

# The Overdone Brain

Failing at the Habit of Attention

Living Education Retreat 2022



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Jason Fiedler









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## PAST TALKS

Fortifying Against Doubt  
the Three Paths Before Us  
Living Education Retreat 2021

Fortifying Against Doubt: the Three Paths Before Us

The Knowledge of God  
THE LIFE-GIVING DISTINCTIVE OF A MASON EDUCATION  
LIVING EDUCATION RETREAT - 2018

The Knowledge of God: The Life-Giving Distinctive of a Mason Education

Outfitting the Chief Explorer

Outfitting the Chief Explorer

An Unpublished Trail Guide  
from 'CM Skeptic' to 'AI In'

An Unpublished Trail Guide: from CM Skeptic

## ARTICLES & PODCASTS

Episode 102  
The Importance of Imagination

A DELECTABLE EDUCATION CHARLOTTE MASON PODCAST

Episode 102: The Importance of Imagination

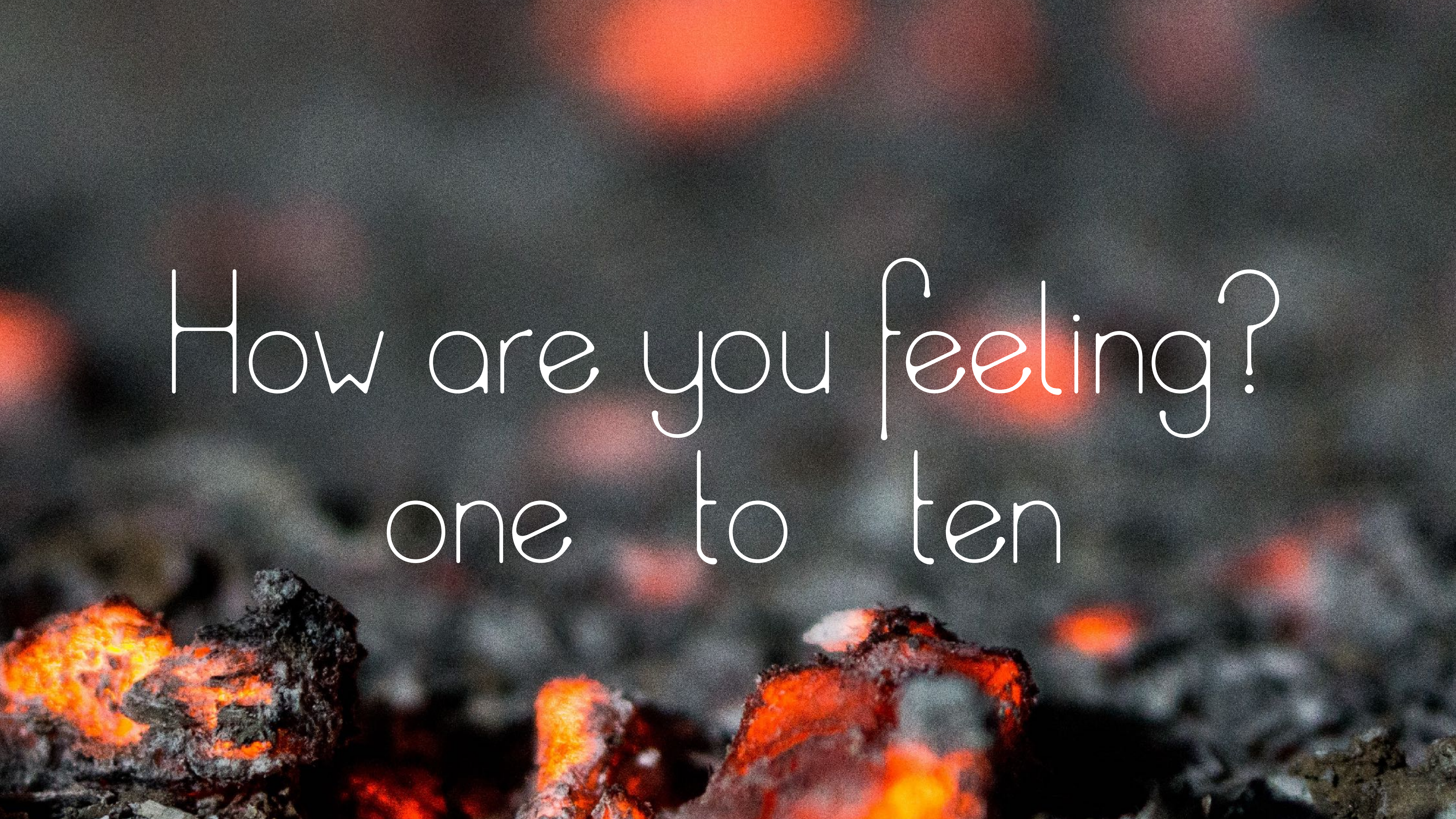
Episode 126  
Charlotte Mason Fathers

A DELECTABLE EDUCATION CHARLOTTE MASON PODCAST

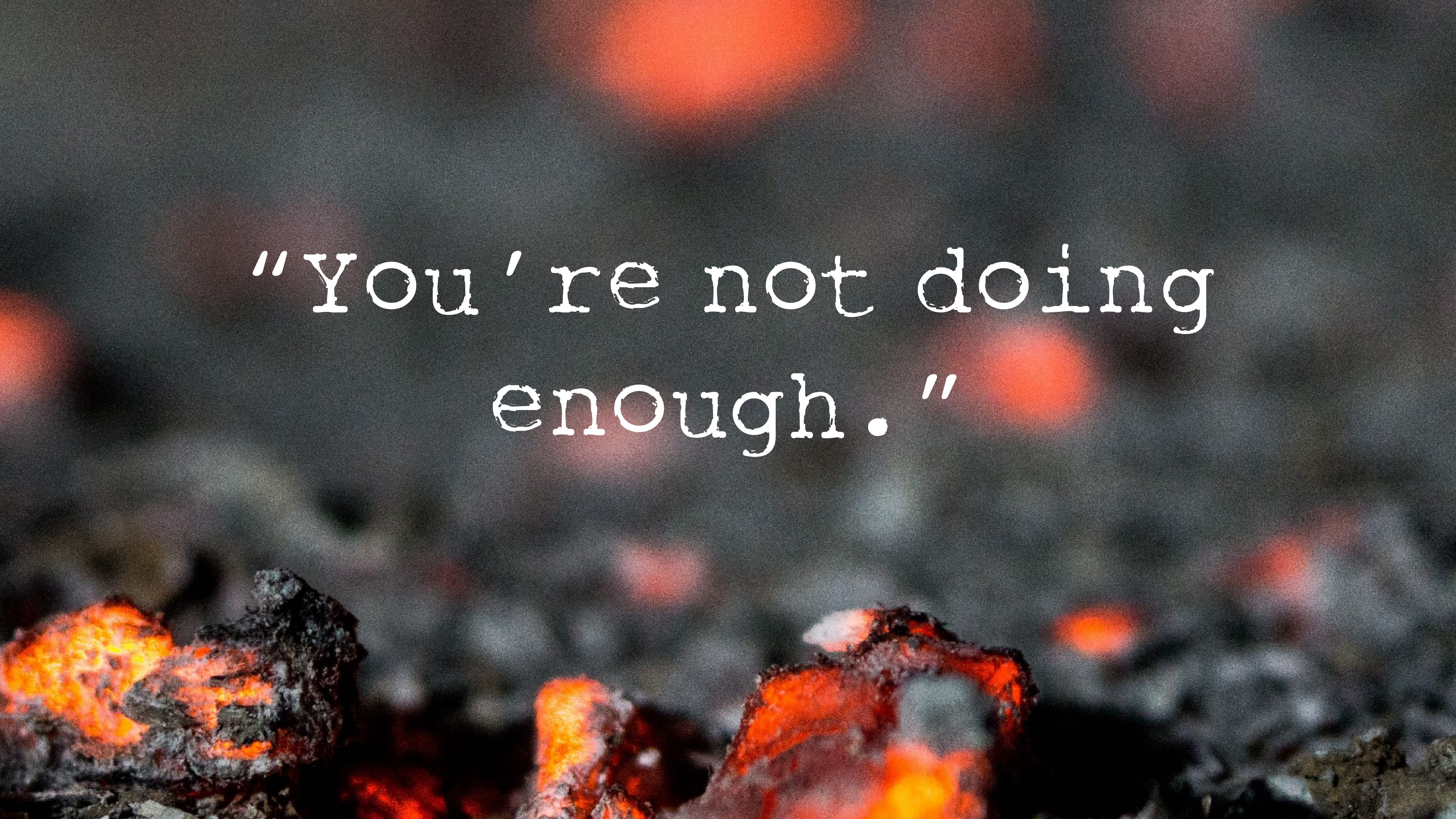
Episode 126: Charlotte Mason Fathers

"When a layman has to preach a sermon I think he is most likely to be useful, or even interesting, if he starts from exactly where he is himself, not so much presuming to instruct as comparing notes."

C.S. Lewis, "A Slip of the Tongue"



How are you feeling?  
one to ten



"You're not doing  
enough."



attention

about his close observations and thought, in his home.

Habits inspired in the Home Atmosphere.— We have already considered a group of half-physical habits—order, regularity, neatness—which the child imbibes, so to speak, in this way. But this is not all: habits of gentleness, courtesy, kindness, candour, respect for other people, or—habits quite other than these, are inspired by the child as the very atmosphere of his home, the air he lives in and must grow by.

