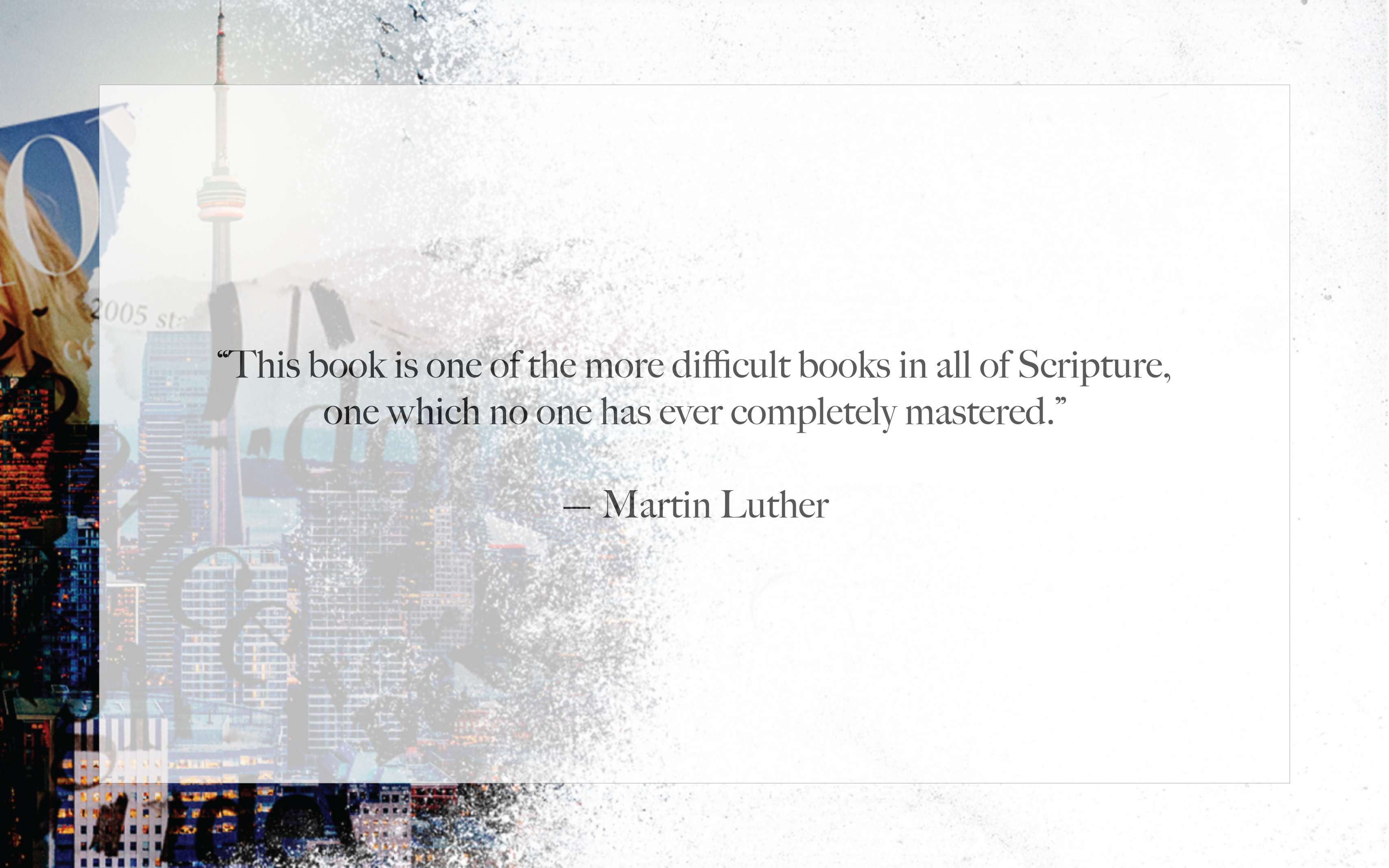




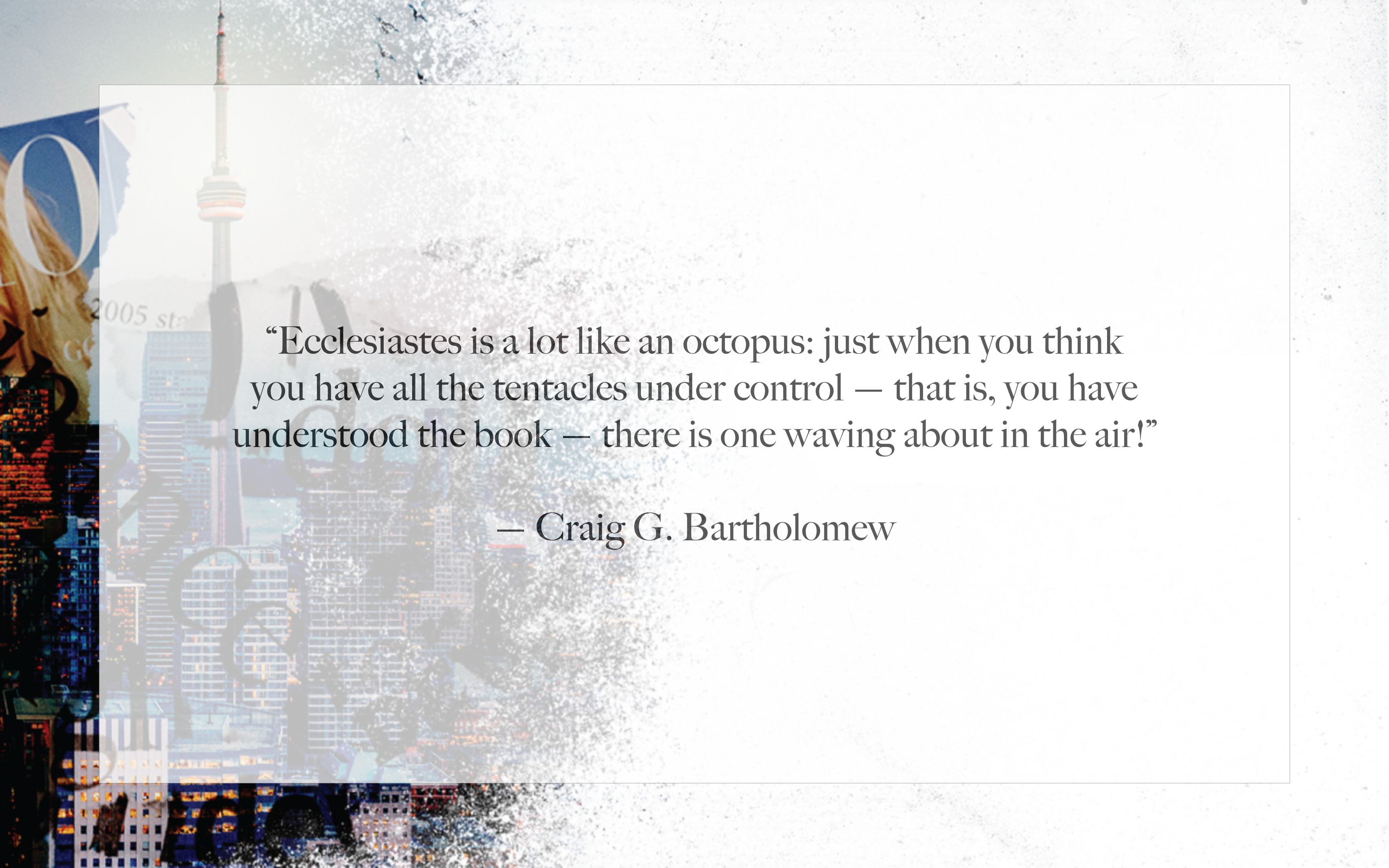
ECCLESIASTES

MAKING SENSE OF A COMPLEX WORLD



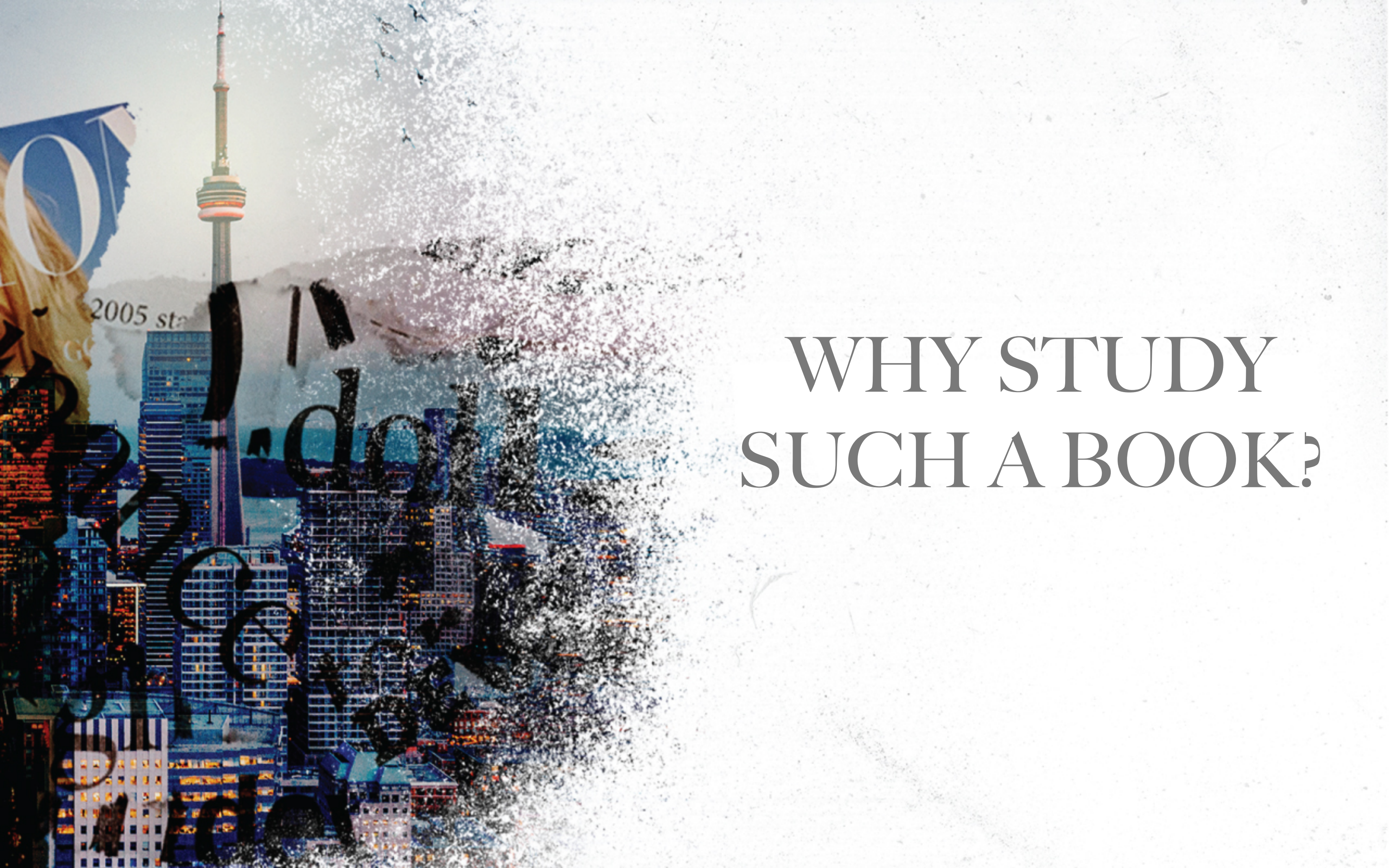
“This book is one of the more difficult books in all of Scripture,
one which no one has ever completely mastered.”

— Martin Luther



“Ecclesiastes is a lot like an octopus: just when you think you have all the tentacles under control — that is, you have understood the book — there is one waving about in the air!”

— Craig G. Bartholomew



WHY STUDY
SUCH A BOOK?



It's honest.



It's honest.

It's course-shaping.



It's honest.

It's course-shaping.

It's apologetic.



It's honest.

It's course-shaping.

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It's doxological.



