

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

KING SAUL

“The Need to be Noticed.”

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

KING SAUL

“The Need to be Noticed.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – The desire for recognition, popularity, and notoriety among people will eventually put you at odds with God Himself.

“God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves.” – Dwight L. Moody

In many of our relationships we are not afforded the benefit of the "long view" – the opportunity to see the beginning and end of people's lives, as well as everything in between. Consequently, we often arrive at premature conclusions about people that in the final analysis are totally mistaken. This can be as true of our ideas about new believers as it is about presidential candidates.

Following the period of the Judges, God's people wanted to be like the neighboring countries. They clamored for a king (1 Samuel 8:1-5). They wanted someone "larger than life," with an impressive appearance and a charismatic personality. God reluctantly granted their persistent request, setting His approval on the tall, strong, handsome young man that the people found so appealing. And so Saul became Israel's first king. God gave him His Spirit, and He "changed" him (1 Samuel 10:6).

But soon Saul got carried away with his official power, and gradually changed in a different way. He was driven by the desire to be in charge, to be noticed, to be "somebody." The real outcome of such an outlook is preserved forever in the words of Saul himself near the end of his life: *"Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly"* (1 Samuel 26:21).

KEY SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 9:1-2, 13:1-14, 15:1-34

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Saul had natural abilities that were further augmented by divine gifts from God. Using the Scripture passages from 1 Samuel listed below, give thought to what you can learn about Saul's natural abilities, and what God gave him spiritually, and then combine your insights to construct "A Profile of King Saul."

Saul's Natural Abilities – Qualities He Was Born With

1 Samuel 9:2 —

9:20-21 —

Saul's Supernatural Gifts – Qualities God Gave Him

10:6 —

10:7 —

10:26 —

11:6 —

A Profile of King Saul

2. Saul was chosen and appointed as king by God, yet he slowly forgot who *his* ultimate King was, and began to rely on his own reputation with the people. Trace this downward spiral in Saul's life using the verses that follow.

10:1-13 —

13:1-12 —

15:1-9 —

28:1-7 —

3. Samuel makes a brief, passing statement in 1 Samuel 15:17 that actually contains a vital clue to Saul's demise. It's in the first part of the verse. Read it carefully. What do you think Samuel is getting at, and why is *what* he says so vital?
4. Often we attempt to promote ourselves under a veneer of spirituality. How does Saul try to rationalize his own ambition and sin using this tactic (1 Samuel 15:12-21)?
5. There is pretty clear evidence for the motivation behind this downward spiral in Saul's life in 1 Samuel 13:11-12 and 15:30. What does it seem drove Saul to disregard God?

6. Contrast these other people's perspective on notoriety with that of Saul's.

- John the Baptist (Luke 1:76,80; 3:15-16; John 3:23, 26-30):
- The apostle Paul (Philippians 1:15-18):
- Jesus (Mark 9:33-40):

LEARNING FROM KING SAUL...

Saul began his career with a sense of awe at what God had done in selecting him to be the first king of Israel. It was an honor, and Saul was humbly grateful at first. But he slowly adopted an exaggerated view of his own importance and skill. And in so doing, he lost sight of a vital principle: No matter what the position, a *child* of God is always first and foremost a *servant* of God.

Saul enjoyed the *title* "King of Israel," but forgot the *role* of "servant of God" that it rested upon. Soon he was merely going through the motions of spirituality, but they lacked any real meaning because he had divorced himself from their proper source. He coveted the praises of men and spurned the approval of God. He forgot that he was once "small in his own eyes," and instead grew to enjoy being "big" in the eyes of others.

But the story of Saul is not simply one more tragic biblical biography. It is an illustration of a negative tendency within each of us. We tend to gravitate toward appreciation and applause, and may even be willing to eventually exchange the commendation of God for the plaudits of our peers. We, too, want to be noticed, respected, and popular. And even though these aspirations may appear harmless at first glance, if left alone they will blossom into bitter fruit.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS...

7. Do you think it is possible for a Christian to gain "notoriety" with God—to impress Him the way we do other people? Explain.
8. Saul was abruptly elevated into a position of notoriety rather than being slowly shaped into the position. What principles about aspiring *to* leadership and *appointing* leaders can you glean from the story of this man's life?
 - Principles about aspiring *to* leadership:

- Principles about appointing leaders:

9. Below, describe two spheres of your own life where you see yourself seeking to be noticed, and describe briefly how you've gone about it.
10. What are some things that you have said or done recently in order to make yourself "look good" by attaching a veneer of spiritual significance to your words or actions?
11. Look back at your responses to questions 9 and 10. In light of this study, what changes do you feel you need to make in your life in this area? How do you plan to make them?
12. Perhaps *you* have actually driven others to seek to be noticed by consciously or unconsciously *withholding* commendation and praise from them. If so, what can you do about it?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The trap of notoriety – 1 Samuel 15:24
- Christ's prescription for notoriety – Mark 9:35