

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.

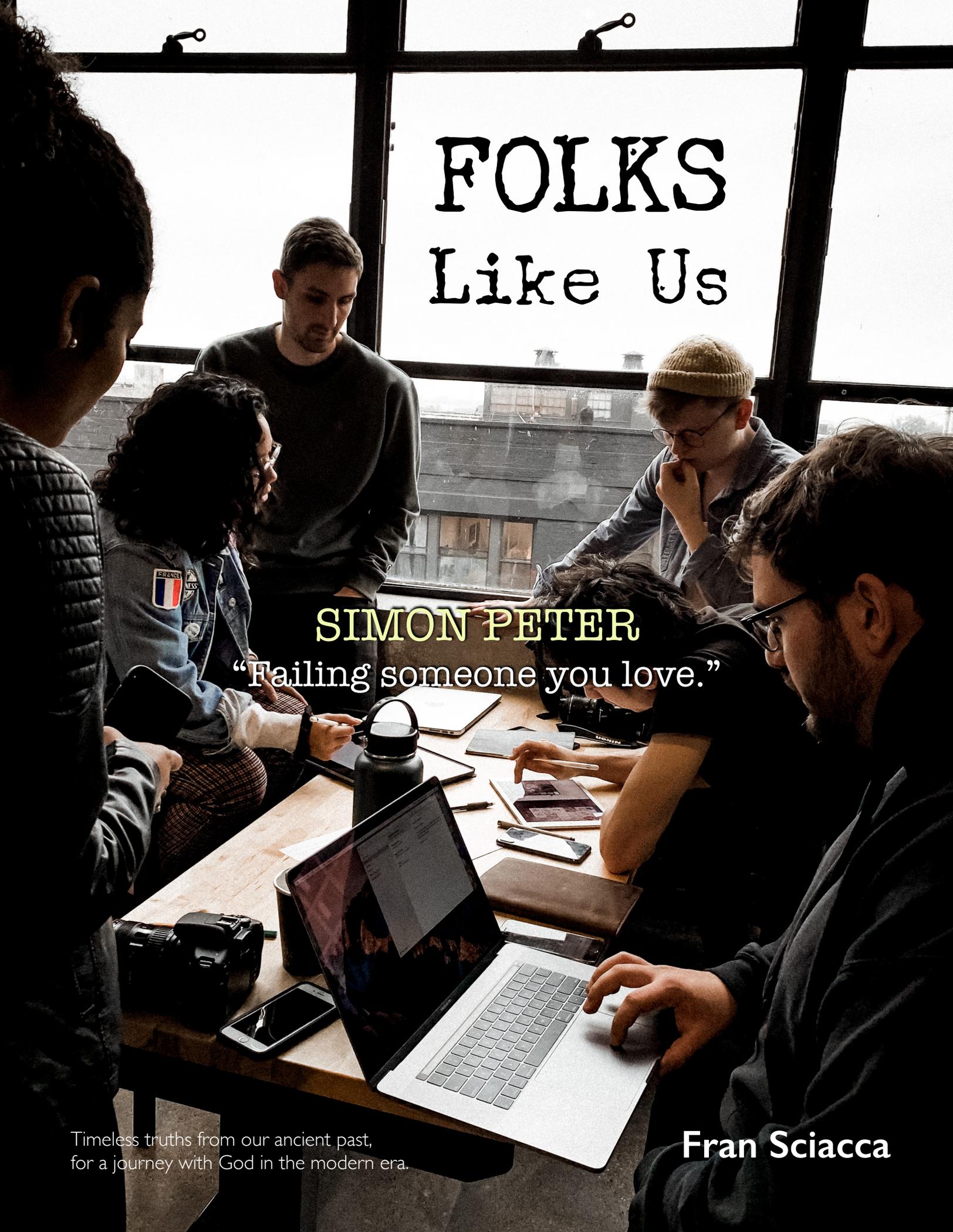
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- **[QUESTIONS/COMMENTS]** – Email them to: information@fransciacca.com

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

SIMON PETER

“Failing someone you love.”

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,



Fran Sciacca
Birmingham, AL

SIMON PETER

“Failing someone you love.”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – Putting too much confidence in others or in yourself will always lead to dashed expectations and fractured relationships.

“In prosperity our friends know us; in adversity we know our friends.”