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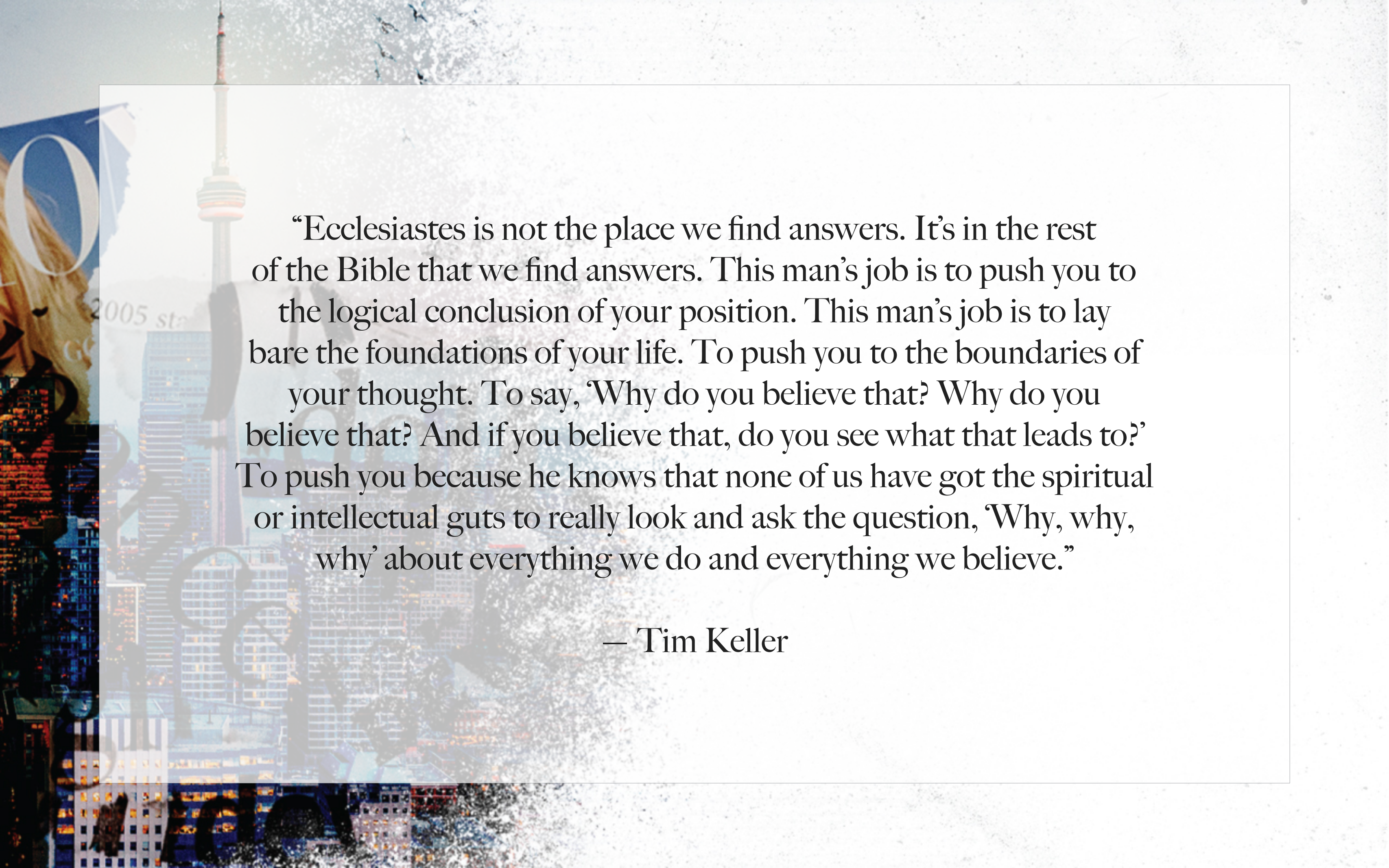
It's doxological.

It's practical.



THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS AND MEANING

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26



“Ecclesiastes is not the place we find answers. It’s in the rest of the Bible that we find answers. This man’s job is to push you to the logical conclusion of your position. This man’s job is to lay bare the foundations of your life. To push you to the boundaries of your thought. To say, ‘Why do you believe that? Why do you believe that? And if you believe that, do you see what that leads to?’ To push you because he knows that none of us have got the spiritual or intellectual guts to really look and ask the question, ‘Why, why, why’ about everything we do and everything we believe.”

— Tim Keller



Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

— Ecclesiastes 1:2



UNDER THE SUN

life as we know it in a fallen world

a view of the world absent of God

a belief in God but one that falls short
of the triune covenant LORD of Scripture

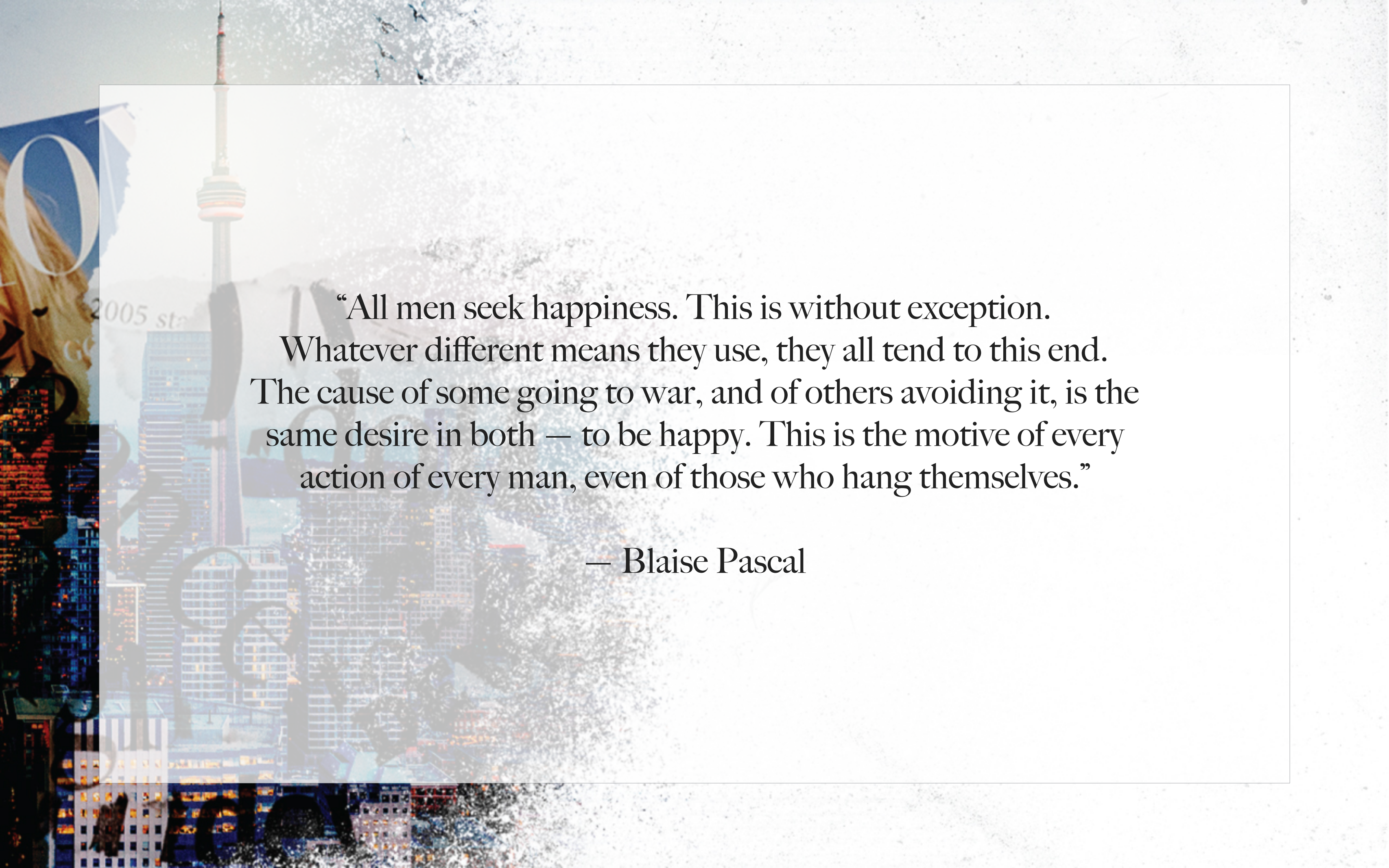
a right confessional belief in God
and yet a functional living for self and now

a limited perspective on life compared to
God's comprehensive, all-knowing view of the world



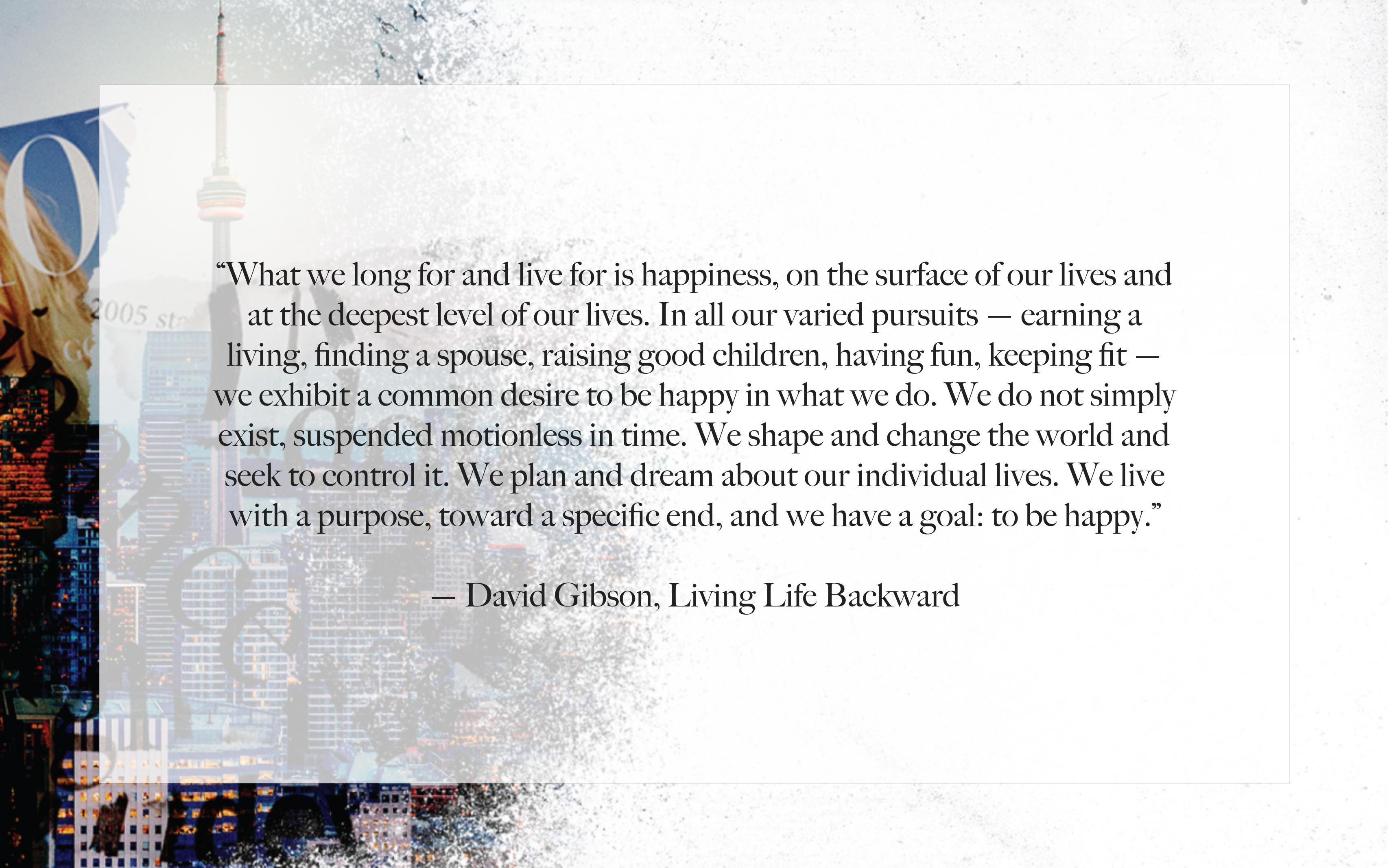
What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?

