

# OPEN WIDE THE DOOR TO CHRIST

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1. **'Evangelical Poverty as Freedom from Attachments'** – (p 9) Looking back over your life can you see times when Our Lord sought to 'liberate you from the torment of possessiveness of gifts He had given you' ? How did you struggle against this and what helped you to 'release your grip'? How would you encourage a directee who is struggling with 'possessiveness' in this area?
2. **' Evangelical Poverty as Freedom from Illusions'** - (p 35) "At a certain moment in our lives God no longer allows our illusions of being spiritually rich to exist" - Have you experienced this 'gift from God' of an awareness of being a 'spiritual beggar'? What helped you respond in a positive way over time to this new awareness? How would you encourage a directee going through this 'growth by trial' ?
3. **'To Hunger for the Eucharist'** – (p 62) Biela says 'If you admit to the state of your spiritual illness... you will confess that in every step of our life you forget about the Lord and your heart continuously turns away from Him. You are in love with yourself and you despise God's love. Although it is painful this truth can generate an authentic Eucharistic hunger within you.'" So that daily Mass does not become a mere habit he encourages repentive practices like praying before a crucifix 'like a leper'. When Mass has become routine for you what have you done or what would you recommend to a directee so that the Eucharist becomes the most important food for the soul?
4. **'Living the Mystery of the Eucharist'** – (p 85) Biela lists a number of parallels between the Mass and our daily lives – both call for an acknowledgement of sin and repentance, for a time of listening to His Word and reflecting on it, for a profession of faith, for unity with the community, for Communion with Jesus, and for being sent forth to spread the Good News. In what ways do you think seeing our daily lives as "living the mystery of the Eucharist" could be helpful to yourself and your directees?
5. **'The Mirage of the Human Will'** – (p 102) Biela boldly states 'All evil in our lives is born of the rejection of the words: *Your will be done*. Even when carrying out God's will we do not rely on God alone. Instead we lean on that which we do...we constantly attempt to prove to Him that something belongs to us.'" Have you experienced situations where you have felt God calling you to rely on Him alone, and in what situations have you seen the fruits of you or a directee seeking to live out this complete abandonment?
6. **'The Truth About that Which Passes Away'** (Chap 9) - The author reminds us that we are but dust, that our lives are fleeting. He refers to moments when our plans fall apart, or we become sick, or someone we love is gone, as "privileged moments" that remind us that everything is passing away. He refers to our works on earth as 'snow castles' destined to melt away. Can you share any practical suggestions to help us or our directees to approach these "privileged moments" with less fear and more trust?

**7. 'Dying to One's Self as Freedom from Illusions'** (Chap 10) - One of the difficult ideas for me in this chapter is that our illusions contain the "poison of pleasure". While accepting the concept that a grain of wheat must die to bear fruit, and grateful that God recognizes our littleness and only reveal this attachment to us gradually, are there any signs we can watch for to discern a "disordered attachment to illusory pleasures"? On page 171 the author's advises us to not focus our attention on our pain in the process of dying to ourselves, and instead try to see Christ in this situation. Can you think of an example that would help us to clarify this concept?

**8. The Greatest Bestowal** (Chap 8) - Meditating on the "blessed loneliness" of the woman at the well, whose condition as an outcast made her available to a profound encounter with Jesus, how can we give consolation to those around us who are lonely or feeling rejected? The author presents Spiritual Poverty as being Purity of Heart; and Purity of Heart as seeing things around us as God sees them, and impurity as seeing these things as if God does not exist, with a desire to possess them. What is your response to this idea? Are there any modern human tendencies that illustrate this concept?

**9. TO WORK AS IF NOT WORKING** - DETACHMENT from "spiritual riches" and the illusion that we are in control.

"It is so difficult to seek God and His will in this dense jungle of matters, problems and aspirations. Never the less, this work has been given to us for a reason: so that we learn how to carry out God's will and try, in accordance with His will, **to be detached from everything we do in order to become poor in spirit.**"

"Only when our helplessness manifests itself and the reality that we are unable to fulfill what God expects from us rises to the surface, **will our opinion of ourselves slowly begin to change.** Only then will they (our opinions) become more truthful. Through trials of faith, God can demolish the edifice of our spiritual richness (self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency) and gradually form the attitude of **poverty with in us.**"

QUESTION:

1. What worldly desires or idols can we and our directees spend our lives serving ("building a chapel to our ego") that are far from a true spirit of poverty and detachment, that allows us place all our trust in the Lord.
2. What is the difference between, "working for God" and "doing God's work". And why is it important to know the difference

**10. CHAPTER SEVEN: Trials of Faith on the Way of God's Will** - Love the Giver of all your gifts not the gifts themselves. Pg. 130 "In every aspect of your life, even those things that you do because it is God's will that you do them, you are in danger of seeking reliance apart from God. When you do this, your own vision of God's Will may manifest itself and it will become your riches"... "Your own visions of God's will is the only important thing to you" .... "Even though it seems like you are walking the tightrope of God's will, you use it to your own ends to fortify your pride". "... in reality, you secretly attributing to yourself that which the Lord accomplishes through you."

QUESTION: What does Biela offer as the remedy in order to turn back from our delusional Pharisee way of thinking, that of attributing all Gods gifts to our own doing, “this path that leads to damnation”?

**11. CHAPTER EIGHT: Toward Communion with Gods Will - Theme: His Call** – He desires that your conscience constantly and attentively listen to His call so that you may perceive even the slightest expressions of His calling presence. Our response can be as a: **BRICK or BALLOON**

**BRICK** - “By taking a closer look at your life, you will see how strongly you resist grace. Quite often you want so much to understand and know everything in your spiritual life. At the same time, you want to impose your own will and your own concept of your life on God. You are incapable of responding to the winds of the Holy Spirit, of cooperating with His grace and fulfilling His will.”

**BALLOON** – “Only when you are fully open to Gods Will, can you be sensitive to His bidding like a light and free balloon carried away by the wind – you will be responsive to the Holy Spirit because you will be poor in spirit.”

Biela’s example is the Rich young man and the tax collector Zacchaeus.

We have to defend ourselves against not only disordered attachment to earthly possessions but also spiritual goods – which “makes us think we are somebody great according to our own thinking”

**Question: Based on what has been presented in the readings of the rich young man and Zacchaeus, what characteristics would a spiritual guide encounter in a directee that would indicate whether the directee was a “brick”- unable to be moved from his own will (rich young man) or “balloon” – completely submissive and open to God’s will (Zacchaeus) and what in a person’s life could facilitate a change.**