### I.—THE HABIT OF ATTENTION

Let us pass on, now, to the consideration of a group of mental habits which are affected by direct training rather than by example.

First, we put the habit of Attention, because the highest intellectual gifts depend for their value upon the measure in which their owner has cultivated the habit of attention. To explain why this habit is of such supreme importance, we must consider the operation of one or two of the laws of thought. But just recall, in the meantime, the fixity of attention with which the trained professional man—the lawyer, the doctor, the man of letters—listens to a roundabout story, throws out the padding, seizes the facts, sees the bearing of every circumstance, and puts the case with precision and method; and contrast this with the replies of the

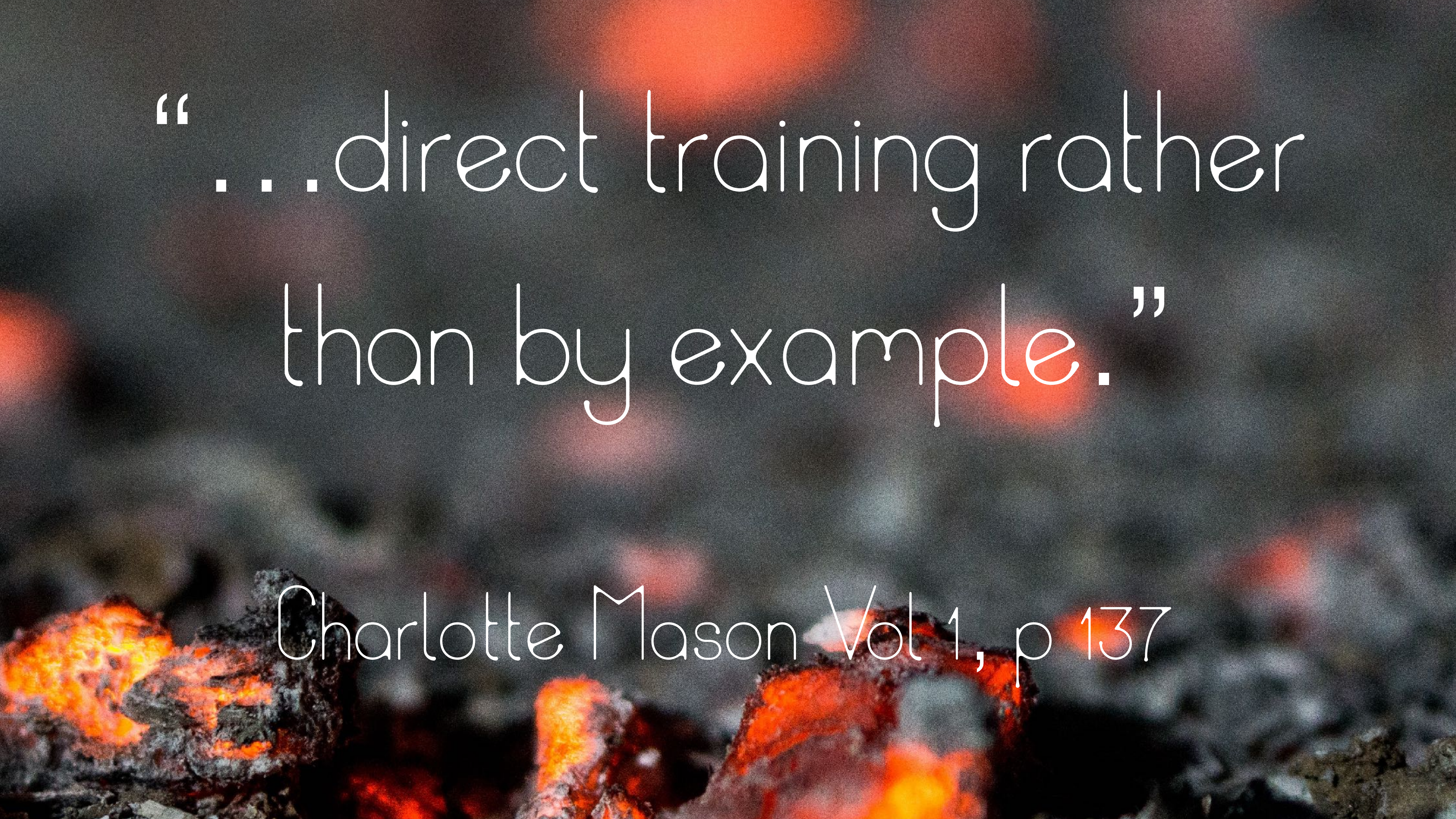
apply? → Holy Spirit  
anxiety - Lewis  
creates  
the loss...  
to fail...  
Sopli w/ her literature  
Nolan w/ the bb gun  
- wire helping  
our kids becomes a habit

**What is Attention?**— It is evident that attention is no ‘faculty’ of the mind; indeed, it is very doubtful how far the various operations of the mind should be described as ‘faculties’ at all. Attention is hardly even an operation of the mind, but is simply the act by which the whole mental force is applied to the subject in hand. This act, of bringing the whole mind to bear, may be trained into a habit at the will of the parent or teacher, who attracts and holds the child’s attention by means of a sufficient motive.