— Ecclesiastes 1:3



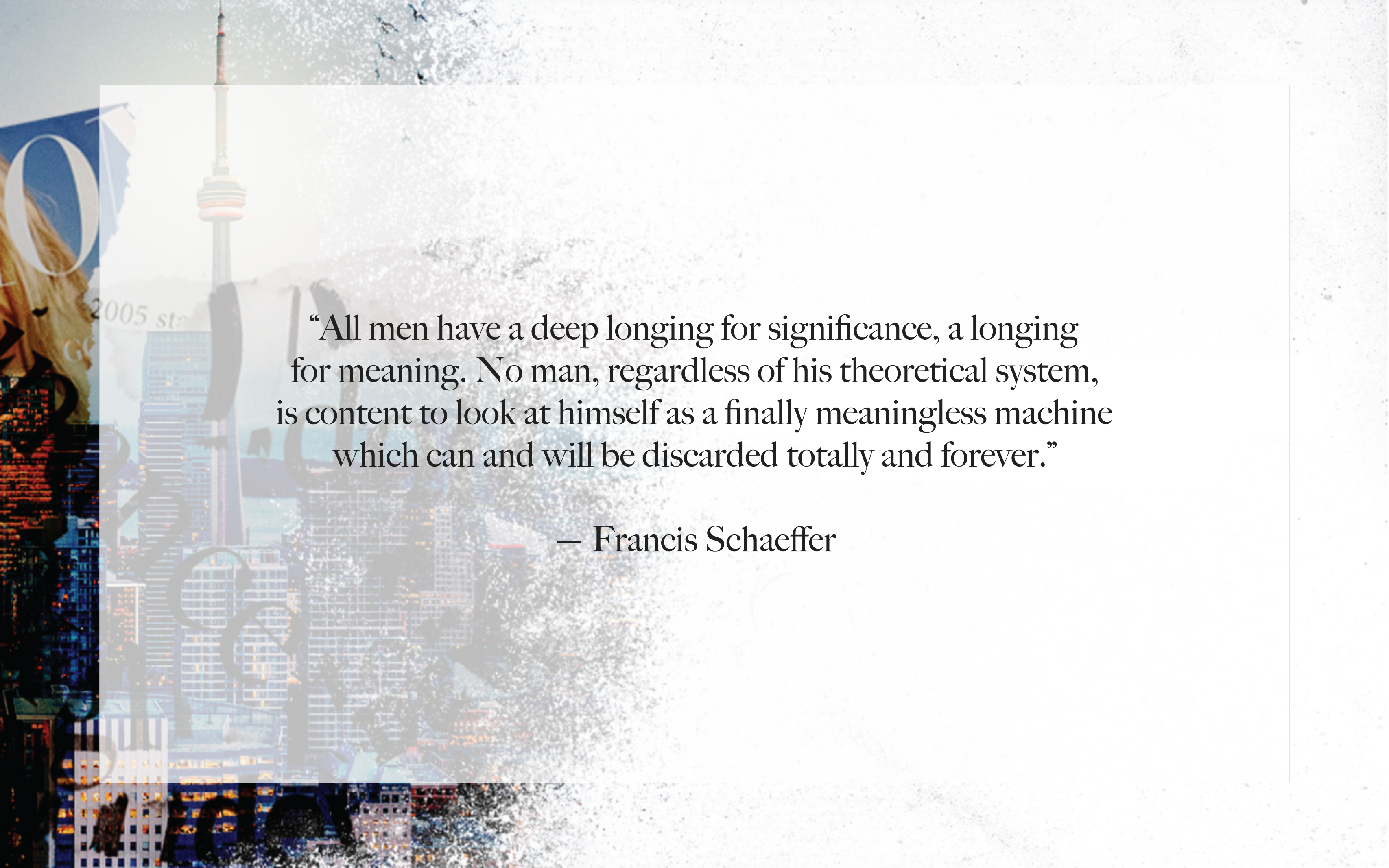
“All men seek happiness. This is without exception.
Whatever different means they use, they all tend to this end.
The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the
same desire in both — to be happy. This is the motive of every
action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”

— Blaise Pascal



“What we long for and live for is happiness, on the surface of our lives and at the deepest level of our lives. In all our varied pursuits — earning a living, finding a spouse, raising good children, having fun, keeping fit — we exhibit a common desire to be happy in what we do. We do not simply exist, suspended motionless in time. We shape and change the world and seek to control it. We plan and dream about our individual lives. We live with a purpose, toward a specific end, and we have a goal: to be happy.”

— David Gibson, *Living Life Backward*



“All men have a deep longing for significance, a longing for meaning. No man, regardless of his theoretical system, is content to look at himself as a finally meaningless machine which can and will be discarded totally and forever.”

— Francis Schaeffer



“We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the universe.”

— Stephen Hawking



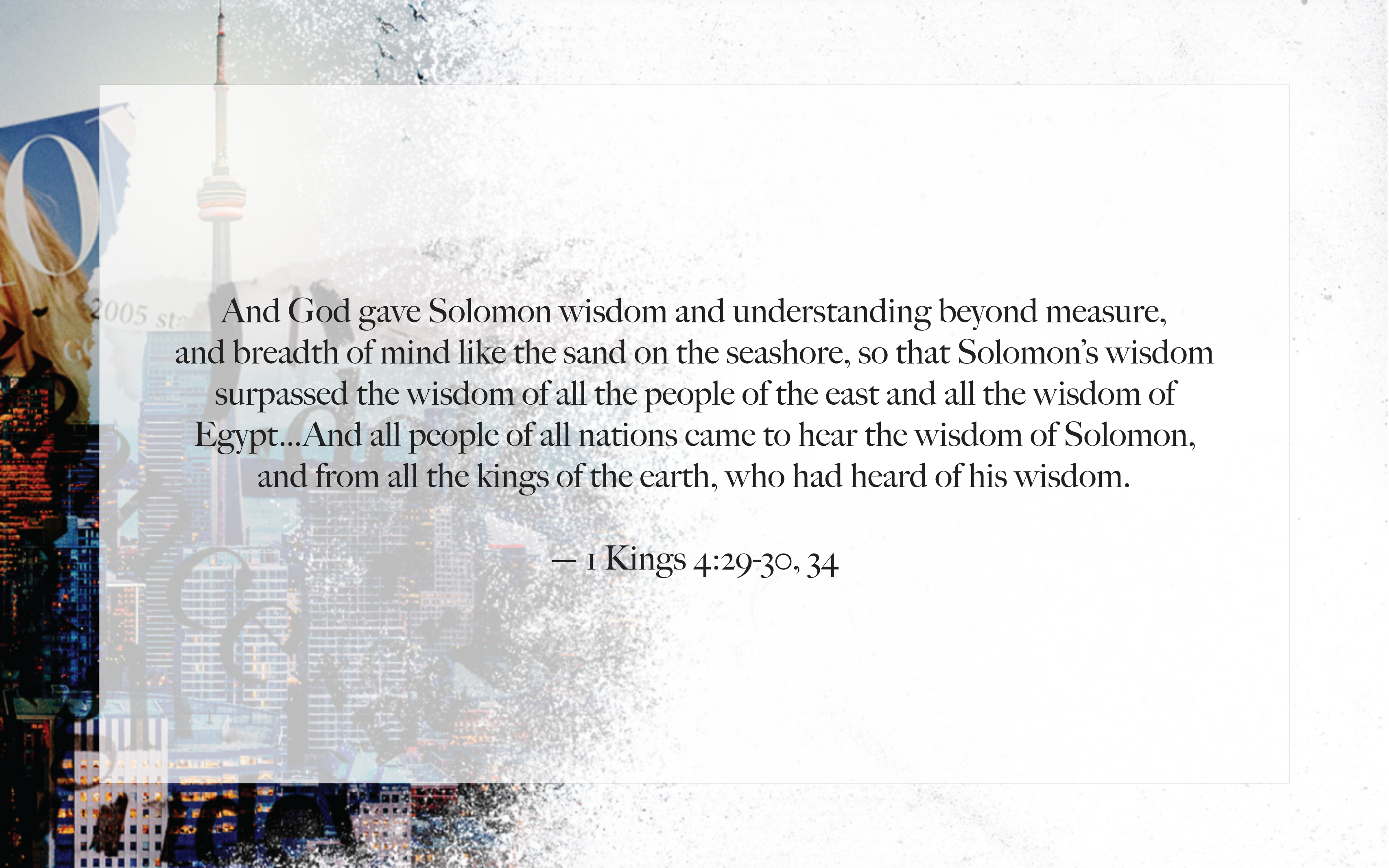
I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

What is crooked cannot be made straight,
and what is lacking cannot be counted.

I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.” And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

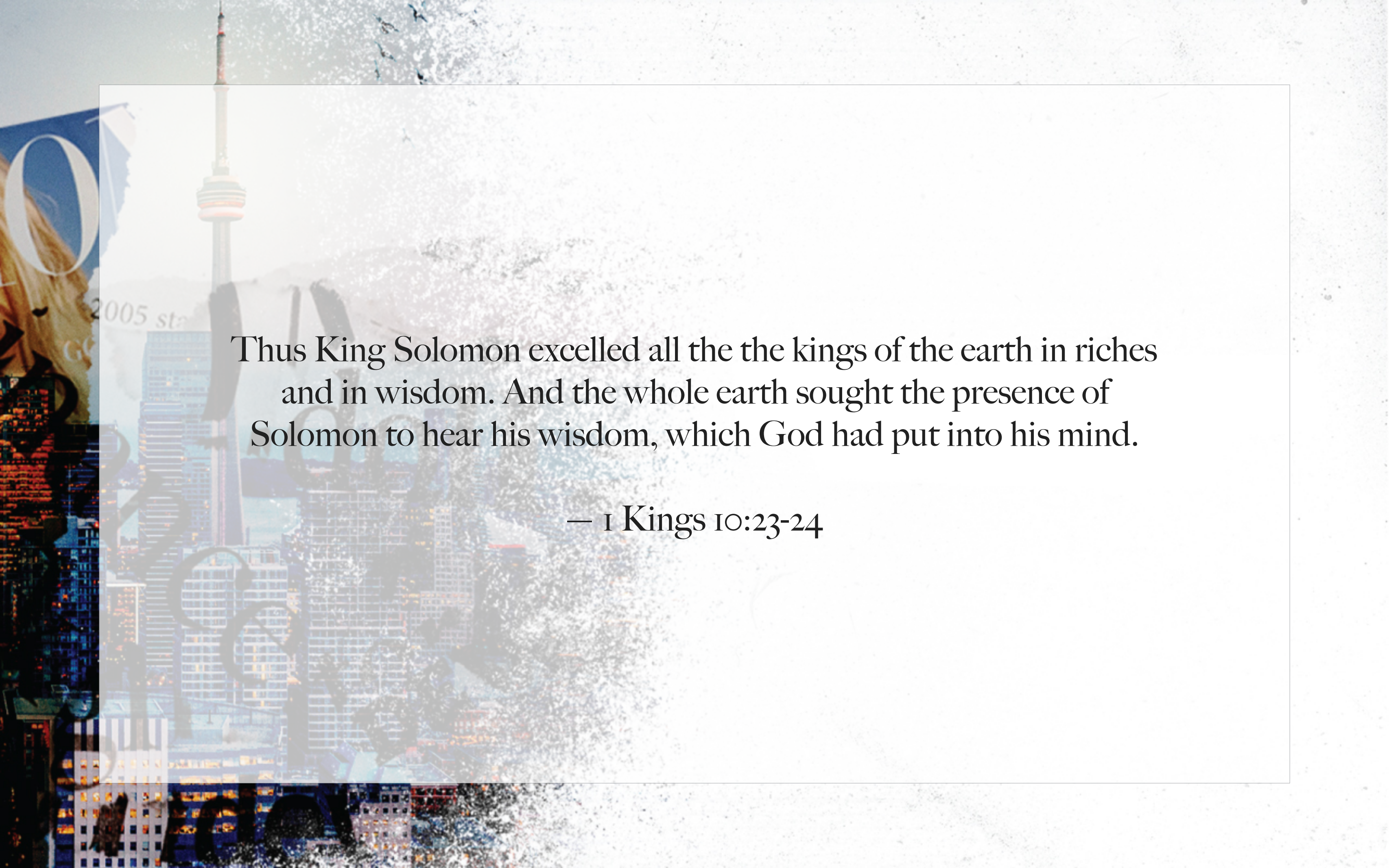
For in much wisdom is much vexation,
and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

— vv 12-18



And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure,
and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom
surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of
Egypt...And all people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon,
and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

— 1 Kings 4:29-30, 34



Thus King Solomon excelled all the the kings of the earth in riches
and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of
Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.

