

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

PAUL

“One Holy Passion.”

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

PAUL

“One Holy Passion.”

ABIDING PRINCIPLE – Sanctification—to become like Christ—is meant to be the ongoing process and passion of my life. God initiates this work in me, and He will bring it to completion as I cooperate with Him

“The whole life of Christ was a cross and martyrdom; and do you look for rest and selfish pleasure?”
—William Barclay

The final chapter of Luke's gospel records an abbreviated peek at two disenchanted disciples who had seen the risen Lord. After briefly listening to Jesus explain the Old Testament predictions of His entire life, their response was, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). Jesus spent the forty days following His resurrection engaged in punctuated instruction of a wide variety of people in different places. It is doubtful, however, that any of them received the intensity and quality of post-resurrection teaching that was reserved for a lone apostle named Paul.

In 2 Corinthians 12 it appears that Paul was taken up into God's very presence and given insight and instruction so penetrating and rare that God had to also take special steps to prevent him from becoming arrogant and power-hungry. In addition to his grand revelations and visions, Paul also was entrusted with great sufferings throughout his life. We may safely surmise from all of this that Paul, apart from Christ Himself, is one of our best conduits to the mind of God the Father on the subject of sanctification. It should come as no surprise that half of the New Testament occurrences of the sanctification word family come from this privileged apostle.

So what does the champion of the doctrine of justification— absolute forgiveness through faith in Christ—have to say about sanctification? How did Paul view the portion of his life between justification and glorification? And how will this help us understand our own sanctification

KEY SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3 (read a number of times, slowly)

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. In this powerful and personally translucent passage, Paul lays out for all time the driving passions of his life as a believer. Do you sense from this passage that Paul is passive about his spiritual life because he is content knowing he is going to spend eternity with God? Why or why not?
2. Look at verses 10 and 12. Did Paul consider being “saved” a once-for-all thing or a lifelong process? Explain your answer

3. a. In this chapter, Paul reveals the dual passions that are behind his every thought, word, and deed as a believer. What are they

Passion 1 (verse 10):

Passion 2 (verse 12):

b. Read Acts 9:15-16. From this account of Paul's conversion, what do we discover would be a big part of his life?

c. How did Paul respond to this information and insight?

4. Paul provides an excellent measurement of Christian maturity in Philippians 3:15. Using this verse and your responses to question 3, complete the following sentence:

A mature Christian is one who . . .

5. In verse 12, Paul says, "*I press on* (literally: chasing on after the prize) *to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*" He focuses all of his efforts on cooperating with God. Paul's goal as a believer was the same as God's goal for him. Then he says that the measure of maturity for us as believers is how closely we follow His example! Just what is God's will for us in this matter? Look up the following passages and explain what they have to say about God's will for us as believers

Romans 8:28-29

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

1 Thessalonians 4.3a

(Note: The word sanctified here is elsewhere translated holy.)

6. God the Holy Spirit is the divine agent of our spiritual transformation (sanctification). According to the following Scripture passages, what specific role does He play in the process?

John 3:3-6

John 16:13-15

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

2 Thessalonians 2:13

7. According to the following passages, what role do we play in our salvation?

Ephesians 4:17-2

Philippians 2:12

2 Peter 1:3-9

8. Using what you have discovered in the chapter thus far, write a thorough definition of sanctification:

Sanctification is...

LOOKING BACK...

Paul understood the inexpressible joy of justification, of being totally forgiven of sin and declared righteous in the eyes of a holy God. He looked forward to the thrill of a new body to complement his redeemed soul, and he eagerly awaited his eternal existence with God and the faithful saints from all ages, lands, and tongues. But he also knew that God's will for his life "in between" was that he conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. He was confident that the Holy Spirit had wooed him to Christ, had given him new birth, and was in the process of using life in all its variegated facets to make him more like Jesus. Consequently, Paul's two passions in life were to know Christ intimately and to cooperate with God in the process of his own spiritual transformation (i.e., sanctification)—to lay hold of the goal for which Christ had laid hold of him. This was what it meant to be saved. Indeed, Paul saw all of life through the lenses of salvation.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

9. Paul had a single goal in mind when he thought of his own sanctification. What was it? (2 Corinthians 4:8-11; Philippians-1:20)

10. What do you think this means for *your* daily life?

11. What assurance can you draw about your own spiritual transformation from the following verses?

Ephesians 2:8-10

Philippians 1:6

Hebrews 13:20-21

12. Look back at your response to question 4 on page 5. Using your answer as a yardstick, how does your own level of maturity measure up? Explain your answer.

13. Review this study. Has your definition of sanctification changed? If so, how? If not, why not?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Sanctification is becoming more and more like Jesus – 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
- God *will* complete my sanctification – Philippians 1:6