

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 UNJUST STEWARD

“Are Dollars More Important Than Sense?”

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 UNJUST STEWARD

“Are Dollars More Important Than Sense?”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – Our perspective on wealth and possessions affects not only the direction of our lives, but often our destination.

“The truly rich man is not he who has the most, but the one who needs the least.” — Unknown

God meticulously choreographed the composition of the Bible. Prophets, poets, and preachers contributed to our understanding of the nature and character of God and humanity. And in the Bible, His plans and purposes for our lives unfold. Some of the most profound teaching in Scripture comes from the most unexpected sources; we are admonished to learn from ants, fish, and even roosters! God also wants us to discover truth from the disobedient people as well as those who followed Him with a heart of love. One such negative teacher, in a story recorded only in Luke's gospel, we know simply as "the unjust steward." His perspective on money and possessions cost him his reputation *and* his occupation. Yet deep within this story is not only a principle about wealth that explains the steward's losses, but also a sober warning about the crucial need to pay close attention to our own view of money and possessions.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Luke 16:1-15

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. Because this parable appears at first glance to be paradoxical, it will be best to build an understanding of the story itself. There is one major point. Look at the verses associated with each question below. In your own words, thoughtfully reconstruct the story.

Luke 16:1—What was the actual charge brought against the steward by his employer? (Note: The word translated "wasting" in this verse is the same as the word translated "squandered" in Luke 15:13, referring to what the younger son did with his inheritance.)

In modern terminology, what do you think the steward was doing?

2. Luke 16:3-4—What becomes the steward's goal once he realizes that he's about to be "out in the street"?

Luke 16:4-7—How does the steward plan to achieve his goal? (Note: The word "quickly" is very important, and the "bill" here was like a contract.)

3. Comparing verses 1-2 with verse 8, how do you explain the obvious fact that the employer was impressed with the person he was about to fire?
4. The key to this passage and parable is found in verse 9. The word translated "gain" or "make" can mean to construct or craft something. What is Jesus telling His disciples and us about the primary *purpose* of worldly wealth?

The words for "wealth" and "money" in verses 9,11, and 13 are all the same. But in verse 13 we discover a principle about money that provides greater meaning to the story of the unjust steward. What does Jesus say about the believer and money in this verse?

5. It has been said that money is either a tool or an idol. Do your responses in question 4 support or contradict this statement? Explain your answer.

Does your assessment agree or disagree with Luke 12:34? Explain.

6. Read Matthew 19:16-24 several times. This short encounter contains the record of one man's attempt to love both God and wealth. He walked away sad when he was told that the way to eternal life conflicted with his comfortable lifestyle. Explain what you see in the young man's life that illustrates the point in each of the following passages.

Matthew 6:19-21:1-14

Matthew 6:24

Matthew 22:34-40

1 Timothy 6:6-10

7. In Ezekiel 28:1-5, God is speaking to His own people who believed that financial gain was evidence of the blessing of God. Do the prophet's words support their belief? Explain your answer.

8. Read Job 1:1-3 and Job 1:13-21. What was Job's view of God and the wealth that He had entrusted to him?

In Luke 8:1-3 we read about several women who were followers of Jesus. What was their vision for the financial resources that God had entrusted to them?

LOOKING BACK...

God says repeatedly throughout the Bible that riches wage an effective warfare for the hearts of people. Wealth can be deceptive, temporary, and arid. It enslaves more often than it emancipates. Yet we read of people like Abraham, David, Job, and Susanna who had great wealth *and* walked faithfully with God. They had learned the truth that wealth is either a tool or an idol. Wealth either serves us *as* we serve Him, or we end of serving it, seeking to serve ourselves. There is no middle ground. In short, what we do with our money and possessions is the result of how we view them.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

9. The subject of money and possessions is a prominent and persistent theme in the Bible. Unfortunately, our own convictions on the subject are often the result of common sense and Wall Street rather than familiarity with the Scriptures. Looking at the following verses, try to what each is saying about your own money and its relationship to your spiritual life. (*Use words like, "my, mine, I" in your responses.*)

Leviticus 25:35-37

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

Psalm 62:10

Proverbs 23:5

Ecclesiastes 5:10-11

Ecclesiastes 5:19

Matthew 13:22

Mark 10:23-27

Luke 12:34

Luke 16:11

1 Timothy 6:9-10

James 2:5

Revelation 3:17

10. The Bible not only provides instruction and insight regarding our relationship to money and possessions, it also enlightens our understanding of true riches, investing, and spending. Read the following passages and construct a one- or two-sentence principle the Bible teaches about true wealth, wise investing, and spending.

Psalm 119:14,72,127

Proverbs 11:24

2 Corinthians 6:10

2 Corinthians 8:13-14

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

2 Corinthians 9:10-13

Ephesians 3:8

2 Peter 3:10-13

11. Look over your responses to questions 9 and 10. Summarize two or three areas in which your perspective of money and wealth has changed because of what you have discovered in this study.

12. Think about your own *use* of the financial resources God has entrusted to you. In light of how you actually live (how you spend your money, what you spend your money on, and so on), what would *other* people, including family members, conclude your convictions are in the following areas?

Your possessions (private ownership vs. stewardship of what belongs to God)

Your possessions (tools to be used vs. gifts to be enjoyed)

Your money (used for things that perish vs. used for people who don't)

Your money (a percentage belongs to God vs. all belongs to God)

Your money (enables personal comfort vs. empowers personal ministry)

13. How have you seen that your perspective and lifestyle regarding money and possessions the *same* as an unbeliever's? (Be honest!)

How are they *different*?

14. What is one thing you can do to change your perspective on your possessions?

Your money?

Who will hold you accountable to do this? Write down that person's name and decide what you will ask him or her to do to help you.

Read Luke 6:38. What is the promise in this passage about true giving and true wealth?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

The dangers of wealth – Hosea 13:6

The purpose of wealth – 1 Timothy