— 1 Kings 10:23-24



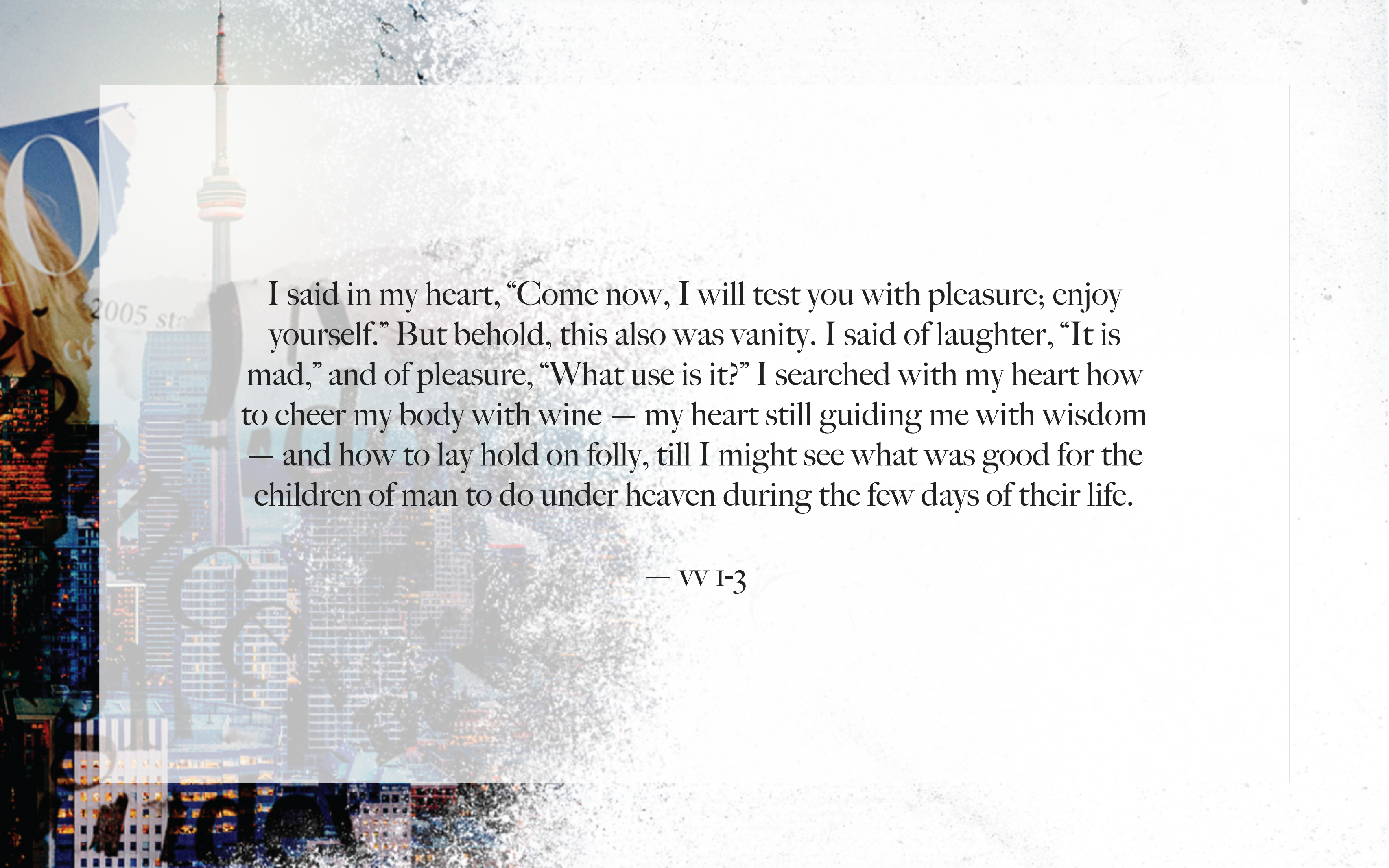
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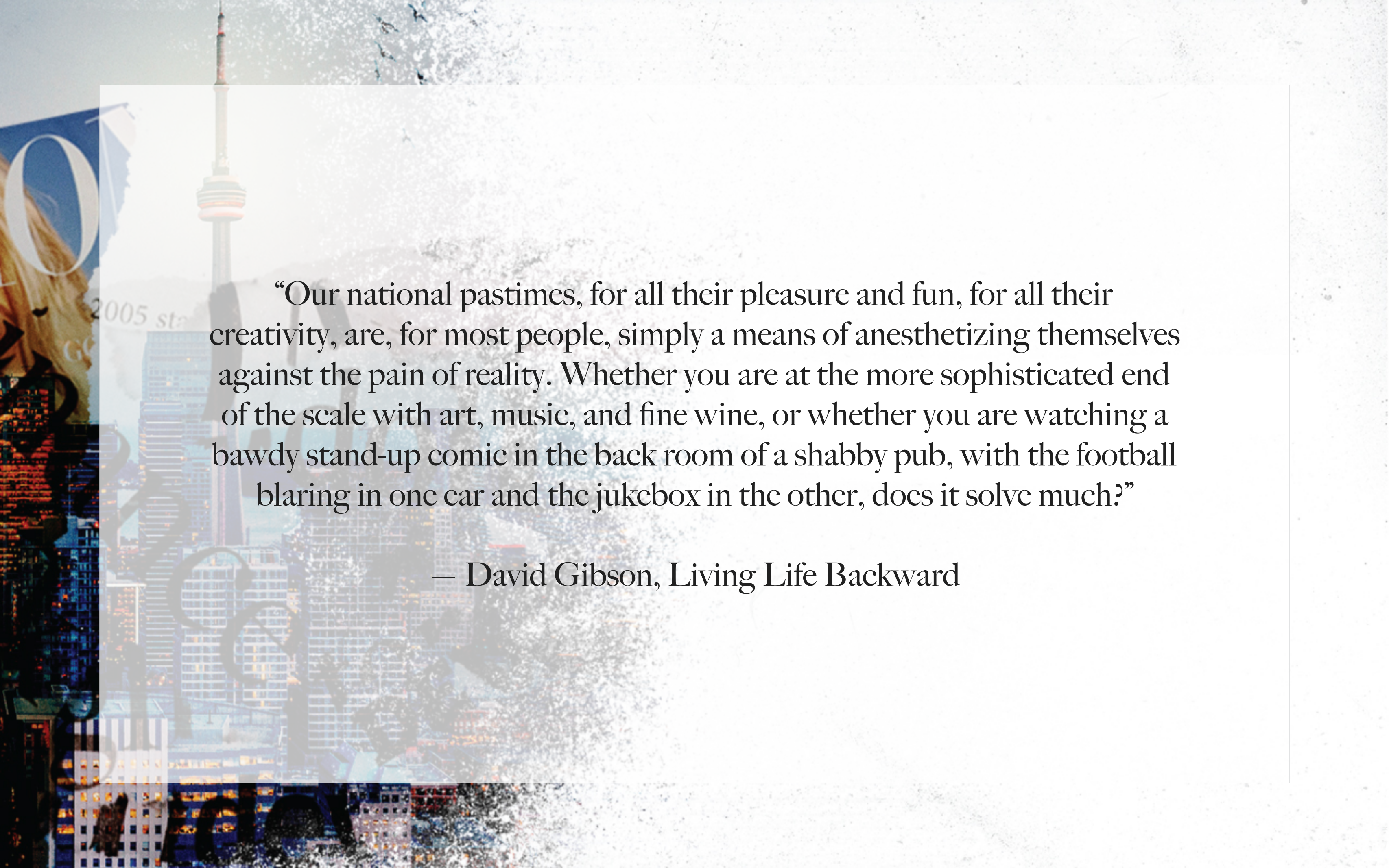
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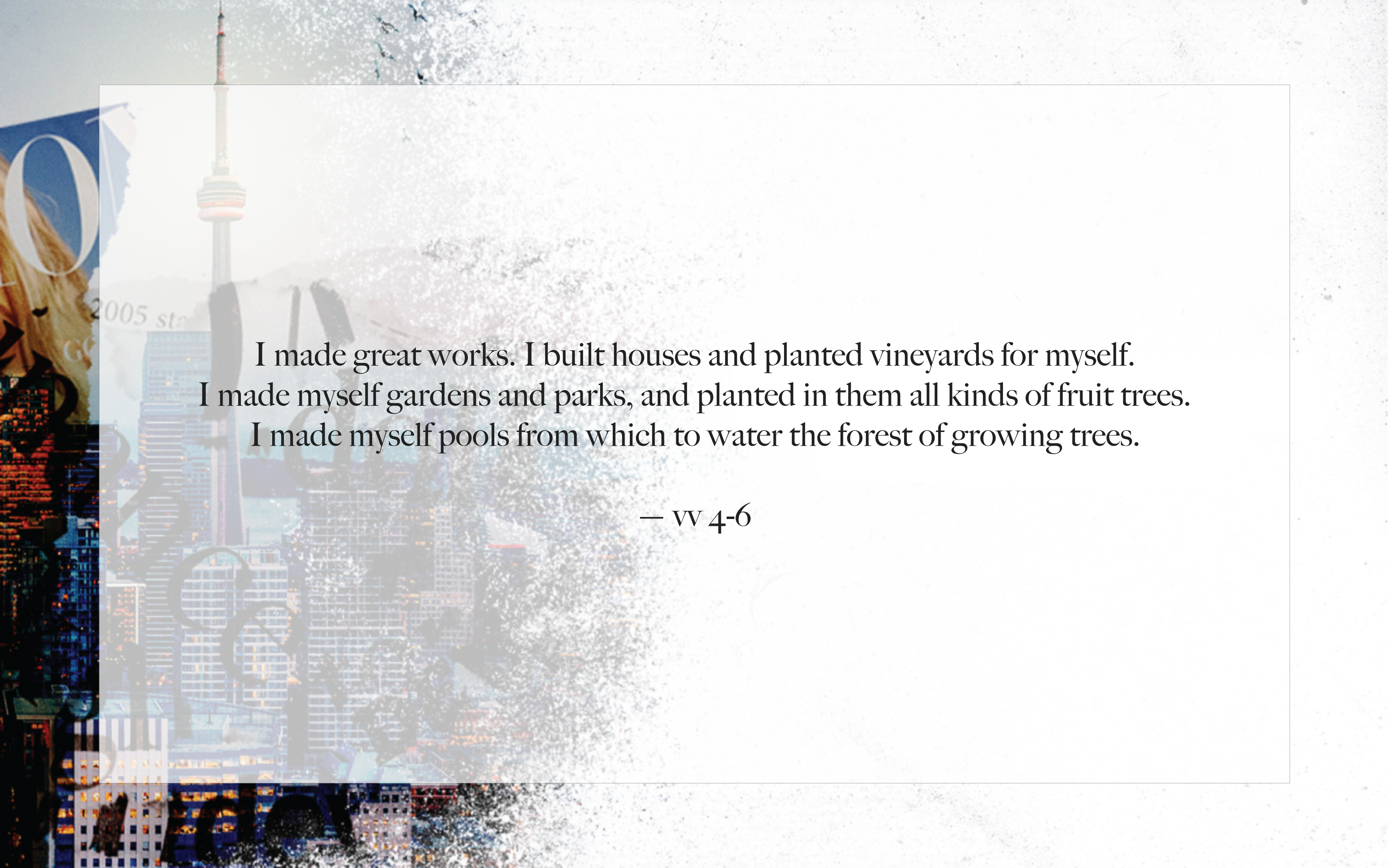
I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?” I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine — my heart still guiding me with wisdom — and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

— vv I-3



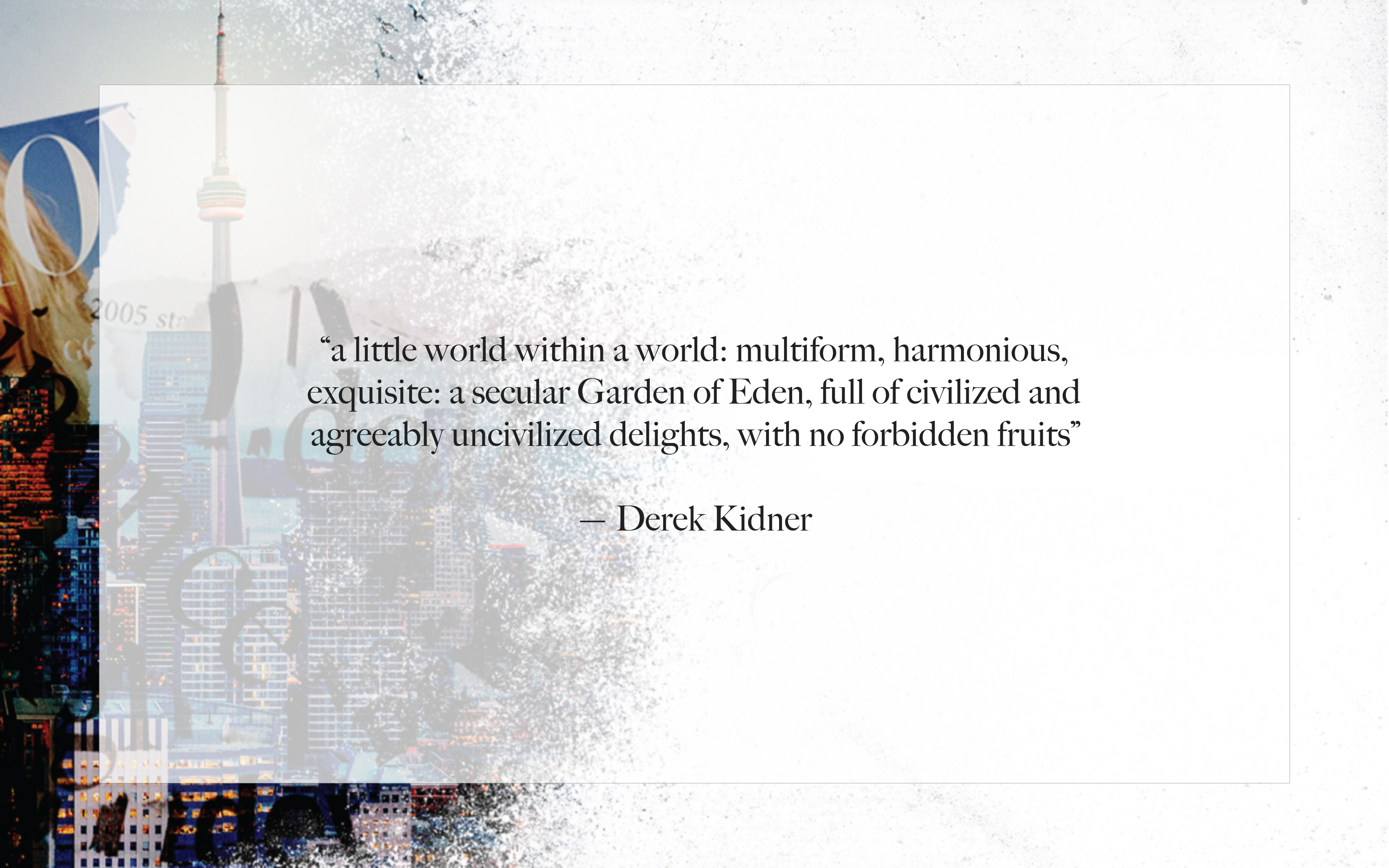
“Our national pastimes, for all their pleasure and fun, for all their creativity, are, for most people, simply a means of anesthetizing themselves against the pain of reality. Whether you are at the more sophisticated end of the scale with art, music, and fine wine, or whether you are watching a bawdy stand-up comic in the back room of a shabby pub, with the football blaring in one ear and the jukebox in the other, does it solve much?”

