

WHY WE NEED THE CHURCH

Being “Spiritual” Is Not Enough

Steven R. Hemler, President



*Can I
Follow Jesus
Without
Going to
Church?*

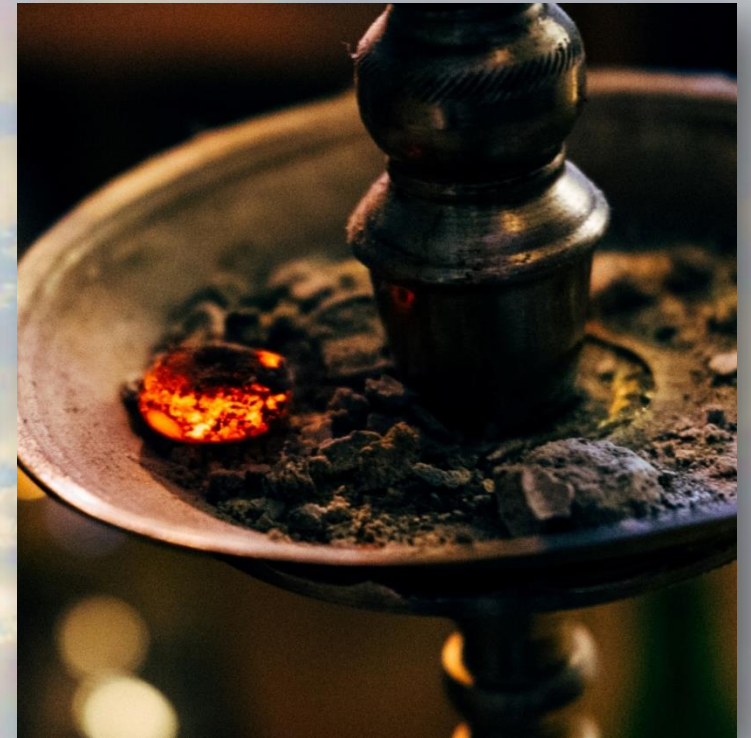


Unchurched Americans

- Over half of adults do not regularly attend any church or religious service.
 - Only about 1/3 of these are atheist/agnostic.
 - 2/3 believe in God/consider Christian. Why not at church?!
- Over 40% of those raised Catholic no longer call themselves Catholic.
 - Only 20% born after 1970 attend Mass.
- “Spiritual” OK, “Religious” Not OK.
- Let’s examine why it IS important to follow Jesus IN the Church.

Supportive Community

- Living a truly Christian life is not easy.
 - It is hard to do difficult things alone.
 - Following Jesus fully can be tough work.
- A supportive community is important.
 - To receive help we need from God and others to live an authentic Christian life.
- Without fellow Christians, our faith would be stunted, fade away, and die.
 - A single coal will lose its fire.
- *Video: Catholics Come Home “Evangomercial”*



