

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

Listening to the Still Small Voice of Conscience

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

Listening to the Still Small Voice of Conscience

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – Your conscience needs to be protected, nurtured and heeded. As the moral rudder of your life, it will either steer you into disaster or away from it.

“Shame arises from the fear of man, conscience from the fear of God.”

” – Samuel Johnson

Nearly one fourth of the entire New Testament came from the pen of a single person. From the letters he wrote and the record of his tireless efforts in the Book of Acts, we discover that he was a man of rare passion, focused ministry, and a prolific writer. We know him as the apostle Paul.

But there is also a lesser-known characteristic of Paul's life that has enormous implications and application for us living nearly twenty-one centuries later in our world of secrecy parading under the banner of “privacy.” Paul had a very special personal conviction about hearing and heeding the prompting of his conscience. He knew only too well—through his own persecution of the early Church prior to his conversion and the moral failures of those he sought to minister to—the dire consequences of stifling the still, small voice of God within us. Perhaps that is why nearly all of the thirty times the word “conscience” appears in the New Testament, come from the heart of Paul.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Acts 7:54- 8:3; Acts 9:1-19

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. The story of Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus is preceded by his crusade of terror against the followers of Christ in and around Jerusalem. (Back then he was known as Saul.) Read the verses below and use them to compile a description of what Paul saw, heard, and did.
 - a. Acts 7:57 - 8:1 –

 - b. Acts 8:3; 9:1 –

 - c. Acts 22:20 –

 - d. Acts 22:19 –

 - e. Acts 26:9-11 –

2. Now look at Paul's own testimony of his conversion in Acts 26:1-23. In verse 14 Paul reveals something important that Jesus *said* to him on the road to Damascus on the day He met Paul, that he didn't mention in his earlier testimony (Acts 22:6-7). What is it?

3. The word "kick" in Acts 26:14 means to *continually* kick backwards with the heel. A "goad" was an iron poker used to make oxen move. In view of your responses to question 1, what do you think the "goad" was that Jesus was referring to?
 - a. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that Paul was continually kicking against it?

 - b. In your own words, what do you think Jesus was actually saying to Paul?

4. What insight does this give you regarding why Paul so "quickly" acknowledged Jesus as Lord that day?

5. Compare Paul's statements in Acts 26:9 and 23:1. Was his conscience totally reliable? Explain.

6. Paul wrote more about the conscience than any other biblical writer. His use of a variety of different words to describe different conditions of the conscience provides us with important insight into this vital component of our souls. Look at the following passages and write out (1) what "kind" of conscience Paul mentions, (2) what you think it means, and (3) how it may have gotten that way:
 - a. Titus 1:15 –

- b. 1 Timothy 4:1-2 –
 - c. 1 Corinthians 8:9-12 –
7. In Acts 24:16 Paul makes his strongest and clearest statement about his commitment to his *own* conscience. Keep in mind that the word "strive" here means to "continually use every effort and skill," and that the word used to *describe* his conscience means "unharmful" or "not causing one to stumble on the path." What do you think Paul meant when he said he "strived" to have this kind of conscience? What do you envision him doing or perhaps *not* doing?
- a. What are some of the things that can "harm" someone's conscience, and how do they cause such harm?
8. Hebrews 5:11-14 is an exciting passage dealing with conscience. Read it a few times and then answer the following questions.
- a. Hebrews 5:12-14 - What is the *source* of a healthy conscience? How is it developed?
 - b. Hebrews 5:14 - What is a *healthy* conscience evidence of?
 - c. Hebrews 5:12-14 - By inference, what is an *unhealthy* conscience evidence of?
9. Jesus lays out a general principle in Luke 16:10 that certainly applies to both the development *and* destruction of the conscience. What is it?
10. In 1 Timothy 1:18-19 Paul describes the consequences of *neglecting* to nurture, protect, and heed our conscience. What is Paul saying here?
11. Reflect and read over your responses to questions 6-9. How would you "rate" your own conscience, using the insights you've gained from this study? Check all the following descriptive words that apply:

STRONG (“speaks” loudly <i>and</i> often)	WEAK (very little influence on my life)
<input type="checkbox"/> pure	<input type="checkbox"/> violated
<input type="checkbox"/> sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> seared
<input type="checkbox"/> “clear”	<input type="checkbox"/> guilty
<input type="checkbox"/> trained	<input type="checkbox"/> untrained
<input type="checkbox"/> based on the “solid food” of Scripture (knowledge)	<input type="checkbox"/> based on the “milk” of Scripture (ignorance)
<input type="checkbox"/> honest in the “little things”	<input type="checkbox"/> dishonest in the “little things”
<input type="checkbox"/> honest in the “big things”	<input type="checkbox"/> dishonest in the “big things”

12. Review your self-evaluation above. To neglect your conscience, according to Paul, is to plan for disaster. Jesus said small violations of your conscience lead to bigger and bigger compromises. Are there any of the following areas where you have been compromising or violating your conscience? If so, how?

- my thought life (lust, envy, etc.)
- my finances
- at work (lunch breaks, expenses, phone calls, etc.)
- at home
- with authorities (speeding, taxes, etc.)
- free time
- relationships with opposite sex (emotional involvement, time together, etc.)
- relationship with friends
- relationship with spouse (honesty, etc.)
- entertainment (TV, movies, computer, reading, etc.)
- substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc.)
- involvement at church

13. Paul said he used all his energy and determination to *maintain* a clear conscience. What do you need to do when it comes to your own conscience? Write out what you can do to *secure* a clear conscience if needed, and how you plan to do to *nurture* a healthy and strong conscience.

a. What I must do to *secure* a clear conscience –

b. –What I plan to do to *nurture* my conscience –

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The *basis* of a healthy conscience – Hebrews 5:14
- The effort to *keep* a clear conscience – Acts 24:16

OPTIONAL

Having a clear conscience does *not* mean that you no longer have memories of the things you did that violated your conscience in the first place. Paul certainly understood this. Look at the following verses in light of the relationship between your conscience and your memory.

- 1 Corinthians 4:3-4
- 1 Timothy 1:14-16
- 1 Timothy 1:13
- 1 Corinthians 15:8-10