— David Gibson, *Living Life Backward*



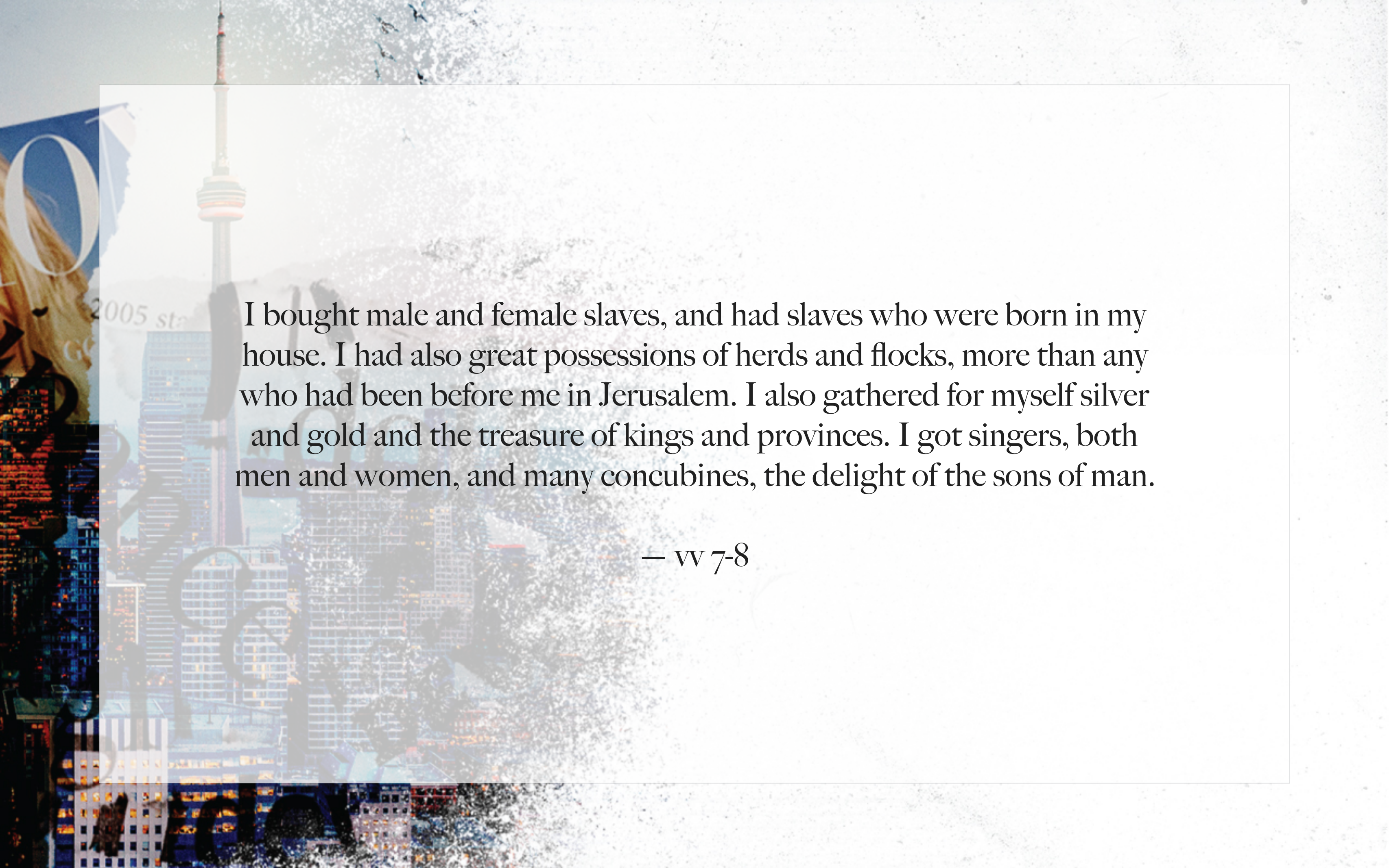
I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.
I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.
I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

— vv 4-6



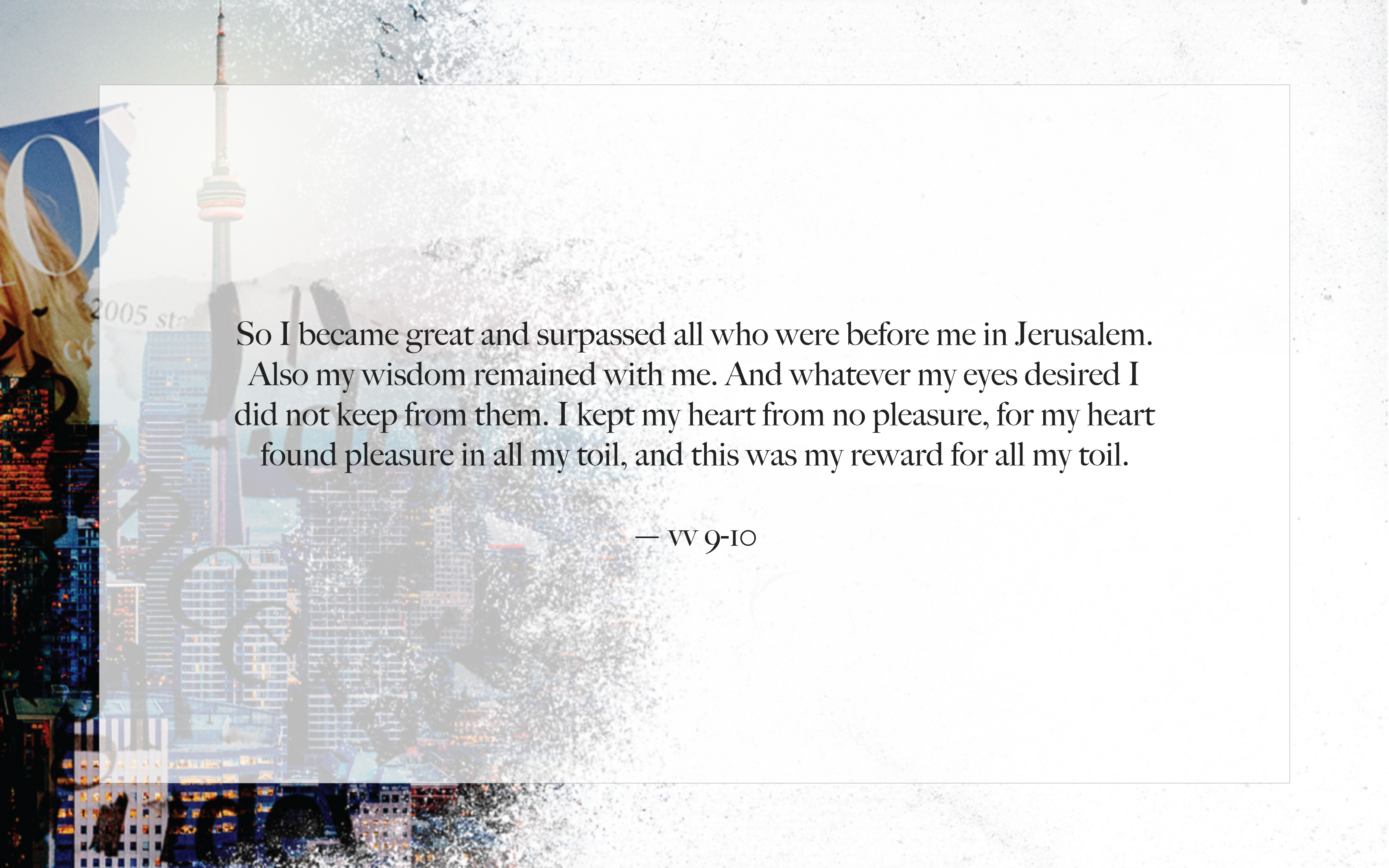
“a little world within a world: multiform, harmonious,
exquisite: a secular Garden of Eden, full of civilized and
agreeably uncivilized delights, with no forbidden fruits”

— Derek Kidner



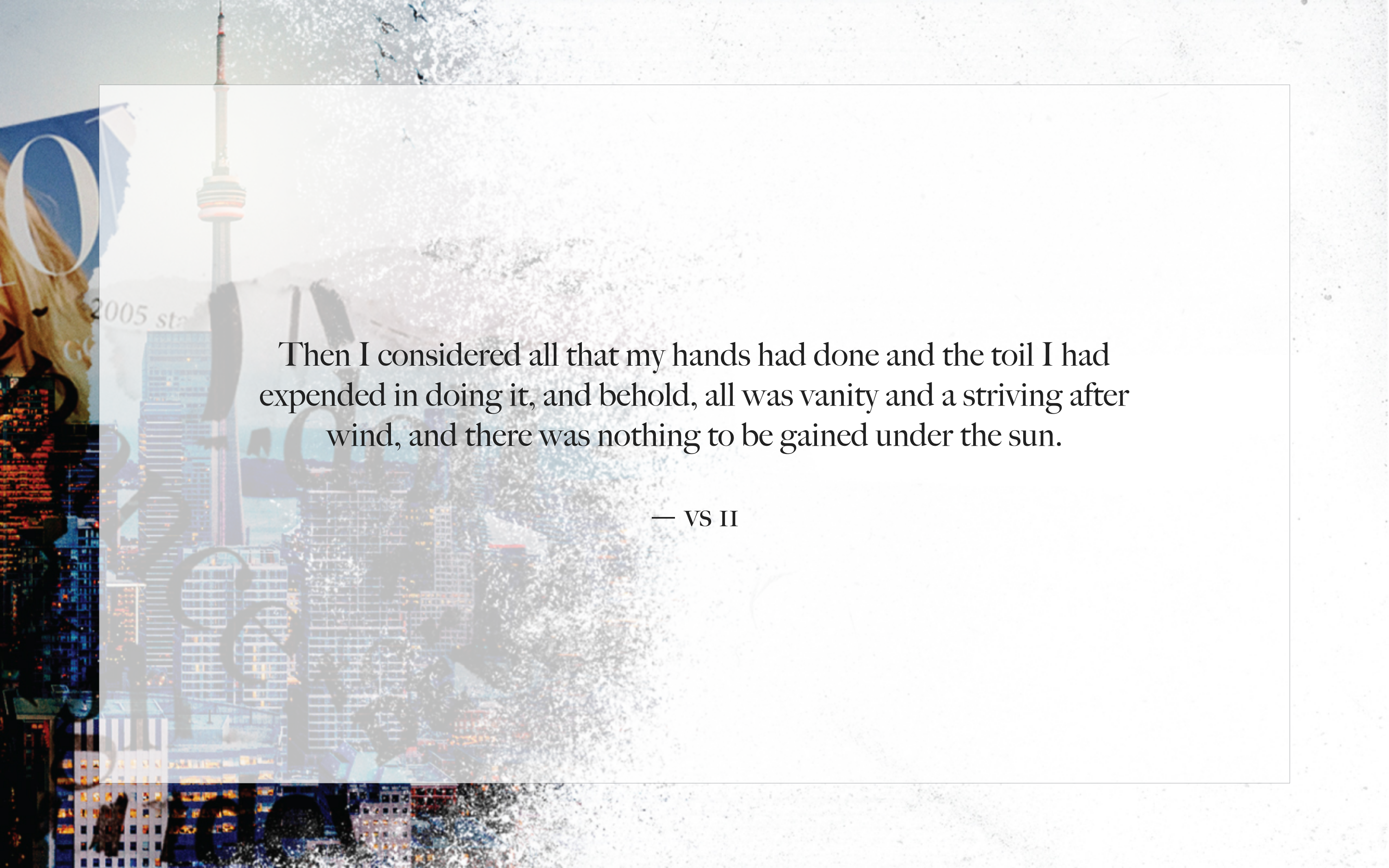
I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