Charlotte Mason, Vol 1, p 145

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this habit of attention. It is, to quote the words of weight, 'within the reach of every one', and should be made the primary object of all mental discipline'; for whatever the natural gifts of the child, it is only in so far as the habit of attention is cultivated in him that he is able to make use of them."

Charlotte Mason, Vol 1, p. 145 - 146



“...direct training rather  
than by example.”

Charlotte Mason Vol 1, p 137

- Short lessons.
- Living books.
- Picture study.
- Nature. Soaking in nature and developing a relationship with outside slowly.
- Attention training in the infant
- Give attention to “things” rather than just words. Lots of words make the mind weary.
- Make sure the lessons are attractive
- Having a timetable where the work is done in a certain time and only then because everything has a right place and time.
- Short lessons
- Rewards (but not overdone)
- Knowledge is attractive

**The Secret of Overpressure.**— If it were only as it saves wear and tear, a perpetual tussle between duty and inclination, it is worth while for the mother to lay herself out to secure that her child never does a lesson into which he does not put his heart. **And that is no difficult undertaking; the thing is, to be on the watch from the beginning against the formation of the contrary habit of inattention.**

A great deal has been said lately about overpressure, and we have glanced at one or two of the causes whose effects go by this name. **But truly, one of the most fertile causes of an overdone brain is a failure in the habit of attention.** I suppose we are all ready to admit that it is not the things we do, but the things we fail to do, which fatigue us, with the sense of omission, with the worry of hurry in overtaking our tasks.



And this is almost the only cause of failure in the work in the case of the healthy schoolboy or schoolgirl: wandering wits hinder a lesson from being fully taken in at the right moment; that lesson becomes a bugbear, continually wanted henceforth and never there; and the sense of loss tries the young scholar more than would the attentive reception of a dozen such lessons.

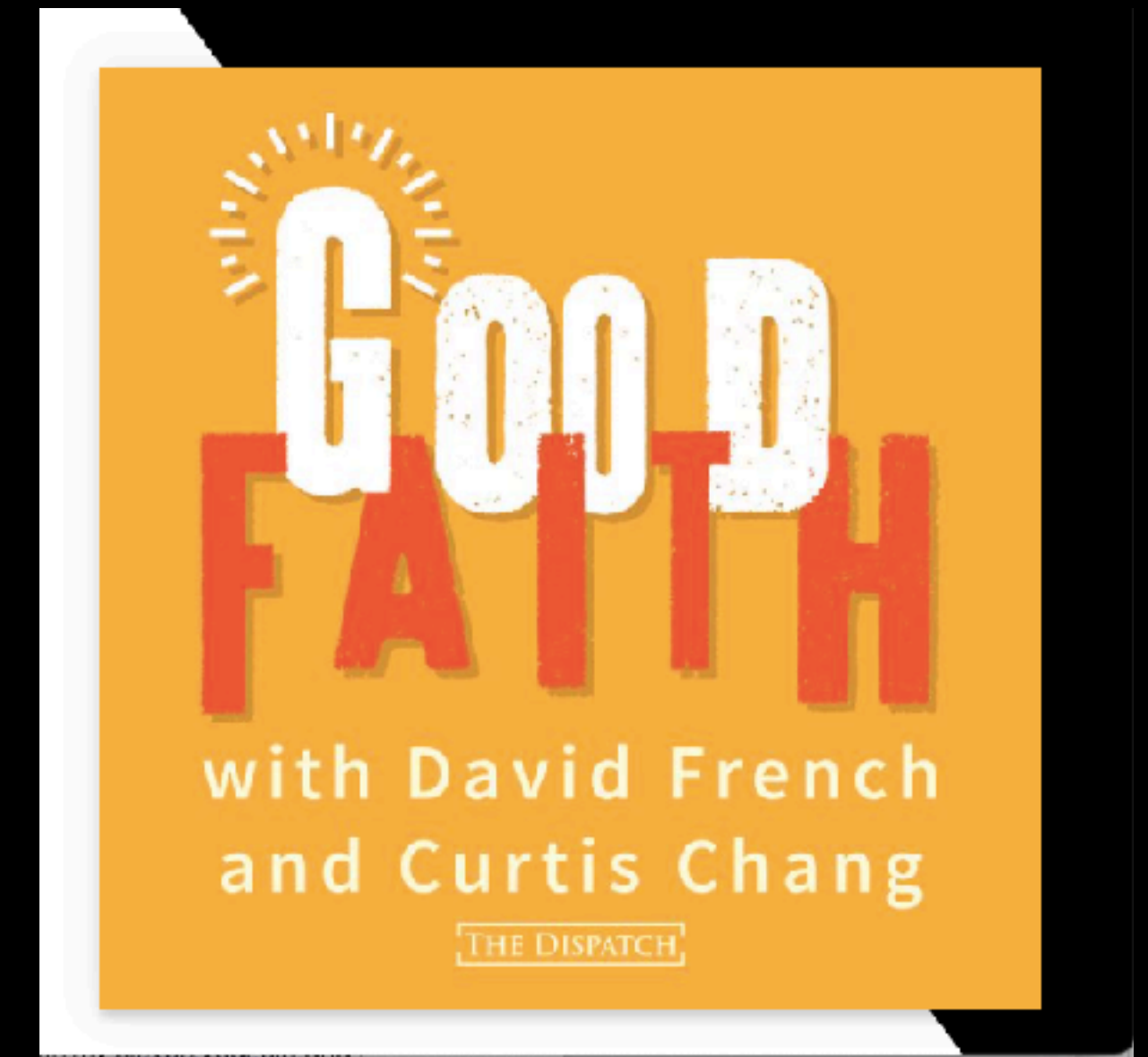
Charlotte Mason, Vol 1, p146

What do you think of  
when you think of the  
failure of attention?  
Or habit of inattention?