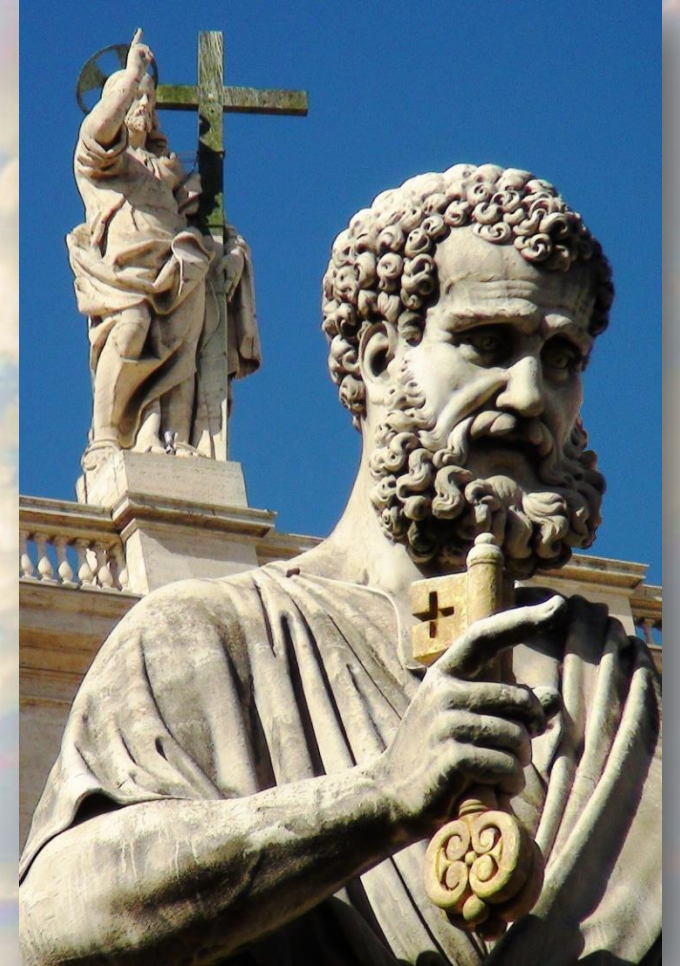
Supportive Community

- We don't go to Church to demonstrate our holiness or hide our sins.
 - The Church is not a haven for saints, but a **hospital** for sinners.
- Faith is deeply personal, but it isn't private. By its nature, faith is communal.
 - Faith must always be internalized, but it is best expressed, strengthened, and lived out with others.
- Christ knew this and left us His Church.
 - Lord's Prayer has plural pronouns (our, us, we).
 - Shows Christ meant for us to be in community.



CHRIST Willed His Church

- Jesus called the Twelve Apostles.
 - Jesus said, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.” (Matt. 16:18)
 - Has lasted for 2,000 years ([Acts 5:34-39](#))
- What did Jesus mean when he asked Paul, “Why are you persecuting **me**?”
 - Jesus equates Himself with the Church.
 - They are inseparable: Christ is the Head of His Body, the Church.
- *Video: Christ is present in the Church*





CHRIST Willed His Church

- Church is visible manifestation of Holy Spirit and His works.
 - Pentecost is called the “Birthday of the Church.”
- Holy Spirit makes Christ’s Power present today through the seven **Sacraments**.
 - Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Confession, Matrimony, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick.
 - Gifts of God that are available **only** through the Church.
 - “Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church.” (CCC 1116)
- *Video: Bishop Robert Barron on the Sacraments*



CHRIST *Willed the Sacraments*



- We are both body and soul, so Jesus entrusted sacraments to the Church.
 - Sacraments are outward physical signs of an inner spiritual reality.
 - Receive God's grace, love, and power.
- Christ is intimately encountered in every sacrament, but most especially in the Holy Eucharist.
 - Eucharist is "source and summit of the Christian life" and integral part of Mass.
- *Video: What generations of Catholics have said about the Mass*

CHRIST *Willed the Eucharist*

- What quotes are most striking?
- Is there a disconnect between the typical experience of Mass and what these quotes say about Mass?
 - If so, why?
- We may need to learn more about what really happens at Mass
 - It's not about mere entertainment.

MASS: *Praise God and Pray Together*

- Two “lungs” of prayer:
 - Personal Prayer and Liturgical Prayer
 - “Private prayer is like straw scattered here and there: If you set it on fire it makes a lot of little flames. But gather these straws into a bundle and light them, and you get a mighty fire, rising like a column into the sky; public prayer is like that.” (St. John Vianney)
- Join prayers of Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication (“A.C.T.S.”)
- *Video: Bishop Barron on why go to Mass*



MASS: *Hear the Word of God*

- During **Liturgy of the Word**, we hear God speak to us in readings from scripture.
 - We also hear Christ's voice in the homily.
 - If we listen with right frame of mind, we will receive a personal message.
 - “By the preaching of God's word, faith is nourished and grows in the grace-filled encounter with the Risen Lord.” (Pope Benedict XVI)
- By hearing, we are prepared to enter into Christ's ultimate act of love — **Liturgy of the Eucharist**.
- *Video: Emmaus and the two parts of the Mass*