— vv 7-8



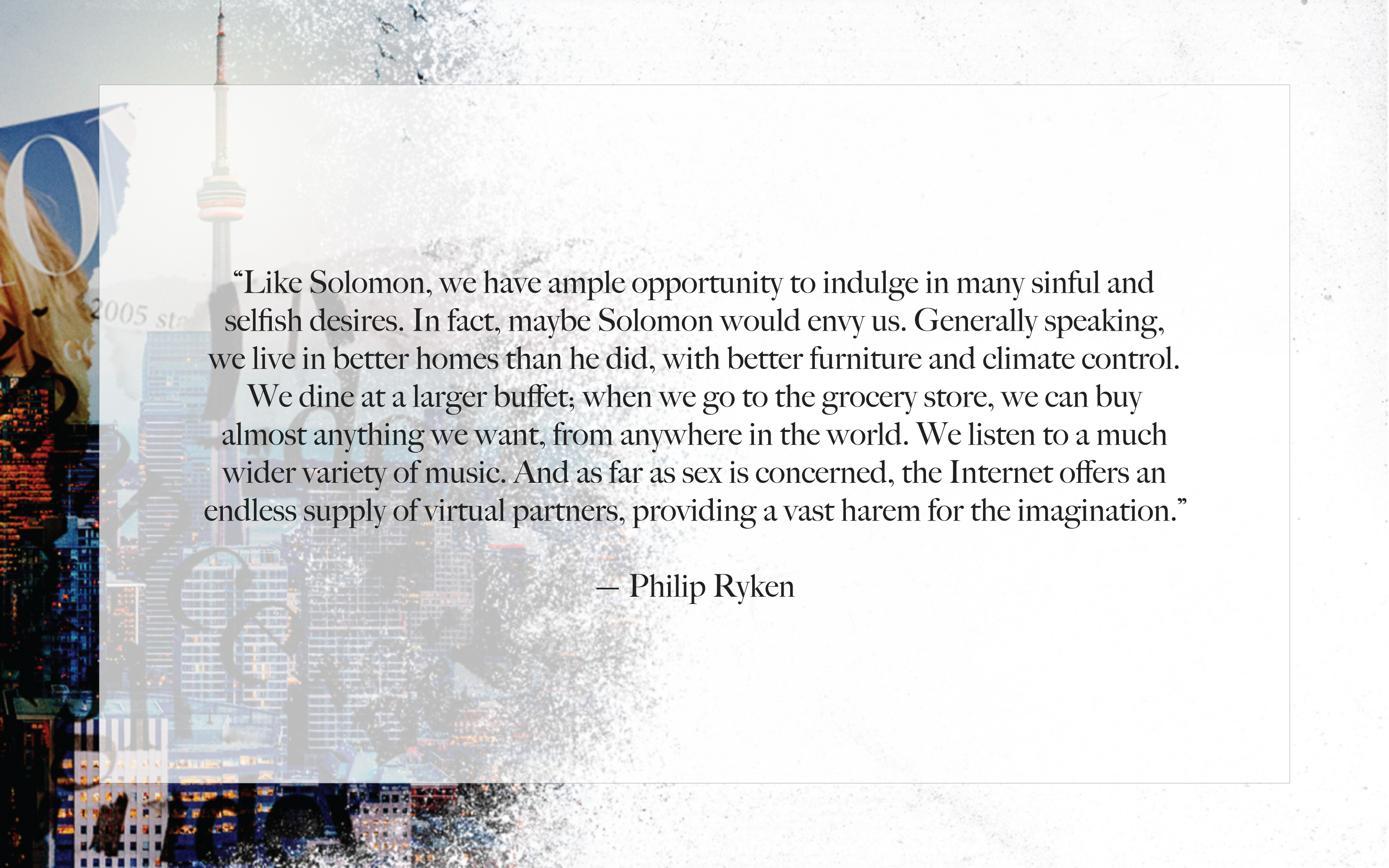
So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem.
Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I
did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart
found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

— vv 9-10



Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

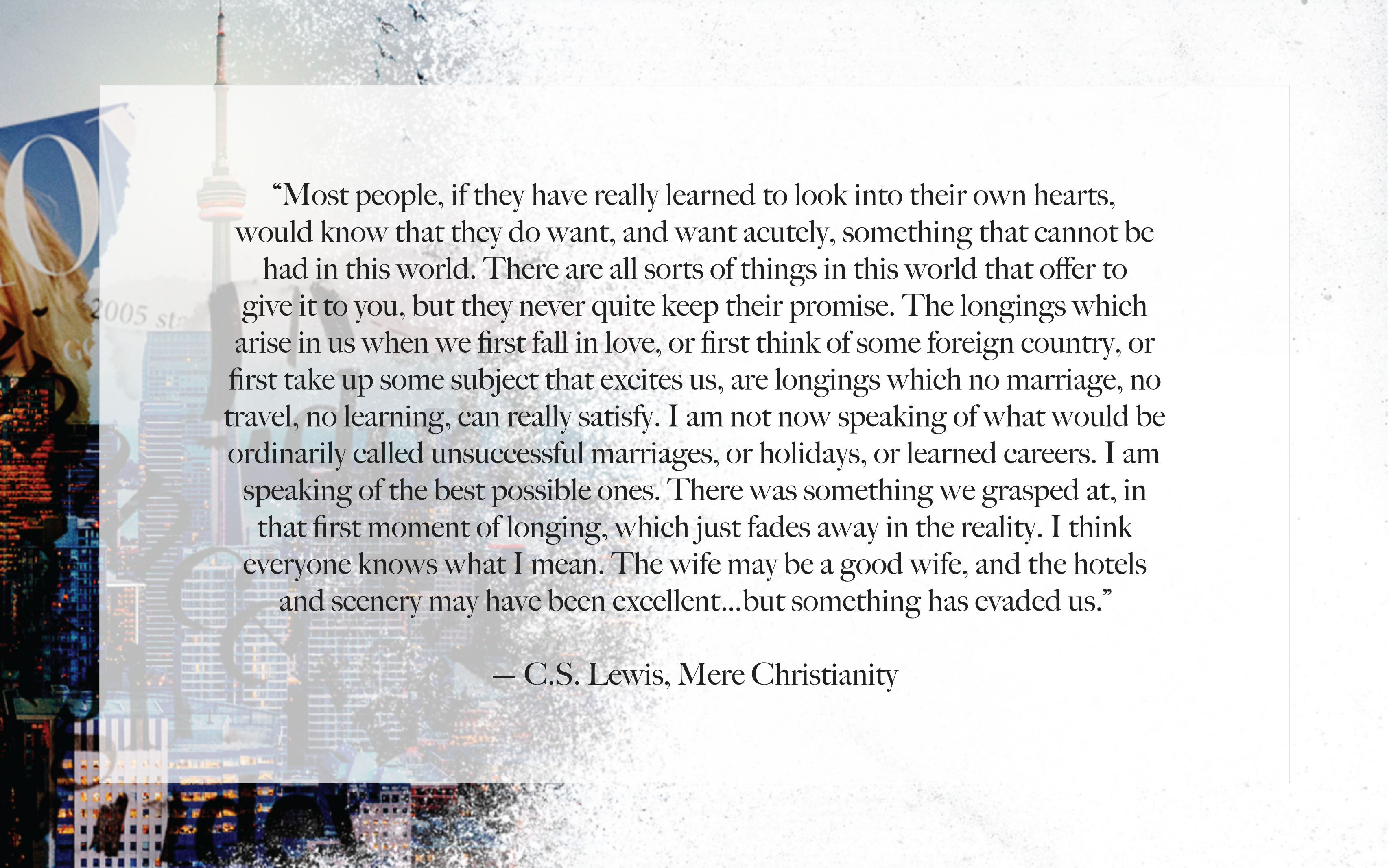
— VS II



“Like Solomon, we have ample opportunity to indulge in many sinful and selfish desires. In fact, maybe Solomon would envy us. Generally speaking, we live in better homes than he did, with better furniture and climate control.

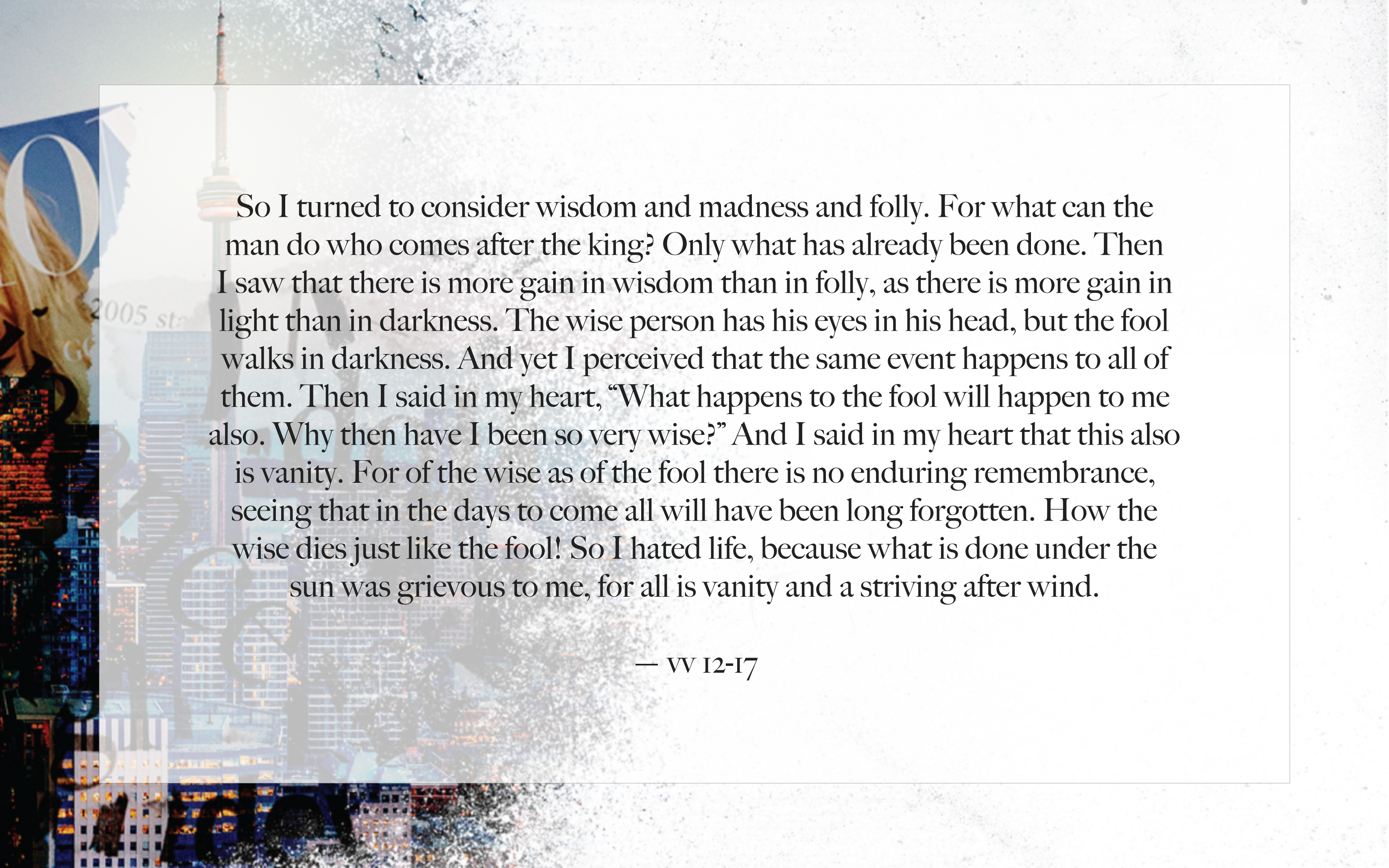
We dine at a larger buffet; when we go to the grocery store, we can buy almost anything we want, from anywhere in the world. We listen to a much wider variety of music. And as far as sex is concerned, the Internet offers an endless supply of virtual partners, providing a vast harem for the imagination.”

— Philip Ryken



“Most people, if they have really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent...but something has evaded us.”

— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity



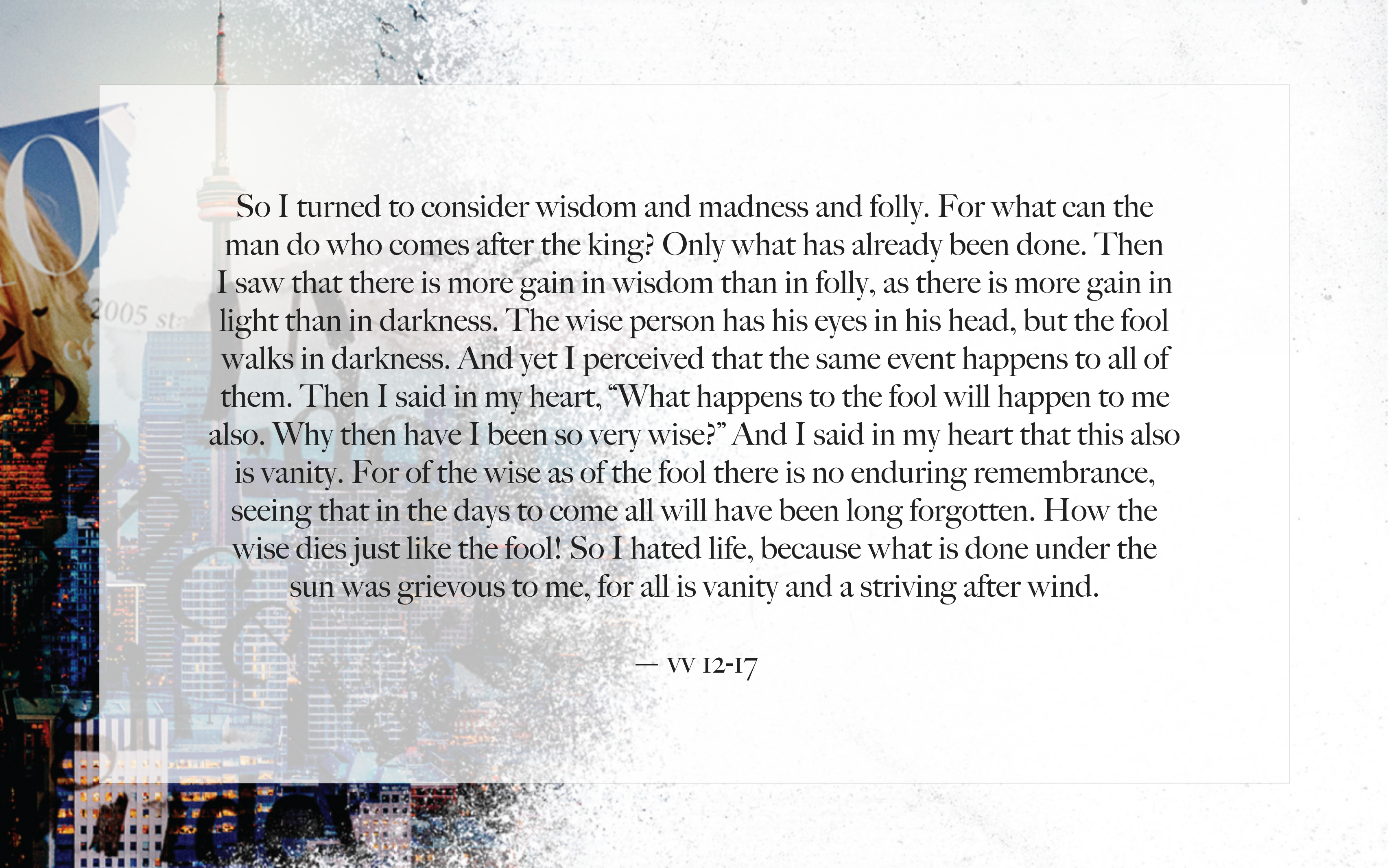
So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