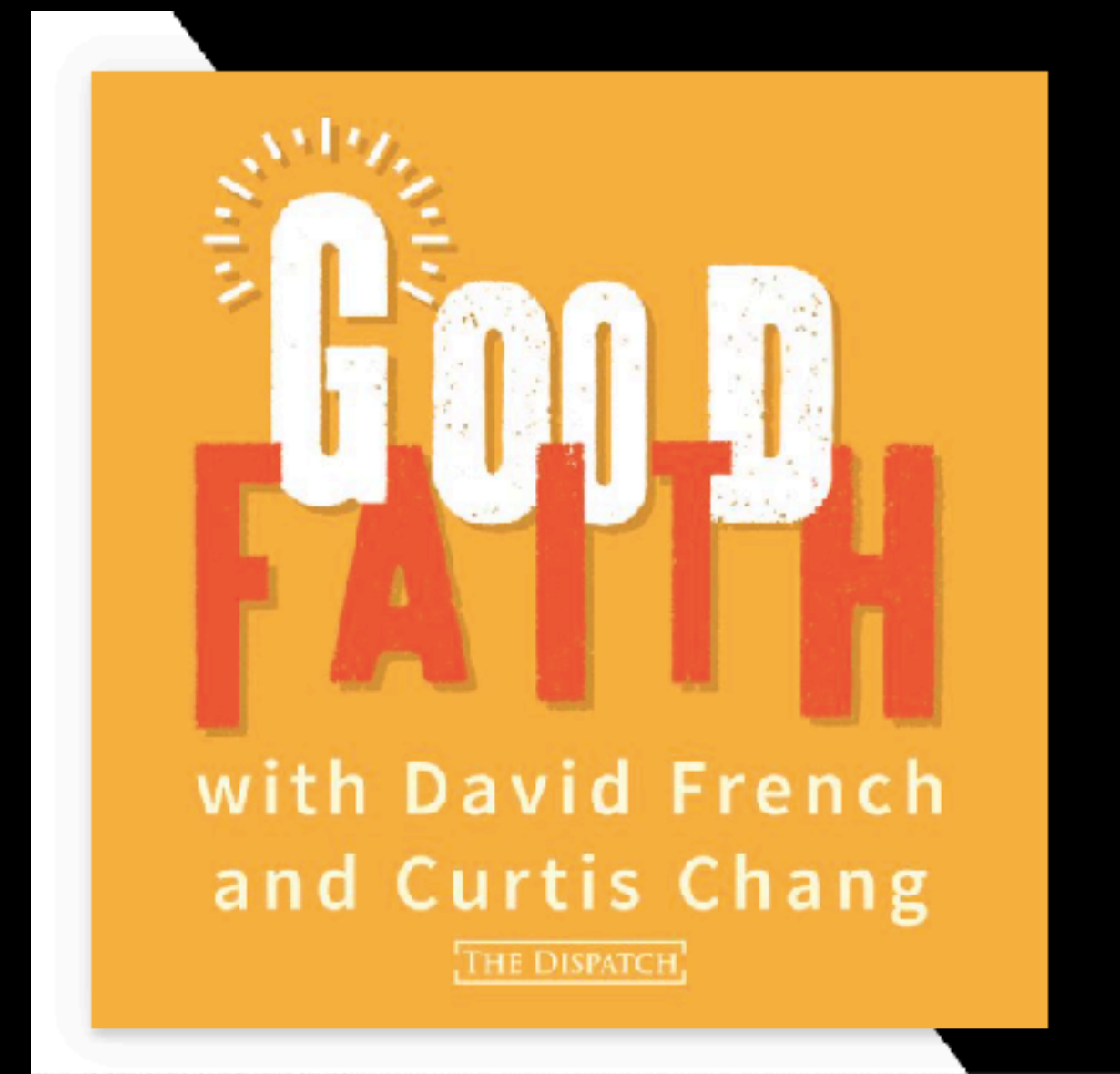


Anxiety: the natural  
human response to  
uncertainty

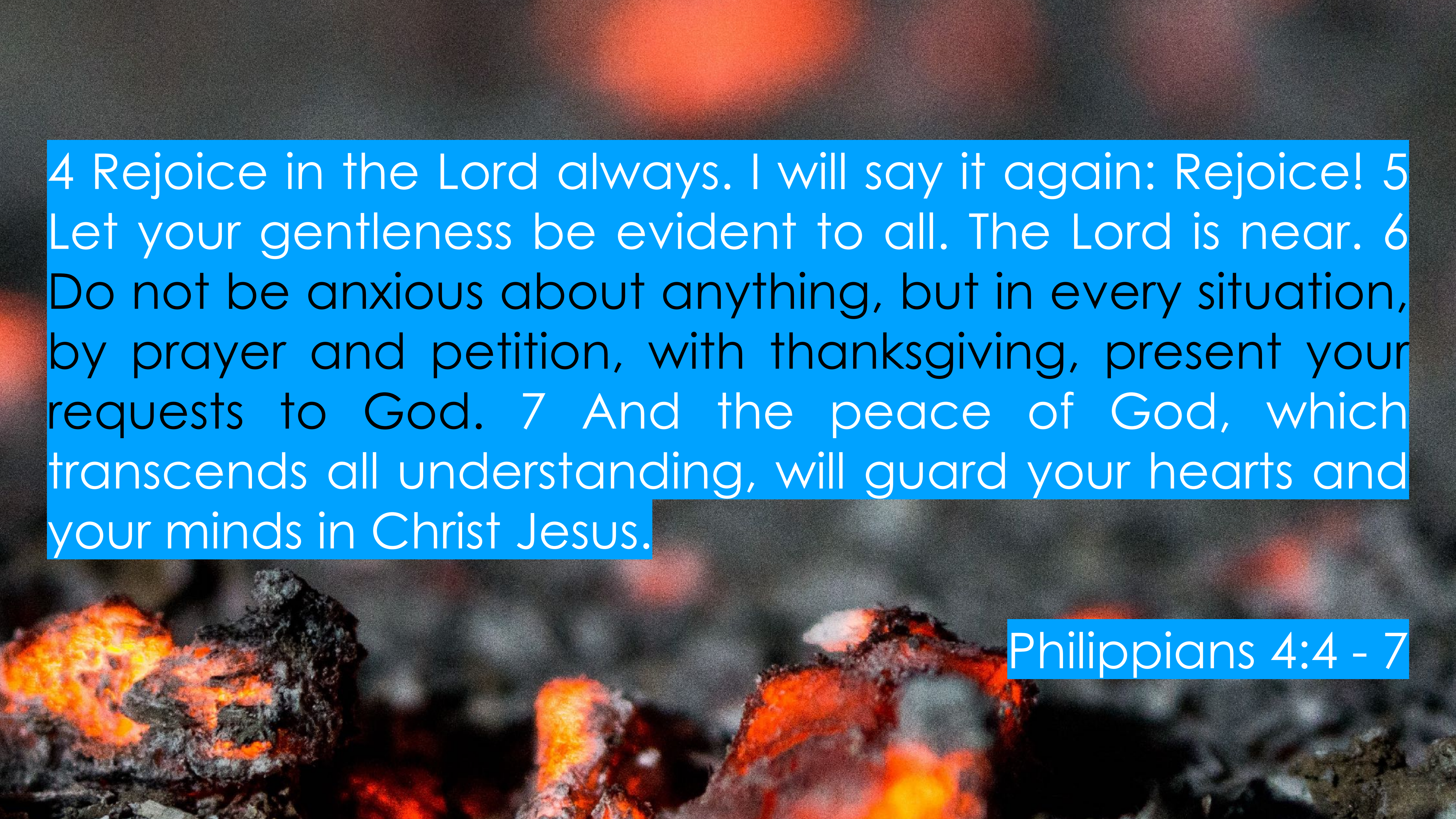
# Episode 33: Feeling Overwhelmed by the News Cycle?