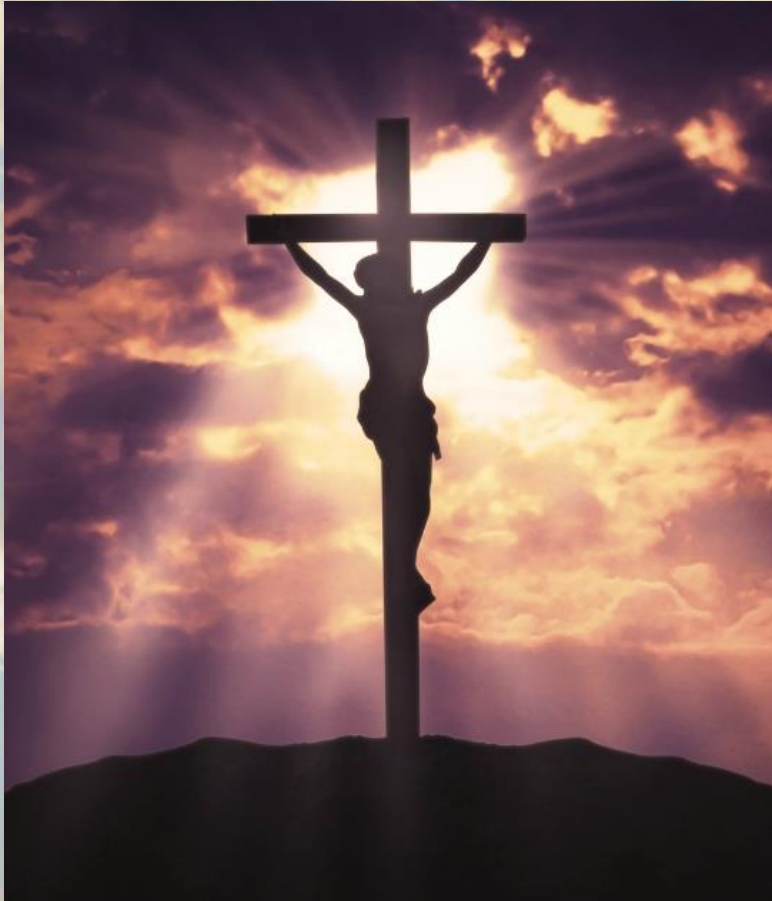




24: *THE WALK TO EMMAUS*

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named
about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other
these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and
together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But they
kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is the
conversation which you are holding with each other as you wa

MASS: *Be filled with and become like Jesus Christ*



- During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we share in Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
 - God makes available to us, with lavish generosity, the saving power of the cross.
 - "It is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, the work of our redemption is accomplished." (Vatican II)
- *Archbishop Alexander Sample: Mass is re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice*

MASS: *Be filled with and become like Jesus Christ*



- At the Consecration, bread and wine become Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.
 - Spiritual food for spiritual life ([John 6:53-56](#))
- **“We are what we eat.”**
 - By Holy Communion we receive grace to become more like Jesus Christ.
 - Pope St. Leo the Great: “The effect of our sharing in the body and blood of Christ is to change us into what we receive.”
- St. Augustine (regarding the Eucharist): **Believe** what you receive, **receive** what you believe, **become** what you receive.
- *Video: Bread for the Journey*