— Churton Collins

The apostle Peter was a man of intense passion. He invested 100 percent of himself in everything he did. People like Peter, who live on the rim of extremes, are always familiar with both the exhilaration of success and the sting of defeat because of the sense of abandon with which they approach all of life.

Peter experienced miraculous "jail-breaks," Pentecostal fire, evangelistic revival, and intense persecution. He was one of the "inner three" disciples, and an eye-witness of both the transfigured and the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Peter was fiercely devoted to Jesus. He was also the most outspoken about his commitment! Peter announced that he would die for his Master if need be—a promise he was no doubt willing to fulfill.

In spite of the depth of his commitment and the fervor of his devotion, Peter failed our Lord in a profoundly personal way. It was not neglect of duty—failure to do what you're told. Peter's failure was a breach of trust—the conscious *denial* of the bond of love. At a time when Jesus needed Peter, he denied three times that he even knew Him!

Consequently, Peter remains forever as an example of what to expect from others *and* ourselves when we place security in people rather than in God.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:57-75

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Slowly read the following passages a couple of times. Think carefully while you do. Then, write what you can learn about Peter, paying close attention for insights about Peter's estimate of himself.

Mark 8:31-34 –

John 13:1-9 –

Mark 14:27-31 –

2. Mark 14:32-42 further describes the circumstances surrounding Peter's denial of Jesus. Read this passage carefully and record anything that helps to better explain Peter's failure.

3. Peter violently confronted the temple guard in the garden of Gethsemane as they prepared to arrest Jesus (John 18:1-11). He undoubtedly believed that this was his opportunity to fulfill his boast that he would die for Jesus, and he was ready! Yet just a few hours later, Peter publicly denied that he even *knew* Jesus. Look at Mark 14:66-72. Who was it that actually "unraveled" Peter and launched the process that ended in his disgrace?

What can you learn from this situation about the temptation to fail those we love? (Keep in mind how "prepared" Peter was in the garden while Jesus was praying.)

4. How do you think Peter felt when the rooster crowed (Mark 14:72)? Why?

5. John 21:15-19 contains a beautiful ending to this story. Describe this glorious message of hope for times when we "fail" in our relationship with God.

6. There is genuine encouragement in knowing that God will always forgive us when we fail Him. But what about when we fail others? Or they fail us? Is there always a guarantee of restoration? Are there any safeguards to prevent it from happening? Look up the verses below and write out at least one principle from each that can apply to this issue of failing others and others failing us.

VERSES	PRINCIPLES ABOUT FAILING PEOPLE
Proverbs 18:19	
Proverbs 20:6	
Isaiah 2:22	
John 2:23-25	

Romans 15:1

Colossians 3:13

LEARNING FROM PETER...

Peter possessed an inflated view of his understanding and commitment that was compounded by a weak grasp of his own frailty and sin. He actually believed that there were some sins he was *incapable* of committing! Consequently, he was prepared for the obvious but vulnerable to the unexpected. His boasting gave way to cowardice in the blinking of an eye, and he denied the Lord he had promised to die for.

But God knows that failure and sin are part and parcel of our fallen nature. So He restores us whenever we repent and ask for forgiveness. Three times Jesus gave Peter the chance to affirm his love for Him—the same number of times he had denied Him. The twofold message for us today is that we constantly fail God *and* each other. What we do with this message of failure is up to us.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS...

7. Have you failed God in a significant way lately? How? Are you willing to let Him "restore" you, like He did Peter?

8. Be honest here. Are there any sins that you think you could or would never commit? If so, list some of the main ones below. Explain why you feel this way.

9. Describe how someone has failed *you* recently.

10. How do you think God wants you to handle this situation?

11. Here is a partial list of ways we tend to fail others. Check all the ones that describe a recent failure on your part. In the space provided, put the initials of the person you failed.

- Not keeping secrets. _____
- Breaking promises. _____
- Not defending someone I love. _____
- Not forgiving. _____
- Talking behind someone's back. _____
- Not being honest. _____
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Criticizing. _
- Other: _____ Person _____

12. Look over the list above. Pick one person you've failed in one of these ways. Next, take some time and write out what needs to change so that you don't *continue* failing that person, and how you intend to go about it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Trusting in people – Isaiah 2:22
- Being responsible to those you've failed – Matthew 5:23-24