Anxiety: the natural human response to uncertainty.



Episode 33: Anxiety.  
Despair. Weariness.



4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4 - 7



“And so seated next to my father in the train compartment, I suddenly asked, "Father, what is sexsin?"

He turned to look at me, as he always did when answering a question, but to my surprise he said nothing. At last he stood up, lifted his traveling case off the floor and set it on the floor.

Will you carry it off the train, Corrie?" he said.

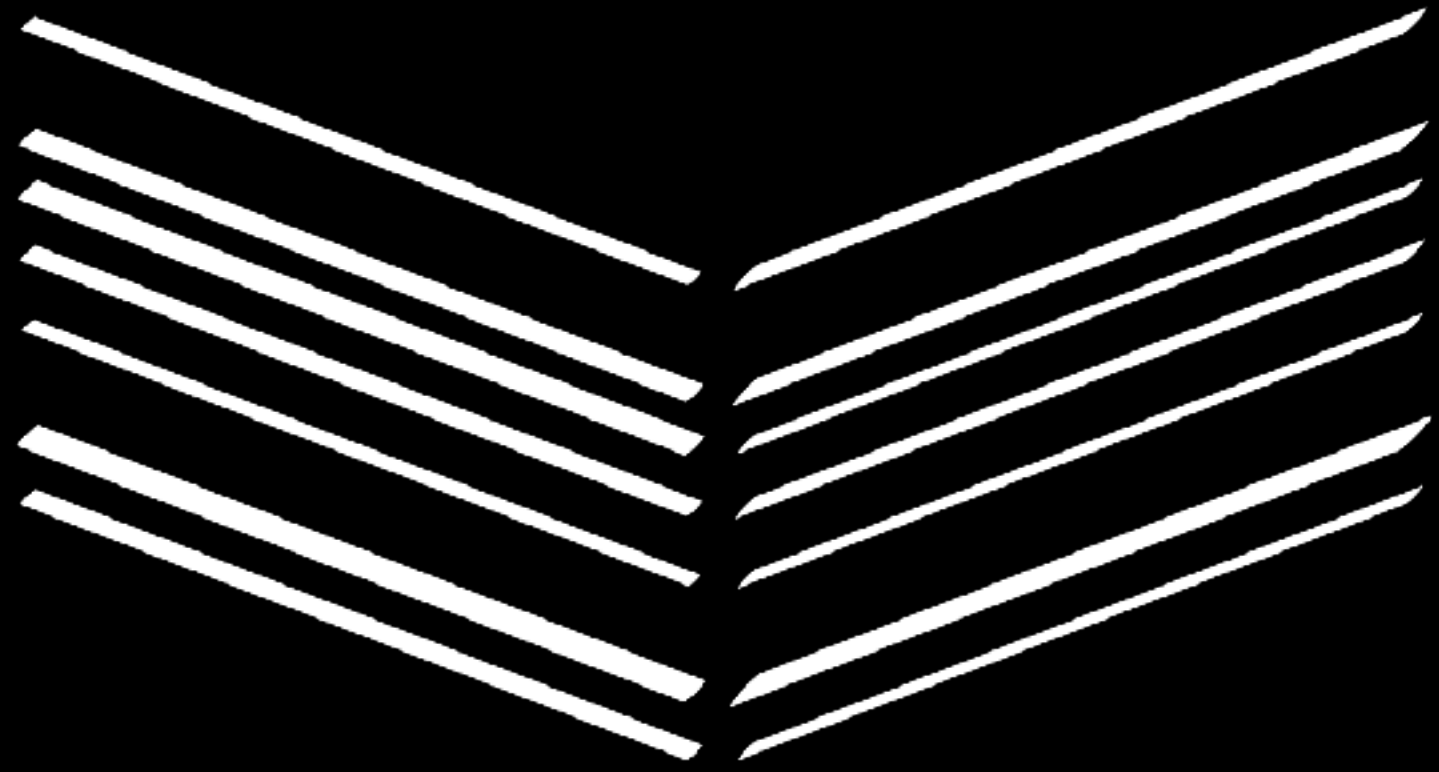
I stood up and tugged at it. It was crammed with the watches and spare parts he had purchased that morning.

"It's too heavy," I said.

"Yes," he said, "and it would be a pretty poor father who would ask his little girl to carry such a load. It's the same way, Corrie, with knowledge. Some knowledge is too heavy for children. When you are older and stronger, you can bear it. For now you must trust me to carry it for you."

Corrie Ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*





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Ἀγάβου προφητείας τῷ Παύλῳ.  
Agabus' prophetic concerning Paul.  
Agabus' prophecy.

Act. XXI. 10.

AGABUS PAULO VINCULA PRAEDICIT.  
Prediction of Agabus to St. Paul.  
Agabus' voorzegging aan Paulus.

Hubert del.