— VV 12-17



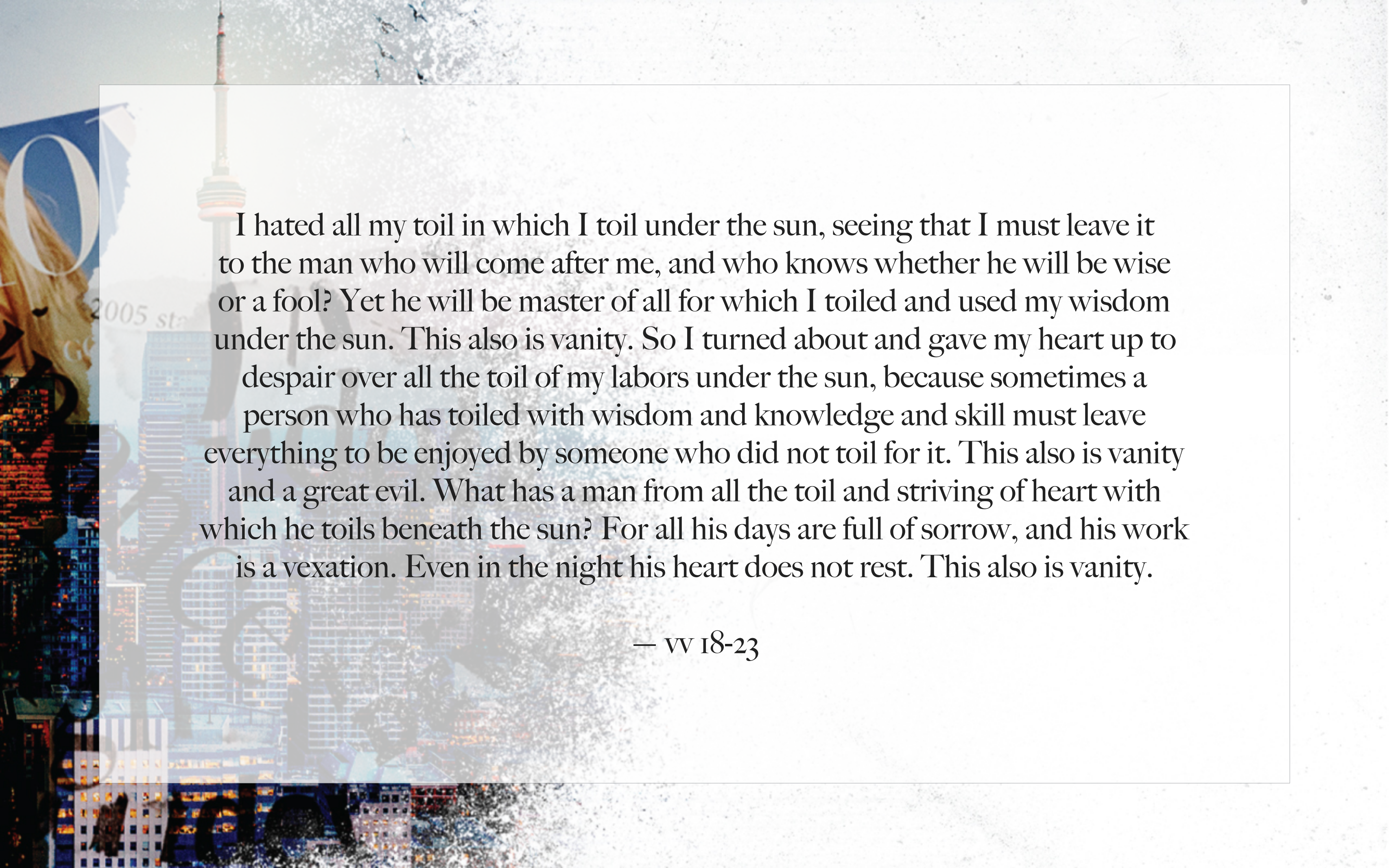
“I am searching for the bones of your father Philip,
but I cannot seem to distinguish them from the bones of the slaves.”

— Diogenes



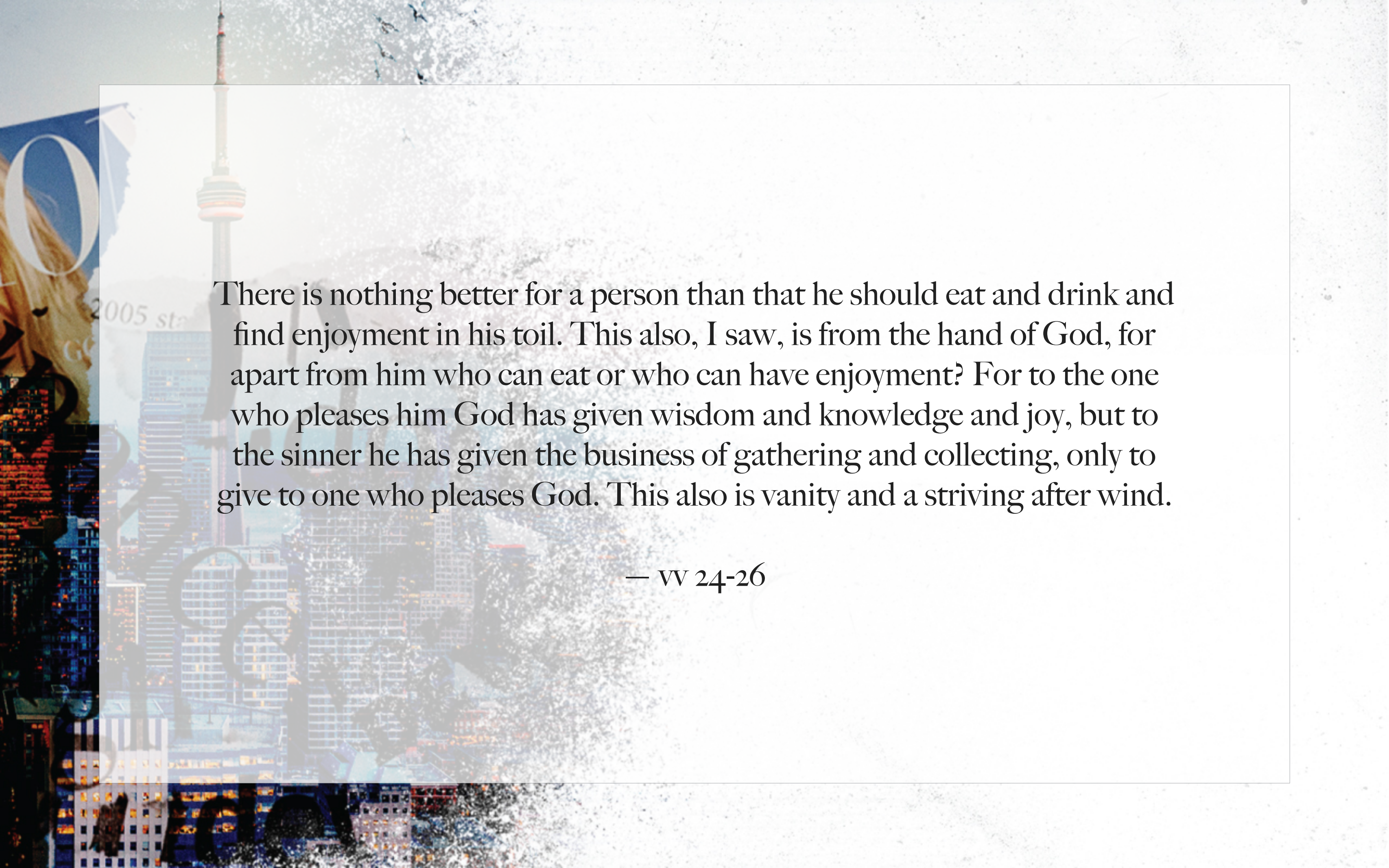
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— VV 12-17



I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

— vv 18-23



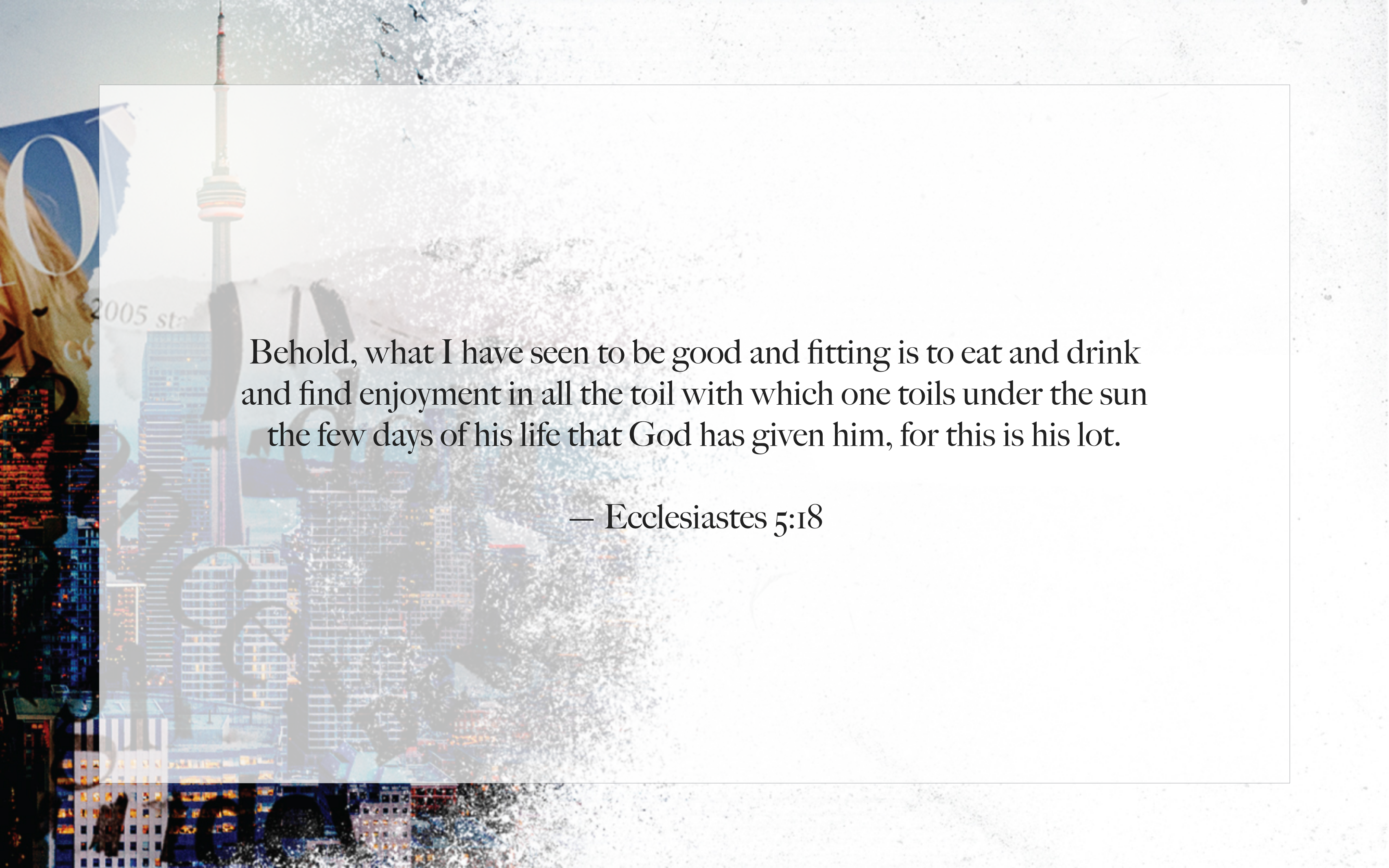
There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

