

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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- **[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 SERVANT

“Have I Been Set Free Or Turned Loose?”

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 SERVANT

“Have I Been Set Free Or Turned Loose?”

ABIDING PRINCIPLE – The more I become like Jesus, the more I discover that true freedom is the ability to pursue my God-given purpose to love and serve Him. Any other pursuit, no matter how appealing, is actually bondage.

“To obey God is perfect liberty.” —Seneca

One of the most inviting promises to fall from the lips of our Lord was, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Then He declared: “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

The notion of liberty has been one of the dominant themes in human history. People have struggled and died to be free of tyrants, debt, disease, discrimination, oppression, and pain. Unfortunately, as fallen human beings, we have embraced a number of mistaken definitions of what it means to be free. These errors in thinking have also penetrated people of faith in significant ways. In particular, there is serious confusion regarding our responsibility to God as believers. Now that I’m forgiven, doesn’t being “set free” mean that I’m free to get on with my life, to fulfill my potential as a Christian . . . with God’s help, of course?

If sanctification—growing to resemble Jesus—is God’s goal for my life, what can I learn about this notion of liberty from His life? He obviously was not in bondage to anything or anyone. How free did Jesus consider Himself to be in relation to the Father? And more important, how did this freedom find expression in His daily life?

KEY SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 12:1-8; Romans 6:8-23

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Write your own definitions of *freedom* and *slavery*.

Freedom –

Slavery –

2. Does your definition of freedom focus on the idea of being “free to do...,” “free to be...,” or “free from...”? Explain your answer.

3. The following verses describe Jesus' relationship to the Father. Summarize what they reveal about Jesus.
 - a. John 5:19 –

 - b. John 6:38 –

 - c. John 7:28-29 –

 - d. John 8:28 –

 - e. John 12:49-50 –

4. Describe the image of Jesus Christ that emerges from the following passages.
 - a. Luke 22:25-27 –

 - b. Philippians 2:5-7 –

5. a. Now thoughtfully read Luke 4:5-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:27-28. What do these passages reveal about the Son of God in relation to His Father?
 - b. Why is this so startling, *and* so crucial for us to grasp?

6. a. The following verses teach an essential truth regarding freedom for those who believe in Christ. What is the only thing we are really free to do, according to these verses?
- Joshua 24:15 –
- 1 Kings 18:21 –
- 2 Chronicles 12:7-8 –
- Matthew 12:30 –
- b. In reality, how many options are there?
7. Summarize the key idea in each of the following verses, which directly or indirectly deal with the idea of “freedom in Christ.”
- a. Romans 6:16-18 –
- b. Galatians 5:13 –
- c. 1 Peter 2:16 –
8. Review your answers to questions 6 and 7. Then read Romans 6:20-22. How does what you have learned in this study relate to your sanctification (*holiness* in verse 22)?

9. How would you change your original definitions of freedom and slavery in Question 1 to reflect what you have discovered in this chapter?

Freedom –

Slavery –

10. Jesus labels Satan the "father of lies" (John 8:44). What do you think are popular lies he has started and kept alive about each of the following areas?

Freedom –

Slavery –

Serving God –

LOOKING BACK...

Jesus Christ promised freedom to those who acknowledge Him as Savior. Paul reaffirmed this promise with the declaration that Christ wants those He has set free to stay free. But he challenges our modern understanding of freedom by defining it as slavery to Christ! Furthermore, Scripture attests to this by destroying the myth of the middle ground. The truth is, we are set free to *choose* who will be our master! We are never free to live for ourselves. In fact, Satan has popularized the lie that we shouldn't serve anybody but ourselves, because it's too demeaning and restrictive. He woos us to be "free," knowing all the while that he is luring us back into bondage. But we are not free to decide *whether* we'll serve someone; only *whom* we will serve.

True freedom, then, is the ability to fulfill my God-given purpose as a human being: to know, love, and serve God. Anything else, regardless of its appeal, it turns out is bondage.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

11. Describe the principle of freedom outlined in 2 Peter 2:19.

12. There are some areas of life in which, when exercising our freedom as Christians, we could actually find ourselves enslaved to sin. Look up the following verses and write out the specific areas that are mentioned. Give a real-world example of how this type of slavery might happen.

Areas of Life	Contemporary Examples
Psalm 19:13	
Ephesians 4:25-27	
Colossians 2:8	
1Timothy 6:6-10	

13. Slowly read Psalms 81:10-11 and 119:45. What insight do these verses bring on the issue of freedom and slavery (especially true freedom)?

14. Review all that you have discovered about freedom and slavery in this chapter. Whose servant have you been? Be honest!

15. Scripture teaches that part of our Christian freedom is built upon accountability to one another as believers. We are not designed to be autonomous (see Matthew 18 :15; Ephesians 5:21; and James 5:16). We need each other as we grow in our love and obedience to Christ. Is there another Christian in your life to whom you are accountable concerning your growth in

sanctification? Someone with whom you can comfortably and honestly talk and pray, especially about what you have discovered in this chapter? If so, make a commitment to do so within the next week. If you do not have a relationship like this, prayerfully consider initiating one. Each of you should have the freedom to hold the other accountable to what the Lord is teaching. This person should ideally:

- be the same gender as you
- be accessible (in person or by phone)
- be interested in your spiritual health
- have a good working knowledge of Scripture
- be willing to make time for this

Begin by sharing what you've discovered in this study about genuine freedom, slavery, and whose servant you are. Tell the friend about specific areas of your life that you would like to bring under Christ's lordship, and ask for his or her support. Give your friend permission and freedom to check on you regularly; then be faithful to your commitment!

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- Choosing your master – Joshua 24:15
- Sanctification and being God's servant – Romans 6:22