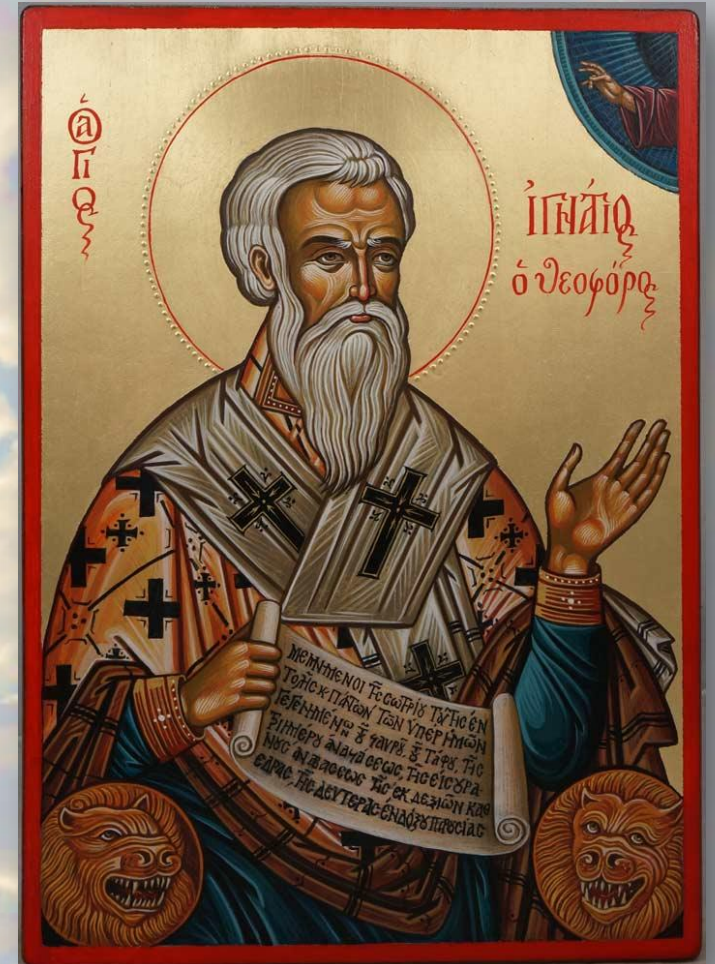
Chapter 1

**BREAD FOR
THE JOURNEY**

MASS: *Be filled with and become like Jesus Christ*

- Belief in Real Presence of Christ's body & blood under appearance of bread & wine was present **from the beginning**.
 - Not a medieval invention.
- St. Ignatius of Antioch (105 A.D.):

“I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the **flesh** of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and I desire the drink of God, namely His **blood**, which is incorruptible love and eternal life.”



2019 Pew Survey



- Only **one-third** of adult Catholics agree that “during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine **actually become** the body and blood of Jesus.”
 - Nearly **70%** of Catholics believe the bread and wine “are **symbols** of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.”
 - Even **37%** who attend Mass **weekly** believe the bread and wine “are **symbols** of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.”

MASS: *Be filled with and become like Jesus Christ*

- It's surprising that not all **Catholics** believe in the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood under appearance of bread and wine.
- In order to manifest Christ's Real Presence and dispel doubts, God sometimes provides us with **Eucharistic miracles**.
- Eucharistic miracles are unexplainable phenomena such as consecrated hosts bleeding, being visibly transformed into human flesh, preserved for hundreds of years.
 - CAINA has another presentation on ***The Science and Significance of Eucharistic Miracles***.
 - Available for free viewing on CMAX.TV