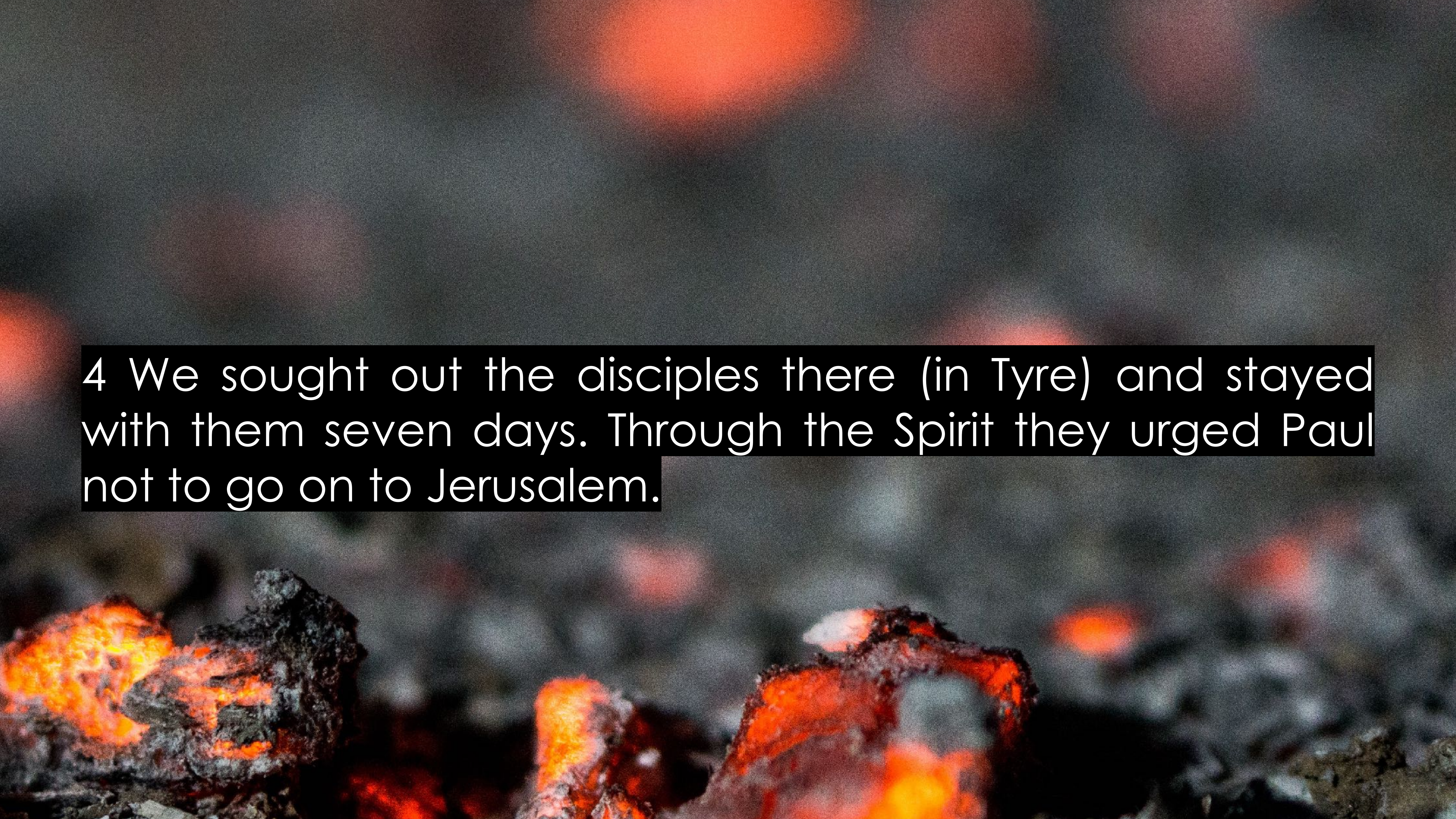
Felton sculp.

Acts 20:22 – 25

22 “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

25 “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.

# Acts 21



4 We sought out the disciples there (in Tyre) and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

15 After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem.



What do we do  
with a text like  
this?

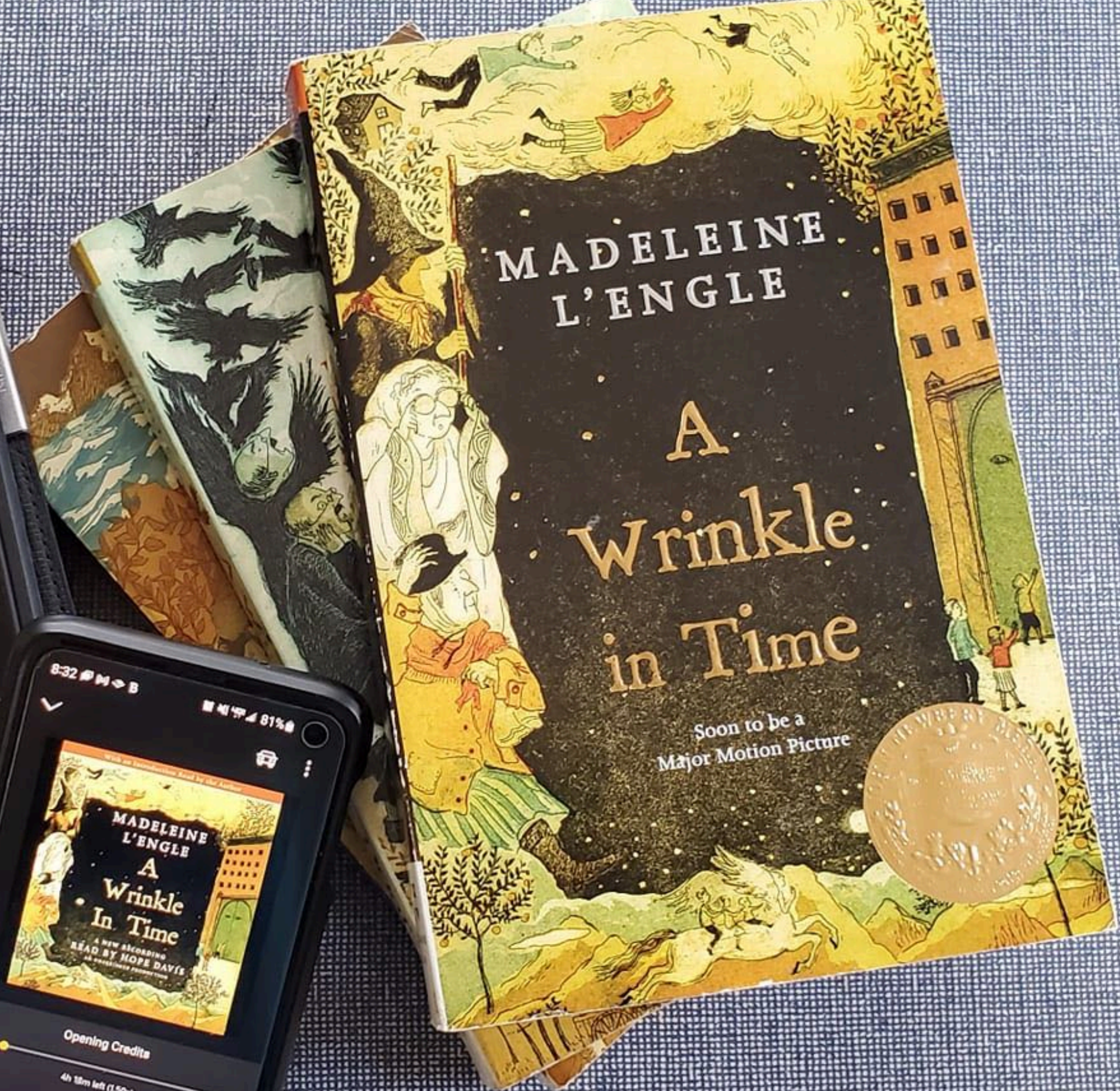
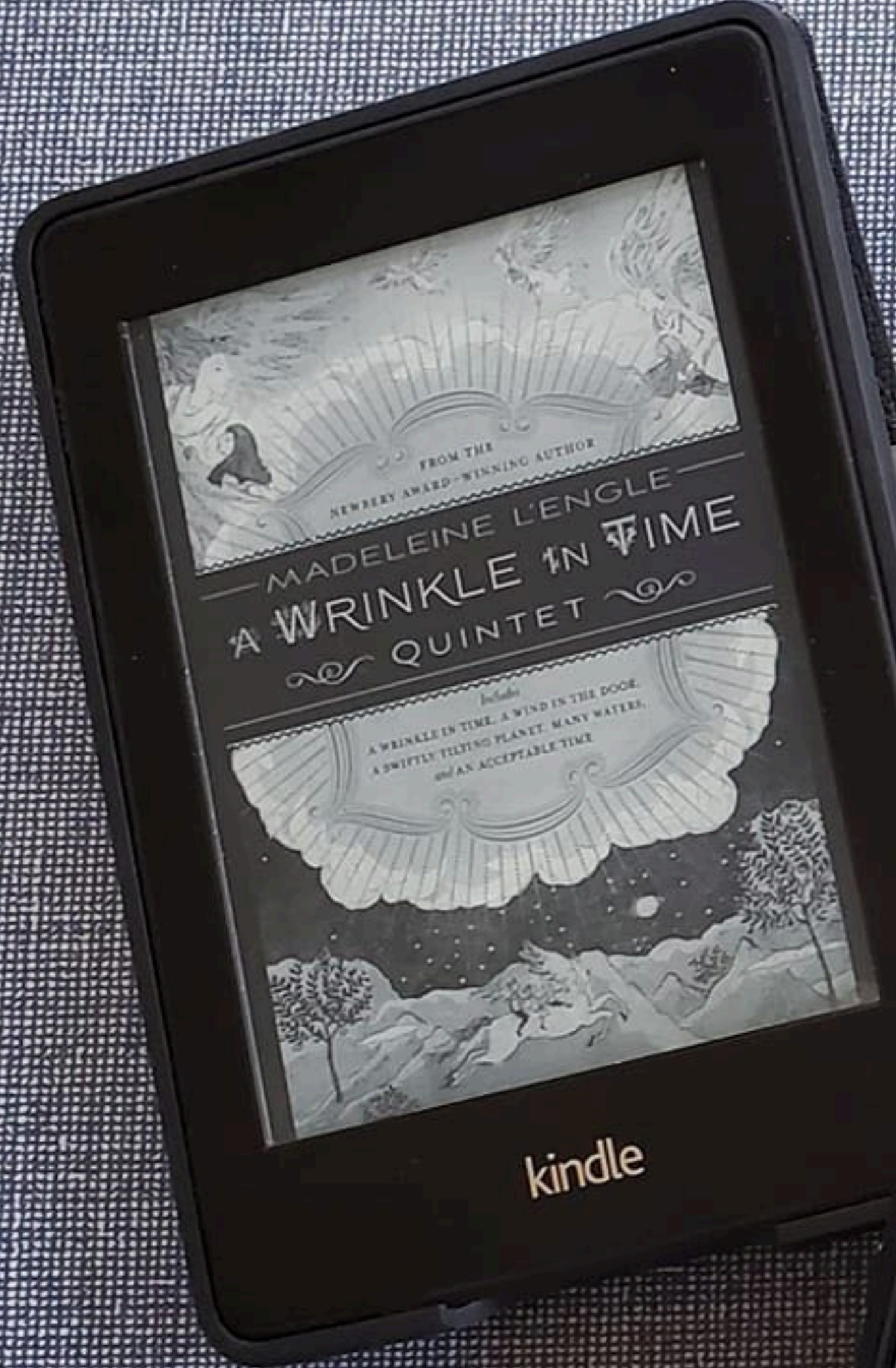


"Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."

Francis Chan, Crazy Love

“We talk of lost ideals, but perhaps they are not lost, only changed; when our ideal for ourselves and for our children becomes limited to prosperity and comfort, we get these, very likely, for ourselves and for them, but we get no more.”

Charlotte Mason, Vol. 3, p. 83





At last she turned to her father. “I’m—I’m sorry, Father.”

He took both her hands in his, bent down to her with his short-sighted eyes. “Sorry for what, Megatron?”

Tears almost came to her eyes at the gentle use of the old nickname. “I wanted you to do it all for me. I wanted everything to be all easy and simple. . . . So I tried to pretend that it was all your fault . . . because I was scared, and I didn’t want to have to do anything myself—”

“But I wanted to do it for you,” Mr. Murry said. “That’s what every parent wants.” He looked into her dark, frightened eyes. “I won’t let you go, Meg. I am going.”

“No.” Mrs Whatsit’s voice was sterner than Meg had ever heard it. “You are going to allow Meg the privilege of accepting this danger. You are a wise man, Mr. Murry. You are going to let her go.”

Mr. Murry sighed. He drew Meg close to him. “Little Megaparsec. Don’t be afraid to be afraid. We will try to have courage for you. That is all we can do.”

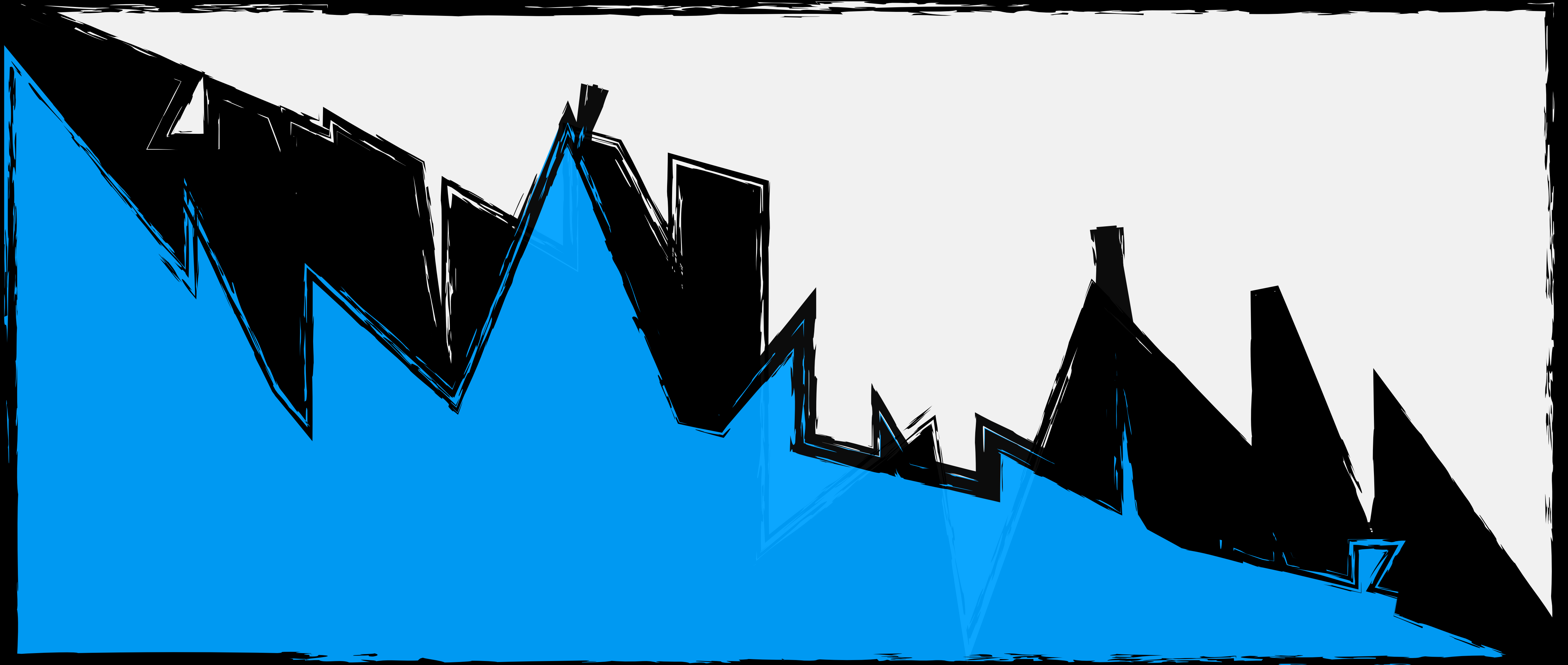
Madeleine L’Engle, A Wrinkle in Time p.220 -220

