

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 LABORER

“Enlarging God’s Kingdom, Not My Own.”

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 LABORER

“*Enlarging God’s Kingdom, Not My Own.*”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – The rule of God in my heart means that my mission here on earth looks more and more like His. Rather than looking out for myself, I am looking to bring the good news of the gospel to those who share the space around me.

“I spent my life climbing the ladder of success, only to discover it was leaning against the wrong wall!” – Unknown

For many people, life is a ladder of achievements. They study and strive to move-up their ladder, one accomplishment at a time. And the path of monetary, social, and professional growth is fairly predictable. They then tend to measure progress by a host of socially approved emblems: marriage, home, cars, corporate status, and a collection of visible "toys." Unfortunately, for a growing number of believers the pursuit is the same; it is just has different “labels” on the path to make it sound more spiritual.

The bigger truth is each of us is chasing *something*. For some, it turns out to be "the wind." For others, it is an edifice that will transcend time. An eternal treasure. Jesus spoke three times as much about this one particular pursuit than He did about His own Father! What *is* this profession that is supposed to fuel the passions of those who are being changed into the likeness of Christ? What *are* we to be "running after"? And, more personally, what exactly are *you* pursuing?

KEY SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:19-34

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus spoke of two things we are supposed to *continually* seek (The Greek verb is a command with no end.). What are they, and what do you think each consists of?
2. Which one of the two do you think is in Paul's mind in Philippians 2:12-13? Explain,
3. In the space below, describe what you currently understand Jesus to mean when He says you should be continually *pursuing* the kingdom of God.

4. Combined, the phrases *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven* appear over eighty times in the first three Gospels. John only uses the phrase twice, but his use is immensely helpful as we try to reconstruct an idea of just what this kingdom that we're supposed to be seeking actually is. Look up the following verses and write as much as you can glean from each about this "kingdom."
 - a. Matthew 9:35 –
 - b. John 3:1-5 –
 - c. John 18:35-37 –
 - d. Acts 20:24-25 –
 - e. Acts 28:17-23 –
5. In your own words, explain what you understand the good news of the kingdom to be.
6. In Matthew 6:25-32, Jesus discusses our basic needs and anxieties in life. In verse 33, the word *first* denotes something primary in rank or of highest importance. With that in mind, what is Jesus commanding us to do in this verse? Explain your answer.

7. The following verses describe some of the things people tend to "run after" instead of pursuing the kingdom of God. List what people run after and what motivates them to chase it, if that is mentioned.

What People "Run After"

Motivation for "Chasing" It

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Jeremiah 45:5

Luke 12:15

2 Timothy 4:3-4

1 John 2:15-16

8. These verses describe some of the things that God seeks. For each verse, list what He seeks and describe what is involved on our part to please Him.

What God Seeks

How I Please Him

2 Chronicles 16:9

Isaiah 66:2

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Luke 19:10

John 4:23

James 1:19-20

9. Review your responses to questions 7 and 8 on the previous page. Which of the two lists best characterizes what *you* are currently "running after"? Explain.

LOOKING BACK...

For us who are being saved—that is, are being changed to be less like Adam and more like Jesus—there should be a growing similarity between the things on His heart and the things on our hearts. In particular, we should increasingly find ourselves defining our mission here on Earth more and more in terms of His mission. Jesus came to seek the lost. He desires to bring them the good news of the kingdom. God says He is seeking people who will not only worship Him the way He desires, but will stand in the gap between Him and the people He is seeking. The kingdom of God—the rule of God in the hearts of those He loves—is something that we should be "running after." Are we? How can we know?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

10. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-15, Paul presents some sobering truths regarding the lives of those who are being saved. What is the main point of each of the following verses taken from this passage?

Verse 5 –

Verse 8 –

Verse 11 –

Verses 12-15 –

11. Describe Paul's perspective on preaching the good news of the kingdom reflected in the following verses:

Acts 20:24 –

1 Corinthians 9:16-23 –

1 Corinthians 15:58 –

12. We have discovered that the labor we are to seek and to which we've been called is to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ. How would you rate your own "construction" in the following areas?

For whom you are building:

What you are building:

13. Describe the last time you consciously sought to share the good news of the kingdom with someone. If you have never done this, what do you think is the reason?

14. Would you say that "seeking the lost" is something that is part of your everyday life? Explain your answer.

15. What have you discovered as a result of this study about yourself and the command of Jesus to "seek first" His kingdom?

16. a. God is pleased to grant you the privilege and opportunity to share the good news of the kingdom with those who do not know Him. It's a privilege that produces amazing joy in this life. Who are two unsaved people you can begin to pray for this week? Write their names on an index card and display it where you will see it each day. Pray for God to open a door of opportunity, and then be available and expectant as you wait on Him!
- b. Perhaps you don't know how to share the gospel with someone, or even how to begin living in such a way that a door would open to share your faith and the good news. The *desire* to share Christ is the greatest need—learning the right tools that you need is easy. Is there someone you know who could teach you? Maybe an online course? Make a commitment to find a way get yourself ready to pursue the most exciting work on earth!

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The command to seek the kingdom – Matthew 6:33
- The commitment to seek the kingdom – Acts 20:24