

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.

Before you make copies and use the studies...

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- **[DONATIONS]** – Although there is no charge for the studies, feel free to make a non-deductible donation to help offset the annual cost of web-hosting, etc. at: [paypal.me/handsofthur](https://www.paypal.me/handsofthur)
- **[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

THE BELIEVERS IN ROME

“Does ‘all things’ really mean ALL things?”

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

THE BELIEVERS AT ROME

“Does ‘all things’ really mean ALL things?”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – The eternal purposes of God for humanity and the expression of a redeemed heart intersect in God's goal for every believer—Christlikeness.

“Salvation is not putting a man into heaven but putting heaven into a man.”

Maltie D. Babcock

The apostle Paul had a passion to propagate and equip "epicenter" churches— local congregations in influential cities that would become radiating hubs for the gospel. He focused on cities like the international seaport of Corinth; Philippi, a Roman colony on the main east-west trade route; and Ephesus, the hub for 230 independent cities within the Roman province of Asia. Equal only to Paul's enthusiasm to see the gospel preached was his insistence that the message be both accurate and true. It was probably the combination of these two passions that God used to prompt Paul to write his most magnificent and exhaustive letter to the epicenter church at Rome, a body of believers that he had never even met!

Because of its grand theological themes and thorough discussion of nearly every doctrine important to our faith, the book of Romans has often been called "The Magna Carta of Christianity." Clear instruction on how to live out the Christian faith in the warp and woof of everyday life is penned on every page of this letter. As a result, what God says to the believers at Rome also has widespread application for you and me, living nearly twenty centuries later.

The topic of salvation is more clearly addressed in the book of Romans than any other letter written by Paul. He wanted this influential church to have an accurate understanding of what the gospel entailed, so that what radiated from it to the rest of the world was clearly the truth.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Romans 8

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Read Romans 8:28. In simple words that you would use to talk with a child, explain what you understand this verse to be saying.
2. Romans 8 is likely Paul's most extensive chapter on the topic of what we call, “*assurance* of salvation.” In your own words, write what each of the following verses says about salvation by completing the sentence, “*Being saved means . . .*”

Romans 8:1 - “*Being saved means...*”

Romans 8:4 - “*Being saved means...*”

Romans 8:9 - “*Being saved means...*”

Romans 8:11 - "*Being saved means...*

Romans 8:15-16 - "*Being saved means...*

Romans 8:23 - "*Being saved means...*

Romans 8:31 - "*Being saved means...*

Romans 8:32 - "*Being saved means...*

Romans 8:33-34 - "*Being saved means...*

3. (Read Philippians 1:6) Reflecting back on what you wrote for #2 above, how does what Paul says to the believers at Philippi compare to what he was talking about in Romans 8?

What do you think the "*good work in you...*" actually is, that Paul is talking to the Philippians about?

4. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, does this "good work" appear to be finished, or a work in progress? Explain your answer.
5. The "good work" of Philippians 1:6 and "the good" of Romans 8:28 are the same. What is "the good" that God is working toward in our lives, according to *Romans 8:29*?
6. Paul made similar comments to other first century believers about this whole idea of becoming like Christ. What additional insight can you add from his teaching of the Christians at Corinth, Ephesus, and Colossae?

2 Corinthians 4:7-11 -

Ephesians 4:11-13 -

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 -

Colossians 3:9-10 -

Ephesians 4:20-24 -

7. Write a summary statement about how you would explain what Paul is referring to when he speaks of, "*the good*" in Romans 8:28.

Based on your findings, what do you think Paul is referring to with the phrase "*all things*"?

8. Since Romans 8 *explains* our salvation, summarize what we can expect, and how it helps explain our life on earth, from verses 28 and 29.
9. Look back at Question 1. How does your summary in Question 8 compare with your response to Question 1? Explain any changes that have occurred in your thinking as a result of what you've learned about your salvation from this study.

LOOKING BACK...

Contrary to popular opinion or wishful thinking, the phrase "*God works all things together for the good...*" is not Scripture's version of, "*every cloud has a silver lining.*" In a chapter virtually saturated with encouragement and assurance, Paul reminds his Roman readers and us, that God desires to enlist every circumstance, every relationship, every event, and every choice in our lives to make us more like Jesus. In fact, God sent his Son in *our* likeness (verse 3) in order to transform us into *His* likeness. The joy of facing no condemnation (verse 1) as we await our final adoption as sons of God (verse 23) is made complete by the conviction that until we resemble Christ, God can and will use "all things" to deal with sin's residue in us. This ongoing process is what theologians call our "sanctification."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Paul sheds some very sobering light on the subject of sanctification in the following passages. Describe *who* is doing the work in each passage and *what* is being done.

Ephesians 2:8-10 -

Philippians 2:12-13 -

2. Reread Ephesians 2:8-10. These verses address the total removal of our guilt (justification) and our continual transformation into the likeness of Christ (sanctification). Explain which verses apply to each of the two, and why.

verses that speak of my justification -

verses that speak of my sanctification -

3. How do you see your sanctification as a partnership between you and God, according to this passage?
4. List five of the most difficult or significant things that have happened in your life this past year.
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 -
 -
 -
 -

Place an X next to each event or circumstance that you honestly come to accept as part of the "all things" that God was using in your life to make you more like Jesus.

5. How would you chart your level of cooperation with God's sanctifying purposes in your life for the past twelve months? (Place an X on the line below.)

“*partnership*”
“*sole proprietor*”
(me and God)
(me alone)

6. Is there anything you need to confess to God regarding your attitude toward circumstances that He's allowed in your life this past year? If so, spend some thoughtful time in prayerful repentance. Ask the Lord for grace and wisdom to accept and embrace His good purposes for you.
7. Perhaps you've excluded a person either purposefully or unknowingly from the "all things" that God wants to use in your life to sanctify you. Take time to pray and acknowledge your failure to cooperate with God. Ask Him to give you a different perspective and attitude toward this person and His purposes.
8. Is there someone to whom you can explain what you've learned concerning the "all things" that God wants to use to make you more like Jesus? Write that person's name below. Ask this person to pray with you and for you, and to check on your progress regularly. Be specific about what you believe God wants to change in your life.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Sanctification's means *and* end – Romans 8:28-29
- *God's* commitment to *my* sanctification – Philippians 1:6