* to do!

11. What key insights have you gained from this study about this unusual, but very real method of God's for creating radical dependence on Him?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Assurance of God's constant presence – Psalm 77:19 and Isaiah 43:1-2

OPTIONAL

Job's friends are classic examples of how we too often *mishandle* the truth of God. You can learn a great deal about compassionate care by studying the errors in their comments to Job, realizing that their basic assumption about the cause of Job's dilemma was wrong from the very beginning.