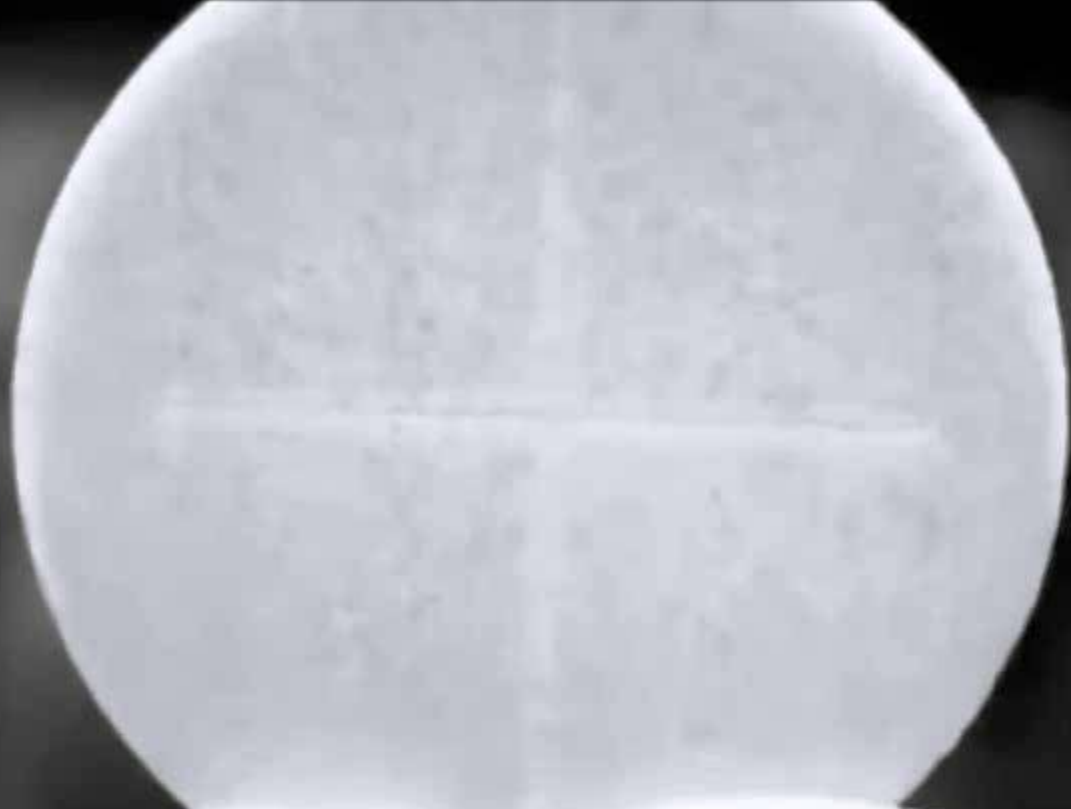
MASS: *Be filled with and become like Jesus Christ*

- Over 150 Vatican-approved EMs, including 5 scientifically studied:

- **Lanciano**, Italy, About 750 A.D.
- **Buenos Aires**, Argentina, 1996
- **Tixtla**, Mexico, 2006
- **Sokółka**, Poland, 2008
- **Legnica**, Poland, 2013



- Similar findings from scientific studies of Eucharistic miracles:
 - Human **heart muscle**, blood **type AB**, same as Shroud of Turin.
- Scientific studies affirm EMs are divine signs that manifest the Real Presence of Body & Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.
- *Video: Eucharistic Miracle of Buenos Aires*



MASS: *Be filled with and become like Jesus Christ*

- At Mass, Jesus offers his living heart in the Holy Eucharist.
 - Heart that suffered for love of us.
 - Jeannette Williams regarding EMs: “It’s as if Jesus, by transforming into a human heart, is crying out to us, ‘I’m here! I love you! My heart yearns for you! Was not my crucifixion enough to prove my love for you? See, then, and believe. I have remained hidden in the Eucharist for these two thousand years that I may remain close to you. Please, approach me. Receive me. Quench my thirst for your love’.”
- St. John Vianney: “There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us.”

