

BISHOP BARRON

with JOHN L. ALLEN JR.

TO LIGHT A FIRE
ON THE EARTH

Proclaiming the Gospel in a Secular Age

Discussion Questions

Chapter One: The Barron Story

1. Are good evangelists born or made? What traits do you have that help you evangelize? What do you need to learn to evangelize more effectively?
2. What is the basic technique Bishop Barron recommends in order to be a good evangelist? How can you put this technique into practice?
3. How does Bishop Barron see himself as “post-liberal”? What does that mean in terms of coming to faith through experience as opposed to revelation (also discussed in Chapter Four)?

Chapter Two: Beauty

1. In evangelization, Bishop Barron believes in leading with beauty as opposed to goodness or truth. Why does he believe in this approach? What are some examples of how the Catholic Church evangelizes through beauty?
2. Why is being passionate about the faith necessary for evangelization? Give some examples from your own life of when you felt passionate about something and could not help but share it.
3. Explain the necessity of rules in life and how they actually free you to be the best you can be.
4. Discuss this statement and how it affects your assessment of the Church: *“On the one hand, the Church is the spotless Bride of Christ, a thing of great beauty and purity. On the other hand, it is also an earthen vessel, composed of flawed and fragile human beings.”* (page 52)

Chapter Three: Goodness

1. The saints exemplify the goodness of Catholicism in flesh and blood. Choose a saint to get to know, reflecting on how goodness is shown through his/her life.
2. Comment on Church Father Tertullian's comment that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
3. In addition to calling *all* to become saints, what else does God offer through the Church when we fall short? How does this help you to set the bar high in aiming for holiness?
4. How does the Church's teaching on sexual morality express a "yes" instead of a "no"?

Chapter Four: Truth

1. How does the secular culture's tendency toward relativism make the proclamation of the truth of the faith more difficult? What is the best way to preach the truth, given this challenge?
2. What is "beige Catholicism" and what is Bishop Barron's antidote to it?
3. Does "reading the signs of the times" mean the Church must accommodate the culture? Why or why not? What does Bishop Barron mean when he says that you need to "read the signs of the times" through the Gospel?
4. Describe the Christocentric approach that Bishop Barron embraces and prioritizes.
5. What is "scientism" and why is Bishop Barron against it?
6. Why is the privatization of faith dangerous to any society?

Chapter Five: Evangelization

1. What evangelical qualities does Bishop Barron admire in the atheist Christopher Hitchens?
2. Why is knowing the facts and intellectual tradition of the faith important in evangelizing today?
3. How has Pope Francis, as an evangelist, been successful in engaging the world?

Chapter Six: Prayer and the Supernatural

1. How are miracles at the heart of Christianity? Give some examples of foundational Christian miracles.
2. How does Bishop Barron define prayer? Does this definition resonate with you? Why or why not?
3. What are Bishop Barron's four "tips" on prayer? Which one do you need most to develop?
4. According to Monsignor Francis Mannion, good liturgy is the balanced play between what three things? Describe what happens when each one of the three things is overplayed.
5. How does Bishop Barron define the three paths to holiness? Reflect on your journey along these paths and where, if at any point, you might be stuck.
6. Explain the spiritual importance of the concept of the "theo-drama" vs. the "ego-drama."

Chapter Seven: The Bible

1. How is the Bible a *library*, not a *book*? Given the observation that the Bible is a library, comment on the importance of relying on an interpretive tradition, such as the Church's Magisterium.
2. Through what key events does Bishop Barron believe the Bible should be read and interpreted?
3. *Dei Verbum* from Vatican II says that the Bible is the words of God, expressed in the words of men. How can this statement inform the way we look at a literal interpretation of the Bible?
4. Bishop Barron believes it is imperative for good evangelists to know the Bible. What is your exposure to and comfort level with the Bible? What can you do to get to know the Bible better?

Chapter Eight: Obstacles to the Faith

1. What is the concept of the “buffered self” and how does it contribute to widespread secularism?
2. Why is suppressing the desire for God dangerous to human flourishing?
3. What are the five visceral objections to religion in general, according to Bishop Barron? Choose one and give an example of encountering this objection. How did you react to it?
4. In your opinion, can the scientific method explain all truth? Why or why not? Give some examples of truths that Bishop Barron says cannot be explained by the scientific method.
5. What is the Church’s teaching on sexuality ultimately about, and what does that word mean in the Christian sense?

Chapter Nine: Barron the Bishop

1. When Bishop Barron got his “marching orders” from Archbishop Jose Gomez in Los Angeles after his appointment, the Archbishop said he wanted Bishop Barron to be present to the people, give them hope, and teach them doctrine. How completely does this directive summarize your idea of evangelization? How can you embrace it as your own mission as well?

2. Bishop Barron remarks, “More important than my status as an American is my status as a Catholic.” What “label” best summarizes your view of your own “status” in the world?

3. In Catholic moral theology, there is a difference between the objective assessment of a situation and the subjective assessment of guilt and responsibility (i.e., sin). Summarize how you understand this difference. Use examples to illustrate your understanding.

Chapter Ten: From Ministry to Movement

1. The Word on Fire movement is rooted in the Mystical Body. How does defining the Church as the “Mystical Body of Christ” differ from defining it as the “People of God”?
2. What is “affirmative orthodoxy” and how can it help evangelization?
3. Why does the Eucharist need to be central to any Catholic spirituality?
4. What evidence of authentic faith do you see in Bishop Barron and in his plans to start a movement?