— vv 24-26



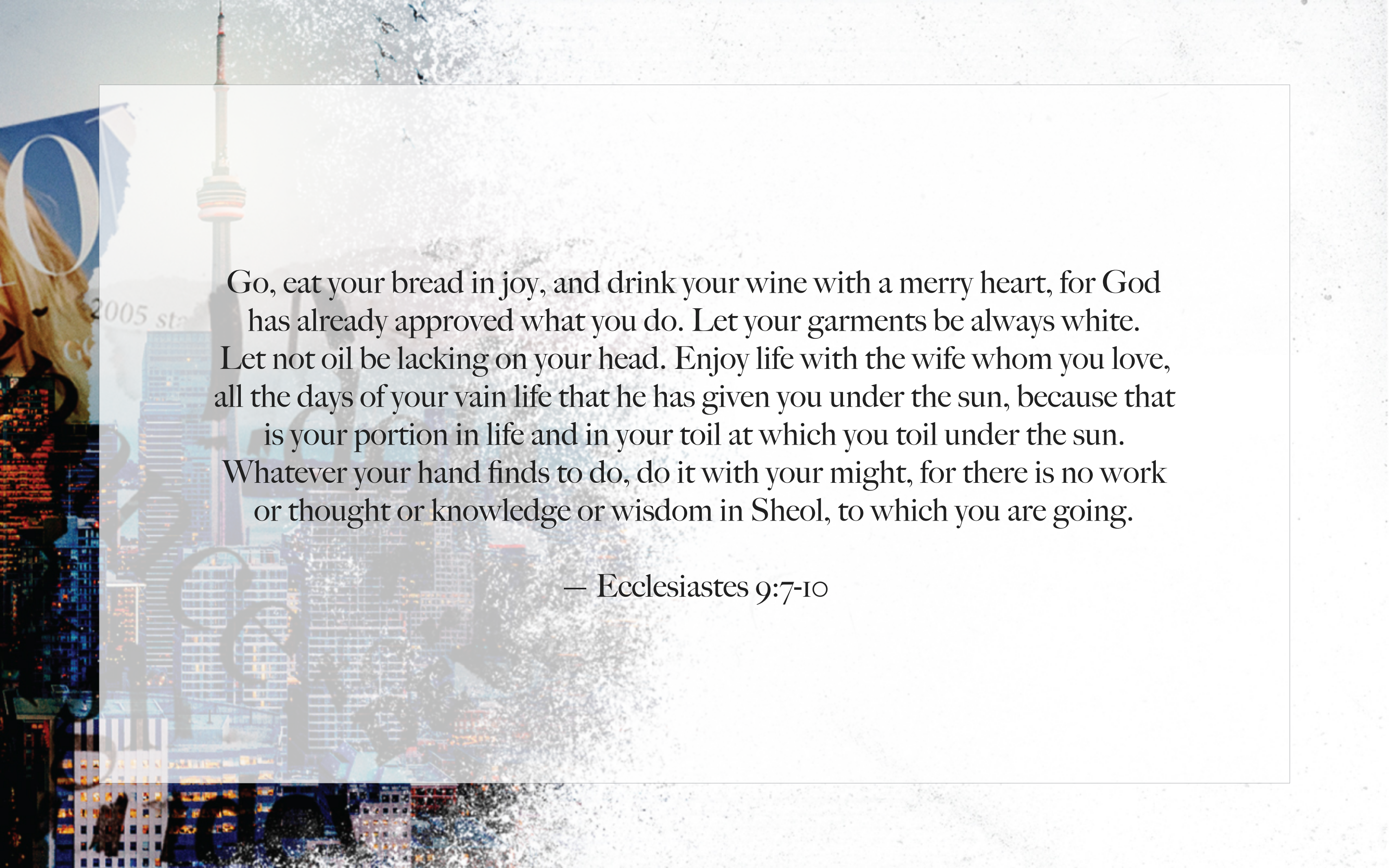
So I saw that there is nothing better than that
a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot.

— Ecclesiastes 3:22



Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink
and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun
the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.

— Ecclesiastes 5:18



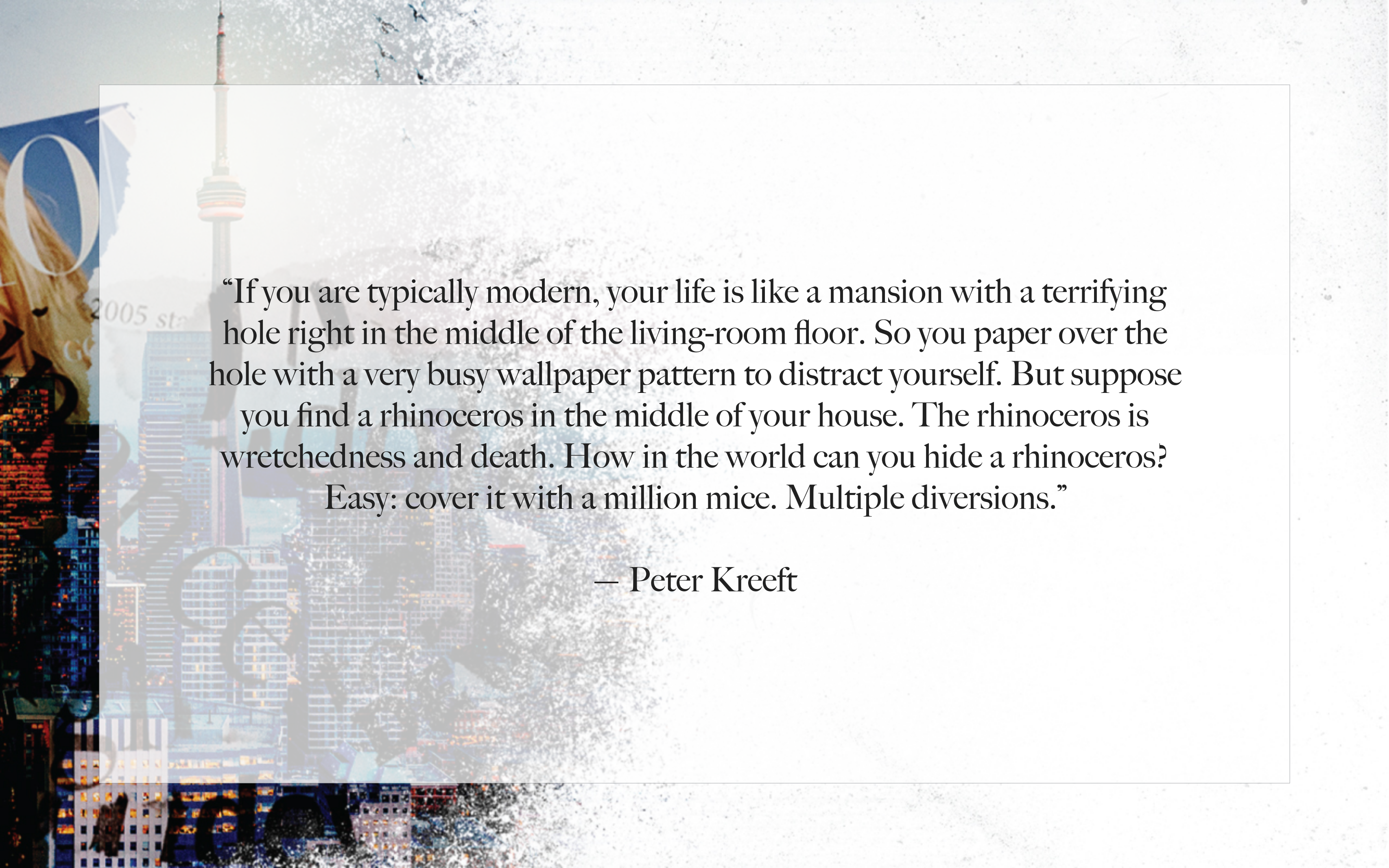
Go, eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

— Ecclesiastes 9:7-10



“As men have not been able to cure death, misery, or ignorance,
they have taken to not thinking about them so as to become happy.”

— Blaise Pascal

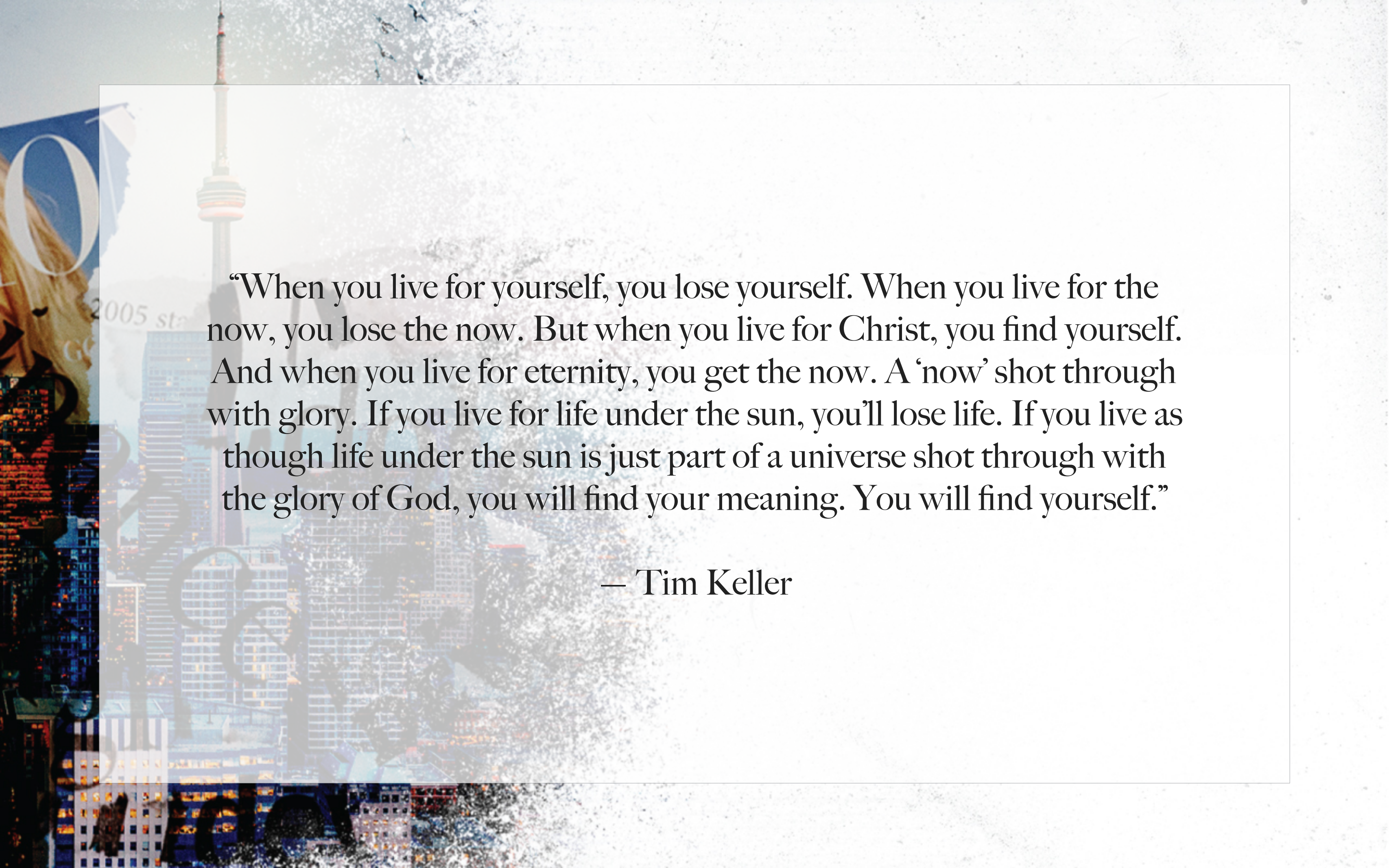


“If you are typically modern, your life is like a mansion with a terrifying hole right in the middle of the living-room floor. So you paper over the hole with a very busy wallpaper pattern to distract yourself. But suppose you find a rhinoceros in the middle of your house. The rhinoceros is wretchedness and death. How in the world can you hide a rhinoceros? Easy: cover it with a million mice. Multiple diversions.”

— Peter Kreeft



finding true
HAPPINESS
and
MEANING
above the sun



“When you live for yourself, you lose yourself. When you live for the now, you lose the now. But when you live for Christ, you find yourself. And when you live for eternity, you get the now. A ‘now’ shot through with glory. If you live for life under the sun, you’ll lose life. If you live as though life under the sun is just part of a universe shot through with the glory of God, you will find your meaning. You will find yourself.”

— Tim Keller



“Thou hast made us for Thyself,
and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”

— Augustine



ECCLESIASTES

MAKING SENSE OF A COMPLEX WORLD