

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

JONATHAN

“Ancient Friendship in Modern Times”

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

JONATHAN

“Ancient Friendship in Modern Times”

ABIDING PRINCIPLE – How many friends we *have* is never an issue to God. His concern is whether or not we are *being* the type of friend He desires to the people He brings into our lives. True friendship requires mutual honesty and commitment, not only towards each other, but more importantly, toward God.

“*Friends drive you to or from God.*” – Jerry White

Jonathan was the eldest son of Israel's first king, Saul. By birth he was the heir apparent, destined to become Israel's second king. He was also a valiant warrior, highly respected and popular within his father's army. But in the sovereign plan of God, he was to play a role altogether different from what he expected.

Jonathan's father forfeited his right to be king, so God chose another man to rule over His people — an obscure young man named David. These two young men, David and Jonathan, not only were destined to become brothers-in-law and share a family heritage, but also to become the dearest and purest of friends. Jonathan's name means "gift from God," and that is surely what he was to David.

Jonathan stands tall in the pages of Scripture, not only as an example of what friendship can *become* when the Lord is at the center rather than the circumference, but also as one of the clearest examples of what a true friend looks like. In our age of “likes” and social media, Jonathan demonstrates the fidelity is more important than immediacy.

KEY SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 19-20; 1 Samuel 23:7-18

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. David's perspective on his encounter with Goliath is clear to everyone by what he said *before* the fight (1 Samuel 17:26,36- 37,45-47). What kind of things do you suspect Jonathan might have heard David say to Saul in his lengthy conversation with him *after* the fight? (see 17:57-18:1).
2. What was most likely the single greatest thing that drew Jonathan to David, and eventually became the foundation of their lifelong friendship? (see 1 Samuel 18:1).

3. What had Jonathan apparently become convinced of during David's stay in the palace? (compare 1 Samuel 18:4 with 13:14, 15:28, and 23:17).

4. The Bible says that Jonathan "made a covenant with David" because of his great love for him (1 Samuel 18:3). The Hebrew word for "covenant" here is an alliance or agreement of a very serious and binding nature between two parties. (It's the same word used for God's "agreements" with Noah, Abraham, and Moses.)
 - a. What do you think this meant to Jonathan?

 - b. For the relationship between David and Jonathan?

5. Jonathan exhibits many of the traits of a true friend in the following passages from 1 Samuel. Look at each passage and extract a quality of true friendship from it.
 - a. 18:1 –

 - b. 19:1-2 –

 - c. 19:4-5 –

 - d. 20:34 –

 - e. 23:16 –

 - f. 23:17 –

- g. 23:16 -18 (this is the last time the two friends ever saw each other face-to-face in this life.)
6. What do you think Jonathan actually *did* in 23:16 to help David "find strength in God"?
7. God puts a very high premium on the impact people have on each other. What can you glean from the following verses regarding what God thinks about *your* friendships?
- Deuteronomy 13:6-10 –
 - Proverbs 13:20 –
 - 1 Corinthians 15:33 –
8. Write out a one-sentence summary of the main truth about godly friendship that you can see in each of the following references. Begin each statement with the phrase "*Godly friends . . .* "
- Exodus 33:11 – "*Godly friends . . .* "
 - Psalm 119:63 – "*Godly friends . . .* "
 - Proverbs 17:17 – "*Godly friends . . .* "
 - Proverbs 27:17 – "*Godly friends . . .* "
 - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 – "*Godly friends . . .* "

f. Hebrews 3:13 – "Godly friends . . . "

9. If the Bible's words of caution about friendship are left unheeded, it can lead to serious hurt, anger, and resentment in our lives. What do the following verses have to say that sheds light on our friendships?

a. Proverbs 27:6 –

b. John 16:32 –

c. Proverbs 27:8-10 –

d. Deuteronomy 31:6 –

10. Write down the names of your two or three closest friends. Then look over each of the six traits of godly friends in question 8. Under the column labeled "To Them," give yourself one point for each of the six that *you* demonstrate regularly in that friendship. Under the column "To Me," give your friends one point for each of the six *they* demonstrate regularly to you.

	To Them	To Me
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

11. What are the key takeaways about your friendships from this lesson? What needs to be strengthened? What needs to be added? What needs to be removed? On the next page jot down some ideas of what you intend to do in one of your closest relationships, and how you plan to go about it.

a. Things I need to strengthen –

b. Things that need to be added –

c. Things that need to be removed –

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The constancy of friendship – Proverbs 17:17
- The caution of friendship – Proverbs 13:20

OPTIONAL

Jesus called his eleven faithful followers "friends" three times in John 15:13-15. The emphasis shifts from "servants" to "friends," with love as the key catalyst. That's because a special love exists between friends that is different from the broad, unconditional love that believers are to show to other believers, people in general, and even their enemies

Friendship love is a love that has to go *both* directions. It gives *and* receives. It is a love that has shared expectations. Jesus made this clear when He said, "You are my friends *if* you do what I command" (John 15:14).

A fruitful study awaits you in a study of Jesus in the Gospel of John with the goal of looking for his relationship with his disciples in a friendship. What were their expectations of each other? Look for those that were fulfilled and those that were unrealistic. How was their relationship with Jesus a "two-way street"?