

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

AQUILA & PRISCILLA
“Ministry As A Lifestyle.”

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

AQUILA & PRISCILLA

“Ministry As A Lifestyle.”

ABIDING PRINCIPLE – Ministry to others is not just the prerogative of paid professionals, or “super Christians.” It is the privilege, joy, and responsibility of anyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus.

“There is not a single passage in the Old Testament or the New Testament where the filling of the Holy Spirit is spoken of and not connected with the testimony of service.” — R.A. Torrey

The Bible does not contain many stories about married couples in which both play a vital role in God’s Story. Instead, it tends to focus on one partner or the other. We read about Peter, but never about his wife. We read about a woman named Mary whose husband oversaw Herod's household, but we know little about him. One exception is a couple we meet in the book of Acts named Aquila and Priscilla. It is interesting that of the seven times their names appear in Scripture, they are always together. And they are always engaged in ministry. Wherever they traveled, from Rome to Greece to Asia, they seemed to have one thing in mind—helping people come to faith and then to grow. As they opened their hearts to people wherever they traveled, their homes became churches! While it is certainly true that they ministered tirelessly and continually, I suspect that they never thought of themselves as “ministers” in our modern sense of the word. Rather, they probably saw themselves simply as Christians, growing in their knowledge of and love for God, and living lives of faithfulness to Him.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Acts 18

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Use Acts 18:1-4 to answer the questions below.

Where did Priscilla and Aquila meet Paul, and under what circumstances?

What was it that brought Paul and this married couple together?

Use your imagination to create a short, possible scenario that explains Priscilla and Aquila's conversion to Christ after arriving in Corinth from Rome (study the passage carefully for details).

2. Read Acts 18:5-11. What do you imagine became of Paul's relationship with this married couple during the eighteen months he remained in Corinth?

3. Read the following verses and chart a short history of Aquila and Priscilla's life. (The verses are arranged in chronological order.)

Acts 18:1-2 –

18 :3 –

18:5-11 –

18:18-22 –

18:24-26 –

1 Corinthians 16:19 (Paul is writing from Ephesus) –

Romans 16:3-5 (Paul is writing to Rome) –

4. Look at Paul's instructions to Timothy as a young pastor in 2 Timothy 2:2 and 3:10-17. List all the similarities you can see in Paul's impact on Aquila and Priscilla, *and* on Timothy.

5. What does each of the following passages teach about ministry (where it comes from, who it is for, why it exists, and so on)?

Exodus 31:1-6 –

Exodus 35:34 –

Jeremiah 3:15 –

Micah 3:8 –

Matthew 25:14-29 –

Mark 8:34-35; John 12:24-25 –

Acts 4:31 –

2 Corinthians 4:5 –

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 –

2 Corinthians 6:3-13 –

Colossians 1:28-29 –

1 Peter 4:10 –

6. Some of Paul's teaching of spiritual gifts and their use in ministry is recorded in Ephesians 4:11-16. Read this passage several times and answer the questions below.

List the gifts God gave to the church (that is, to believers).

What does Paul say to church leaders in verse 12?

What does Paul say to individual believers in verse 12?

What is God's ultimate goal in this cooperative process (verses 13-16)?

7. Summarize what you have discovered in this study about the relationship between being a Christian and being involved in the spiritual growth of others. (Quickly look over all of your responses to the previous questions before you begin.)

LOOKING BACK...

It is virtually impossible to read the Bible and not see the obvious truth that God expects His children to reinvest into His kingdom what He has given them, which typically involves other people. In fact, Jesus warns us that if we try to hoard what we have, we will lose our lives. Perhaps this is why there are so many who claim to know Jesus but whose lives are characterized by an absence of joy and a presence of depression or boredom. Pouring our lives out for others is not merely the job of "paid professionals." It is the calling of anyone who claims to be a Jesus-follower. In fact, it often turns out that it's at the intersection of our life with that of someone else's that God does His most remarkable, joyful, and permanent work in ours.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

8. What do you discover from 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 about the source and power of ministry?

What encourages you as you read this?

9. Isolate the specific *type* of ministry described in the verses below. Whenever possible, list modern equivalents.

Job 29:15 –

Job 29:16; Proverbs 31:20 –

Isaiah 50:4 –

Matthew 19:14 –

Matthew 25:35 –

Matthew 26:6 –

Mark 6:34 –

Luke 8:1-3 –

Acts 4:32-35 –

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 –

Colossians 4:12 –

Philemon 7 –

Hebrews 13:3 –

James 1:27 –

10. Read Mark 14:8; John 6:5-10,11; and 2 Corinthians 8:12. What important principle about *your own* ministry today do you find in these verses?

11. Read Isaiah 58:10-11. What principle and promise for *your* life from pouring your life into *others* do you see in this passage?

12. Think back on your spiritual life over the past couple weeks. What percentage of your time would you estimate has been centered around *you* and your relationship with God (prayer, Bible study, fellowship, etc.)? Write the percentage in the space provided. What percentage of your time would you estimate has been spent investing in the needs of others (ministry)? Write that percentage in the appropriate space.
Time spent on my own spiritual life: _____%
Time spent on the spiritual lives of others: _____%

13. Look over your responses in this last section. What has changed from examining your own spiritual life in regard to a new perspective on the place of meaningful ministry to others?

14. If your percentage from question 12 is out of balance in favor of "self," what can you eliminate from your life to reduce that percentage?

What can you do to replace it with something that is rooted in ministry to others? (You may need to refer to your answers to question 9 and seek advice from people doing those ministries in your church or community.)

Remember that Priscilla and Aquila *learned* how to minister to people by spending time with Paul, for whom ministry was simply a way of life, a lifestyle. Think of the people you are in touch with each week. Are they moving you toward true ministry or away from it?

In light of this study, who is someone you may need to spend *more* time with, and who is someone you need to spend *less* time with? What can you do this week to make changes?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The healing power of ministry for me – Isaiah 58:10-11
- God's expectations in ministry – 2 Corinthians 8:12