Releasing Our Children\*



\*fantasy

# Releasing Our Children\*



\*reality

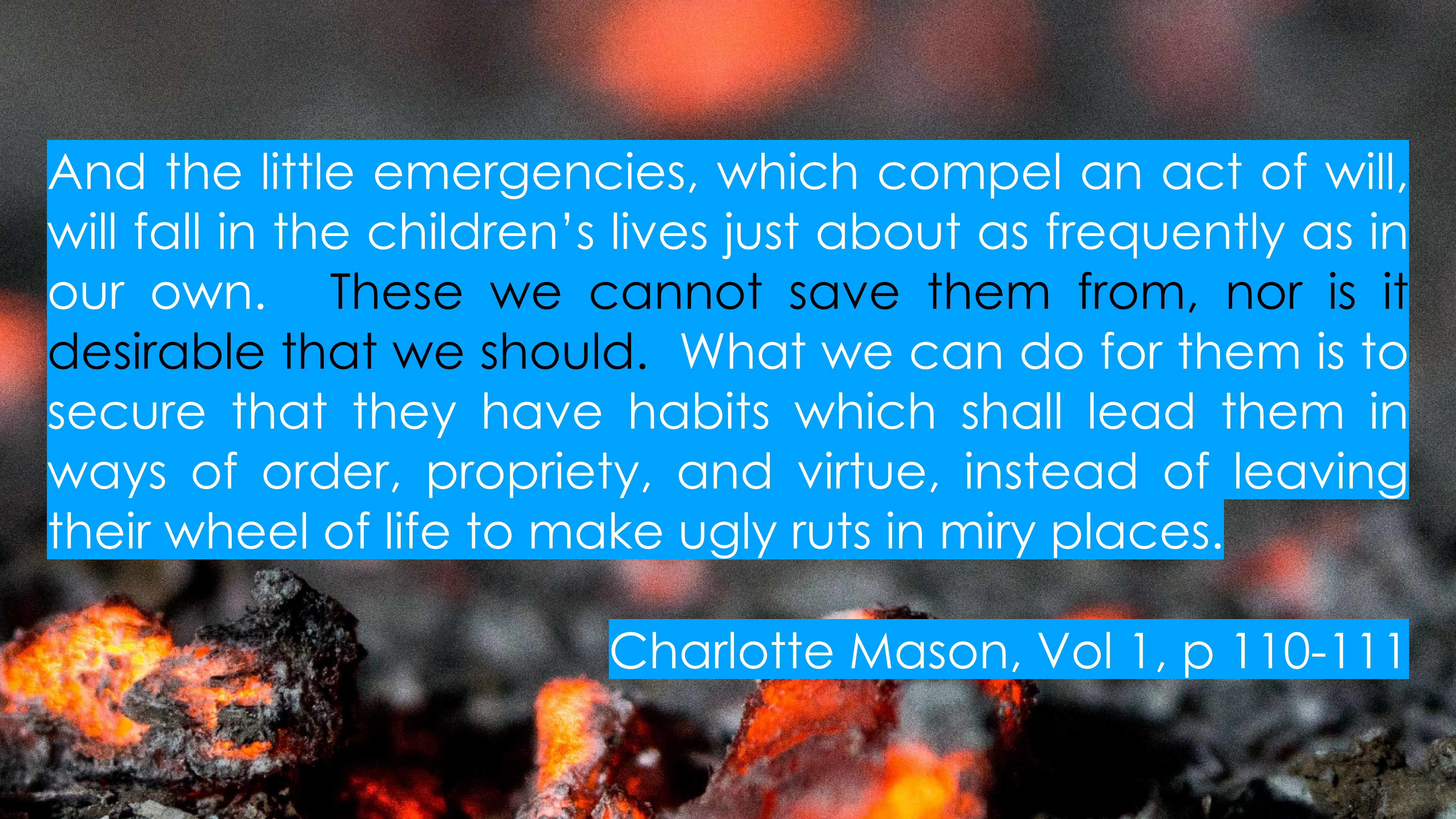
"I wanted you to do it all for me. I wanted everything to be all easy and simple. . . . I was scared, and I didn't want to have to do anything myself."

Meg



"But I wanted to  
do it for you.  
That's what every  
parent wants."

Mr Murry



And the little emergencies, which compel an act of will, will fall in the children's lives just about as frequently as in our own. These we cannot save them from, nor is it desirable that we should. What we can do for them is to secure that they have habits which shall lead them in ways of order, propriety, and virtue, instead of leaving their wheel of life to make ugly ruts in miry places.

Charlotte Mason, Vol 1, p 110-111

"No. You are  
going to allow  
Meg the privilege  
of accepting this  
danger."

Mrs Whatsit

He should be taught to feel a certain triumph in compelling himself to fix his thoughts. Let him know what the real difficulty is, how it is the nature of his mind to be incessantly thinking, but how the thoughts, if left to themselves, will always run off from one thing to another, and that the struggle and the victory required of him is to fix his thoughts upon the task at hand.

Charlotte Mason, Home Education, p. 145

"Don't be afraid to be  
afraid. We will try to  
have courage for you.  
That's all we can do."

Mr. Murry

"We will not let the  
Black Thing get you.  
I don't think."

Mrs Whatsit

"I suppose we are all ready to admit that it is not the things we do, but the things we fail to do, which fatigue us."

Charlotte Mason

If we make the avoidance of uncertainty in our lives the goal, we will actually increase our anxiety. If we fail to release our children to feel and move through the natural response to uncertainty (normal anxiety) we risk impairing their ability to experience and move through the uncertainty.



Releasing our  
children



Sabbath

“We talk of lost ideals, but perhaps they are not lost, only changed; when our ideal for ourselves and for our children becomes limited to prosperity and comfort, we get these, very likely, for ourselves and for them, but we get no more.”

Charlotte Mason, Vol. 3, p. 83

"The world says, 'Love yourself, grab all you can, follow your heart.' Jesus says, 'Deny yourself, grab your cross and follow me.'"

Francis Chan

“And what I have to give you this time you must try to understand not word by word, but in a flash.... Listen, Meg. Listen well. *The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.*” She paused, and then she said, “*May the right prevail.*”

A Winkle in Time, p. 222



*I wonder what would  
happen if I called  
out, "Here boy!"*



# The Overdone Brain

Failing at the Habit of Attention

