

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 WOMAN AT THE WELL”
“The Power of Incarnational Ministry”

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, slightly slanted style.

Fran Sciacca
Birmingham, AL

THE “WOMAN AT THE WELL”

“The Power of Incarnational Ministry”

A **BIDING PRINCIPLE** – The most efficient and permanent way to impact the world for Jesus Christ has always been, and continues to be, one dedicated life touching another.

“O the blessed influence of one true loving human soul on another!”

– George Eliot

Nestled between the two regions where Jesus spent most of His time—Galilee and Judah—was an area known as Samaria. It was shunned at best and despised at worst by devout Jews of Jesus' day. In typical fashion, He would journey *through* it on His way to Galilee from Jerusalem rather than around it like most of the Jewish priests and religious leaders.

On one such journey, Jesus arrived at a well in Samaria at high noon, hours after the women of the area had left, having gathered their water for the day. A solitary figure soon joined Him. First, it's really significant that she was a Samaritan, second, that she was a woman, and finally, that she was a woman who'd lost the respect of her village, any of which would have been grounds for Jesus to shun her too. But He didn't. In fact, the story that unfolds from this encounter is an arresting example of how God prefers to work in this world, enlarging His kingdom one life at a time, face-to-face, one person touching the life of another. It's the polar opposite of our pixel-to-pixel existence that we've somehow come to accept as normal.

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 4:1-42

STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. How would you describe this conversation in John 4:7-29, superficial or deep, personal or impersonal? Explain your response using examples from the story.
2. Look at Jesus' encounters in John 3:1-21 and 5:1-15. How are they similar to His encounter with the woman?
3. How are these three encounters in question 2 different from those Jesus had in John 5:16-18 and 6:1-2?

4. What was *different* about the outcome of Jesus' encounters with the three individuals and the two groups?
 - a. His encounters with individuals –

 - b. His encounters with the groups –

5. What is happening in each of the following passages related to effective ministry?
 - a. John 1:40-42,45 –

 - b. Acts 9:27; 11:25-26 –

 - c. Acts 16:1-4 –

 - d. Acts 16:23-34 –

 - e. Acts 18:19, 24-27 –

6. The apostle Paul takes the whole idea of life-to-life ministry a step further in his counsel to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2. What does Paul tell Timothy to do, and how is it related to what you've studied so far?

7. Think about Paul's own life and what he taught about ministering to others, and note that he was carrying out his ministry the way Jesus told him to (see Acts 20:24). With this in mind, just *how* do you think Jesus intended Matthew 28:19-20 to be fulfilled?

8. If you were able to choose between leading 1,000 people to Christ per day for the rest of your life or pouring your time into one person per *year*, with the goal that that person would do the same, which of the two would you choose? Why?
9. When it comes to the two methods of ministry in the above question, you might be surprised to discover the first would take over 2,000 years to reach the world with the gospel, but the second method would accomplish the same task in slightly over thirty years!
- a. Which of these two methods do you think is more *appealing* to most believers at first glance? Why?
- b. Which of these two *perspectives* on ministry do you think requires more faith? Why?
10. Think about your own current perspective on ministry to others. Which of the three statements below best represents your attitude, and explain why:
- no commitment to ministry
 - commitment to reaching the “crowds”
 - commitment to life-to-life ministry
- Explanation:
11. Think of one particular person in your life right now whom you could pray for earnestly for an entire year, trusting God for his or her salvation and spiritual growth. (E.g., a neighbor, coworker, running partner, etc.) Who is this person?
12. Maybe you've given most of your ministry time and energy to the wrong perspective and need to graciously begin to withdraw from the "crowd" so that you can begin to invest yourself in one life at a time. If so, what would be a great first step?

13. Maybe you have discovered that you don't yet know *how* to invest yourself in someone else. Is there a mature Christian you know who might be willing to invest himself or herself in *your* life to help you come to a place of capable, mature ministry? Who is this person?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY (optional)

- The purpose of ministry - Ephesians 4:11-13
- The plan of ministry- 2 Timothy 2:2

OPTIONAL

You may be surprised to discover the extent to which the lives of Jesus and Paul, the two most visible people in the New Testament in terms of effective ministry, reflect a commitment to *individuals* rather than crowds. Even though they both ministered to crowds whenever the opportunity arose, it is obvious that they understood the power of reaching the world one life at a time. Take some time and read through the four Gospels while keeping a record of how many individuals Jesus ministered to whose lives were permanently changed who then went out and impacted others.