MASS: *Strengthens us for our mission*

- Our mission is to go forth to **love and serve** the Lord and one another.
 - “By their fruit shall you know them.”
- Mass equips us for our mission.
 - Christ **strengthens** us in His **community**,
 - **Forms** us by His **Word**, and
 - **Nourishes** us in our Holy **Communion** with Him.
- *Video: Bishop Barron discusses our being sent on mission at end of Mass*
 - *Liverpool Eucharistic Congress*





MASS: *Commands of God, Jesus, and the Church*



- 3rd Commandment: “Remember to **keep holy** the Sabbath day.”
- At Last Supper, Jesus commanded us to “**do this** in remembrance of me.”
- Catholic Church requires Mass attendance on Sundays & Holy Days.
- *Video: Fr. Larry Richards Mass more than obligation*



Conclusion

- Pope Francis: “How many times have we heard it said ‘Jesus yes, the Church no!’, as if one could be an alternative to the other. **One cannot know Jesus if one does not know the Church.** One cannot know Jesus apart from the brothers and sisters in his community.”
- *Video: Bishop Robert Barron’s recap of a truly Catholic spirituality*



Presentation Summary

- We Need a Supportive Community.
- **Christ Willed:**
 - His Church, Sacraments, Eucharist.
- **Christ asks us to do what He wills.**
 - *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”* (John 14:15)
 - *“Whoever rejects you rejects me.”* (Luke 10:16)
- *Video: Fr. Claude Burns (aka Fr. Pontifex) “Why I Love Religion, And Love Jesus”*

Closing: *What Really Happens at Mass*

- St. John Chrysostom (4th century, Archbishop of Constantinople):
 - “When Mass is celebrated, the sanctuary is filled with countless angels who adore the divine victim immolated on the altar.”
- *Final Video: The Veil Removed*
 - Reveals the coming together of heaven and earth at Mass, as seen by saints and mystics, revealed by Scripture, and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.



