

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

THE TWO ON THE ROAD
“Disappointment - God’s Winnowing Fork”

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 TWO ON THE ROAD

“Disappointment - God’s Winnowing Fork”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – The radical dependence upon God that characterized the life of Jesus can only be sustained by the deep conviction that God alone is sufficient. And that conviction rarely takes root apart from disenchantment with oneself and others.

"You can't change circumstances and you can't change other people, but God can change you."
—Evelyn A. Thiessen

Sometimes, life can unravel like an old sweater—quickly and irreversibly. A lifetime of planning can evaporate in one unexpected phone call, letter, or knock at the door. Disappointment with life divulges the true source of our hope, and where we have anchored our confidence. Often, to our dismay, we discover that our security rests in people rather than in God Himself.

Within what would be a long weekend for us, the entire mission of the "supposed Messiah" seemed to crumble and fade before the eyes of those who had forsaken everything to follow Him. Jesus was arrested, falsely accused, and executed like a common criminal. From the intimate Passover feast on Thursday evening to the misty graveside scene on Sunday morning, those who best knew Jesus had their entire world suddenly shattered. But their disillusion was more than just a personal misunderstanding. It was to become a vital and useful tool in the plan of God to make them more like the One they had hoped in and followed. And God’s methods haven’t changed. Disappointment is a frequent bridge we must cross over on the highway of spiritual transformation.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:1-35

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Look at Proverbs 13:12. What do you think this verse means?
2. Read Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; and Matthew 20:20-21. What *was* the perspective and expectation that the followers of Jesus held about Him and what *they* thought He was destined to do?
 - a. How does this background help you understand the sorrowful statement of Cleopas in Luke 24:21?
3. Carefully read Luke 24:13-21 again. What direction were these two despondent men traveling that day, and why do you think that might be significant?

- a. The force of the verb "hoped" in Luke 24:21 carries within it the idea of a trust and confidence that had been repeatedly exercised in the past. In your own words, describe the feelings of these men:
 - (1) about Jesus –

 - (2) about their own lives –

 - (3) about their future –

4. Look at the response of Jesus to their disappointment and disillusionment in verses 25-27. According to Jesus, what's the specific cause of their state of mind?

5. From this example, which is more powerful in facing disappointment—the circumstances themselves or your perspective? Use this story to explain your answer.

6. Each of the following verses addresses an avenue that could take you to thoughts and feelings of discouragement. Isolate the area and then briefly explain why or how it could lead to disappointment and disillusionment in your life.
 - a. Job 23:8-9 and Psalm 13:1 –

 - b. Proverbs 23:4-5 and 1 Timothy 6:17 –

 - c. Haggai 1:5-6 –

 - d. Matthew 26:36-40 and Psalm 69:20 –

 - e. John 11:1-6, 17-21 –

 - f. 1 Corinthians 3:4-7 –

7. Thoughtfully look over your responses to question 6. Do you see a common thread running through your answers? If so, what is it?

LOOKING BACK...

Following the death of Jesus, at least two of his disciples left Jerusalem, the previous hub of hope for the Jews. Their hearts and hopes clearly were crushed regarding the return of the Jewish kingdom. Disillusionment had so clouded the truth that they considered Jesus to be the "village idiot." In a move to unmask their tunnel vision, He concealed his identity and played ignorant to the events surrounding His own death.

Disappointment and disillusionment occur when our deepest expectations aren't met. Either what we hope for doesn't happen, or what we dread comes to pass. In either case, the emotional, tangible, or spiritual ground we're standing on collapses. And we're left alone with our own thoughts and conclusions. Sometimes it's the failure of people we highly esteem that triggers our disillusionment. Other times, we may falter from being overly dependent on people, especially close friends or those whose opinions matter most. Our disappointment might come from the sudden loss of financial resources that have always been available, or an unexpected turn of events that robs us of stability and reputation. No matter what the source might be, we're confronted with the questions of where our hope is anchored and what we actually need to survive and continue. Disappointment is meant to be a divine "checkpoint" on our journey to become like Jesus. We must declare to ourselves and to God where we're seeking our sufficiency from. And if we long to be conformed to the likeness of our Lord, only one answer will suffice.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Return to the story of the two men on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:18-35. Look at the stark contrast between the attitude of the men in verse 21 and verses 33-34. They journeyed from disappointment while *leaving* Jerusalem to anticipated opportunities for evangelism after *returning to* Jerusalem! Carefully read the verses between 21 and 34 again. Record every insight you see that points to what contributed to this tremendous rebirth of hope.
2. Do you think their hope was restored by a change in their circumstances? Explain your answer.
 - a. Who sought the change of vision and heart for these two men (see verses 13-17)? How do you think this applies to your life when you're facing disappointment?

3. Each of the verses below explores a specific biblical truth about hope and disappointment. Record the encouragement you can draw from each for your own life.
 - a. Deuteronomy 8:2-3 –
 - b. Psalm 119:74,114,147 –
 - c. Psalm 42:5; 43:5 –
 - d. Psalm 62:1-8 –
 - e. Psalm 73:21-26 –
 - f. Romans 15:4 –
 - g. 1 Timothy 4:10; 6:17 –
 - h. 2 Timothy 4:16-17 –
 - i. 1 John 4:18 –
4. Review your responses to question 6 on page 5 in the Study Questions section. Make a list of some personal examples from your own life that connect to as many of the categories as possible.
5. Look back over the list you just made. If you asked God to change your circumstances in the midst of a situation, mark “M” next to the entry. If you gradually asked God to change your attitude, mark “G” next to the entry. If you still haven't asked for God's assistance, mark “0”.

6. Is there anyone you've offended or blamed in regard to the list above whom you need to contact and ask forgiveness? Is there someone with whom you've discussed one of the above situations to whom you need to go and share how your perspective has changed? If so, write down the names below. Specify when and how you plan to speak to each person. Ask a friend to hold you accountable to follow through this week.
7. What's the most significant thing you have learned about disappointment from this chapter?
8. What's the most significant thing you've learned about yourself from this chapter?
9. Finally, is there a circumstance in your life right now that normally would move you in the direction of disappointment or disillusionment? How will you handle the situation differently, using what you have learned in this chapter?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- God's gracious *source* of hope - Romans 15:4
- God is sufficient for me - Psalm 73:25-26