

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.

Before you make copies and use the studies...

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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

JOSEPH SON OF JACOB

“The Antidote to a Victim Mentality”

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

JOSEPH SON OF JACOB

“The Antidote to a Victim Mentality.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – For the obedient child of God, tragedy, trauma, and testing are all opportunities for growth within the care of a sovereign and loving heavenly Father.

“Adversity is God’s university.” – Paul Evans

Jacob's twelve sons grew into the nation of Israel. Each of their lives is a drama unto itself, but his second-youngest son's life contains lessons of lasting importance. The story of Joseph is vibrant, punctuated with sibling rivalry, romance, sexual and political intrigue, friendship, and cunning.

Joseph was frequently mistreated, misunderstood, and misjudged. He experienced the extremes of life. He was acquainted with the ecstasy of success, the agony of deceit, and the devastation of disgrace. In the words of the apostle Paul, Joseph indeed knew how to handle having very little and how to handle having plenty (Philippians 4:12). And all of the many painful circumstances in this young man's life can be traced directly to the deeds and decisions of others!

If Joseph lived in the 21st century, we would probably consider him a "victim" of unjust circumstances—a man whose personal "rights" had been ignored or violated. But how did *Joseph* see himself? And more importantly, was he really a "victim"?

KEY SCRIPTURE: Genesis 37:1-28, 39:1-23, 40:1-23

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Below are the accounts of three of the most traumatic events in the life of Joseph. Examine each one thoughtfully and write out:
 - a brief description of the circumstances.
 - who you think was responsible, and why.
 - Joseph’s probable thoughts and feelings.

EVENT 1 — Genesis 37:18-28 (see also 37:3-4)

The Circumstances	
The “Culprits”	
Joseph’s thoughts and feelings	

EVENT 2 — Genesis 40:1-23

The Circumstances	
The “Culprits”	
Joseph’s thoughts and feelings	

EVENT 3 — Genesis 40:1-23

The Circumstances	
The “Culprits”	
Joseph’s thoughts and feelings	

2. If you had been Joseph's best friend, quietly observing what happened to him in the land of Dothan, in Potiphar's house, and in the Pharaoh's prison, would *you* have immediately seen Joseph as a “victim”—someone whose "rights" had been violated? Explain.
3. How did *Joseph* view the tragic circumstances of his life and the violation of his "rights" (Genesis 45:1-5, 50:18-20)?
4. If a modern person were somehow transported back in time and witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus on Golgotha, without knowing (or recalling!) anything about the full biblical story, would

he view Jesus of Nazareth a "victim" and the crucifixion a tragic human error? Explain. (Be honest!)

5. What did Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, consider to be the main reason for the crucifixion (Acts 4 :2 7-28)?

6. If Joseph and Jesus were both living a life of true obedience to God, in what sense could they *not* be "victims"?

LEARNING FROM JOSEPH...

Joseph's response to the injustice, cruelty and "bad luck" he faced and endured is an encouraging yet sobering reminder that God is sovereign in the lives of His children. Joseph's statement to his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20), is a powerful truth about life within the circumference of God's family.

How do you think Joseph would be counseled today? Would you and I assist him to arrive at the same conclusions he reached on his own? Or would we encourage him to "stand on his rights," and blame his father and brothers, or Potiphar's wife, or the Pharaoh's cupbearer?

Victimization—the ideology that I am a "victim" of others—has become a 21st-century explanation of blame for much of life's pain. Yet, while providing a temporary balm for our emotional aches, it can subtly erode our confidence in God's competence and the conviction that He really cares.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS...

7. Joseph's statement, "*God intended it for good,*" was perhaps somewhat easier to make because he actually got to *see* and be part of the "good." But what about circumstances in which no good seems to come? Are the principles from Joseph's life still valid? Explain.

8. Can you think of any characters in the Bible where no "good" came to them (in this life)?

9. As Christians, when we blame other people or difficult circumstances for our pain, do you think sometimes it's really an unconscious attempt to blame God? Explain. (See Job 2:9-10.)

10. Can you think of a recent circumstance in your life where *you* concluded (or were told) that *you* had been a "victim" or that your rights had been violated?

11. Perhaps you know someone who feels victimized. How can you creatively and sensitively share with this person the principles from this lesson?

12. Take a few moments right now and tell the Lord about an incorrect perspective you've had about something in your past, especially if you've felt victimized or unjustly treated by Him. Ask Him to help you see it in the context of His sovereign love.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- God's purposes in pain – James 1:2-4
- Our responsibility in pain – 1 Peter 4:19