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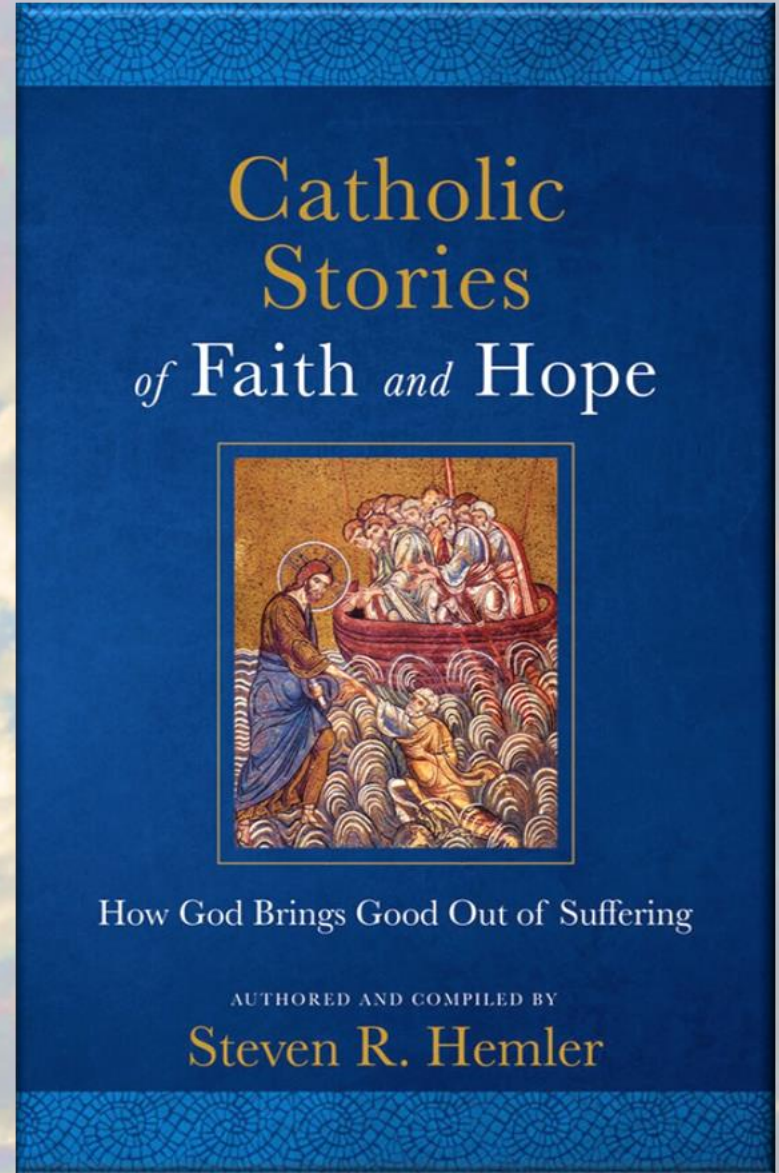
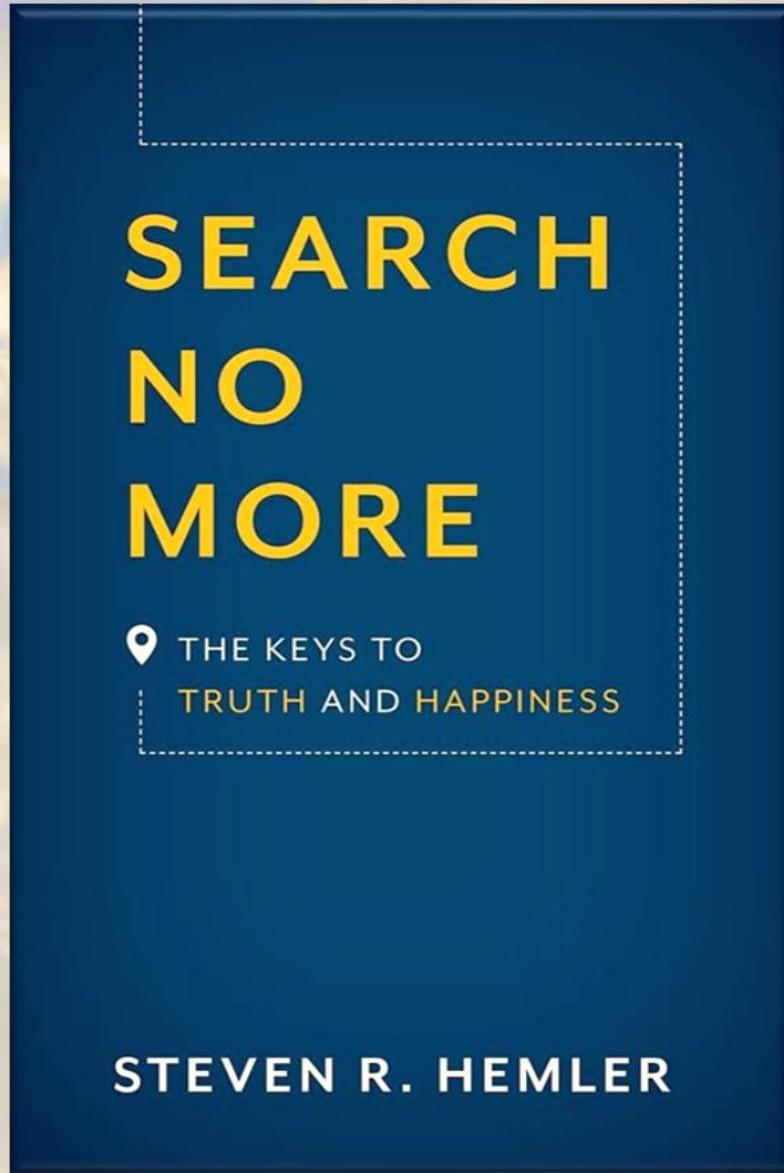
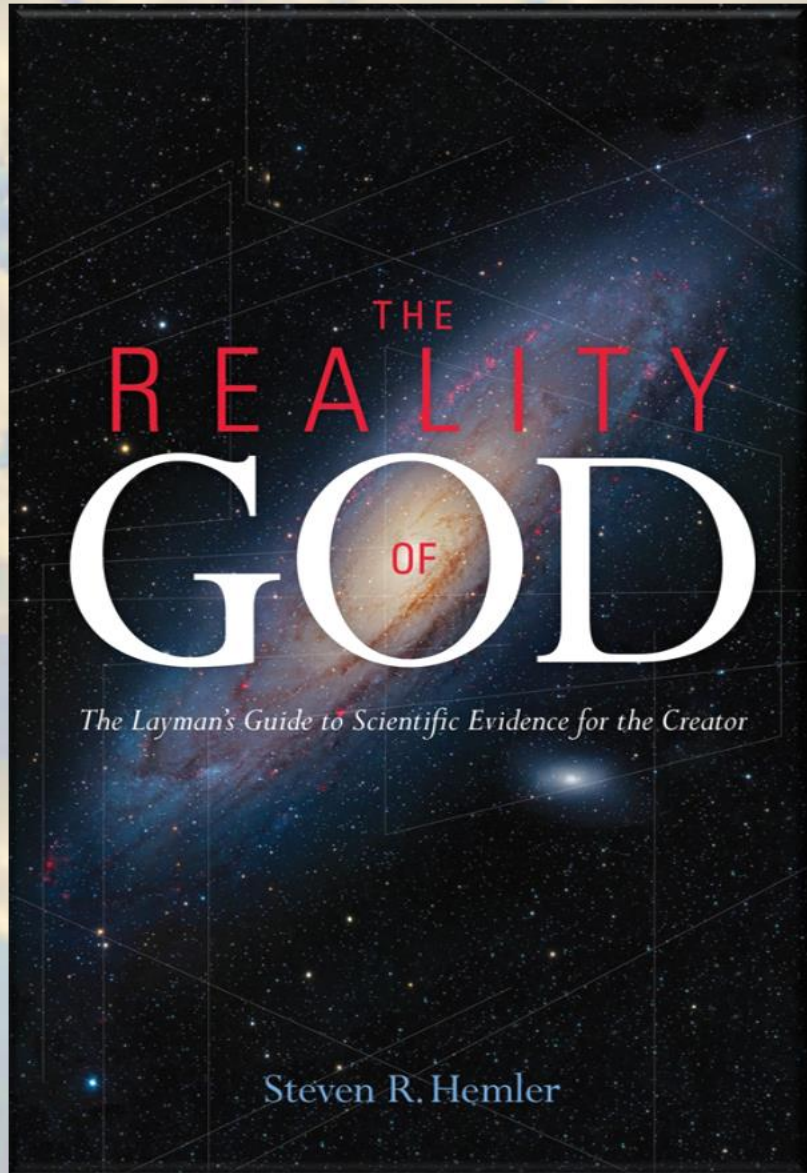


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A bright, sunny sky with scattered white and yellow clouds. The sun is visible in the lower-left quadrant, creating a strong glow and lens flare effect. The overall color palette is warm, with yellows, oranges, and blues.

Questions?

Comments?

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Acts 5: 34-39

A Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up, and said to them, “Fellow Israelites, be careful what you are about to do to these men. Some time ago, Theudas appeared, claiming to be someone important, and about 400 men joined him, but he was killed, and all those who were loyal to him were disbanded and came to nothing. After him came Judas the Galilean who also drew people after him, but he too perished and all who were loyal to him were scattered. So now I tell you, have nothing to do with these men, and let them go. For if this endeavor is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God.”



**UNLESS YOU EAT THE FLESH OF
THE SON OF MAN AND DRINK
HIS BLOOD, YOU DO NOT HAVE
LIFE WITHIN YOURSELVES. HE
WHO EATS MY FLESH AND
DRINKS MY BLOOD HAS ETERNAL
LIFE, AND I WILL RAISE HIM UP IN
THE LAST DAY. FOR MY FLESH IS
TRUE FOOD, AND MY BLOOD IS
TRUE DRINK. HE WHO EATS MY
FLESH AND DRINKS MY BLOOD
ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM.**

JOHN 6:53-56

