



Enduring Witness



It's during times of adversity

Pain Suffering Confusion Doubt Evil Injustice Fear Desperation

that people are most open to spiritual growth



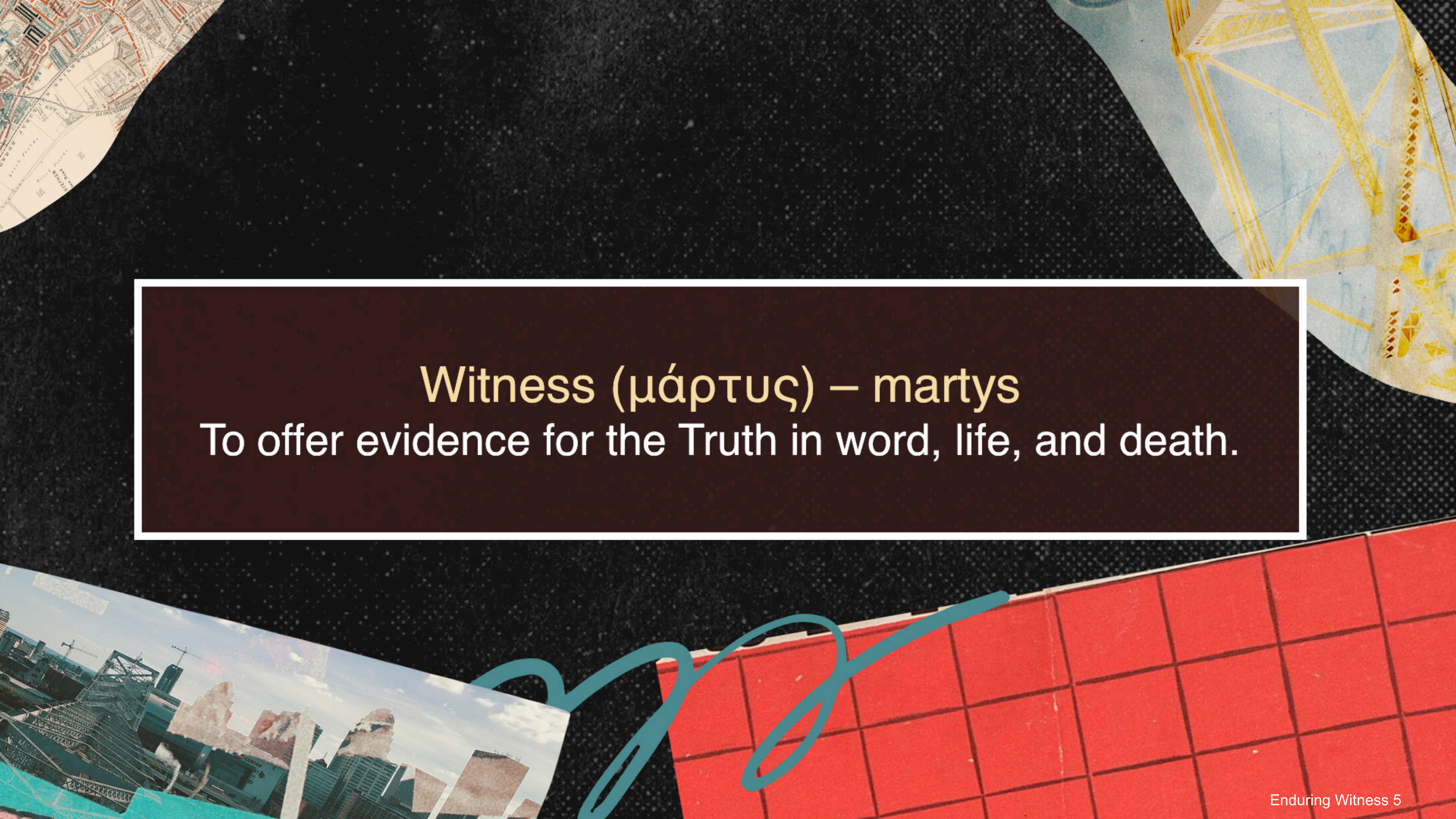
Enduring Witness

"Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing,
but to turn it into glory." - William Barclay



Acts 1:8-9

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
When He had said this, as they were watching, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.

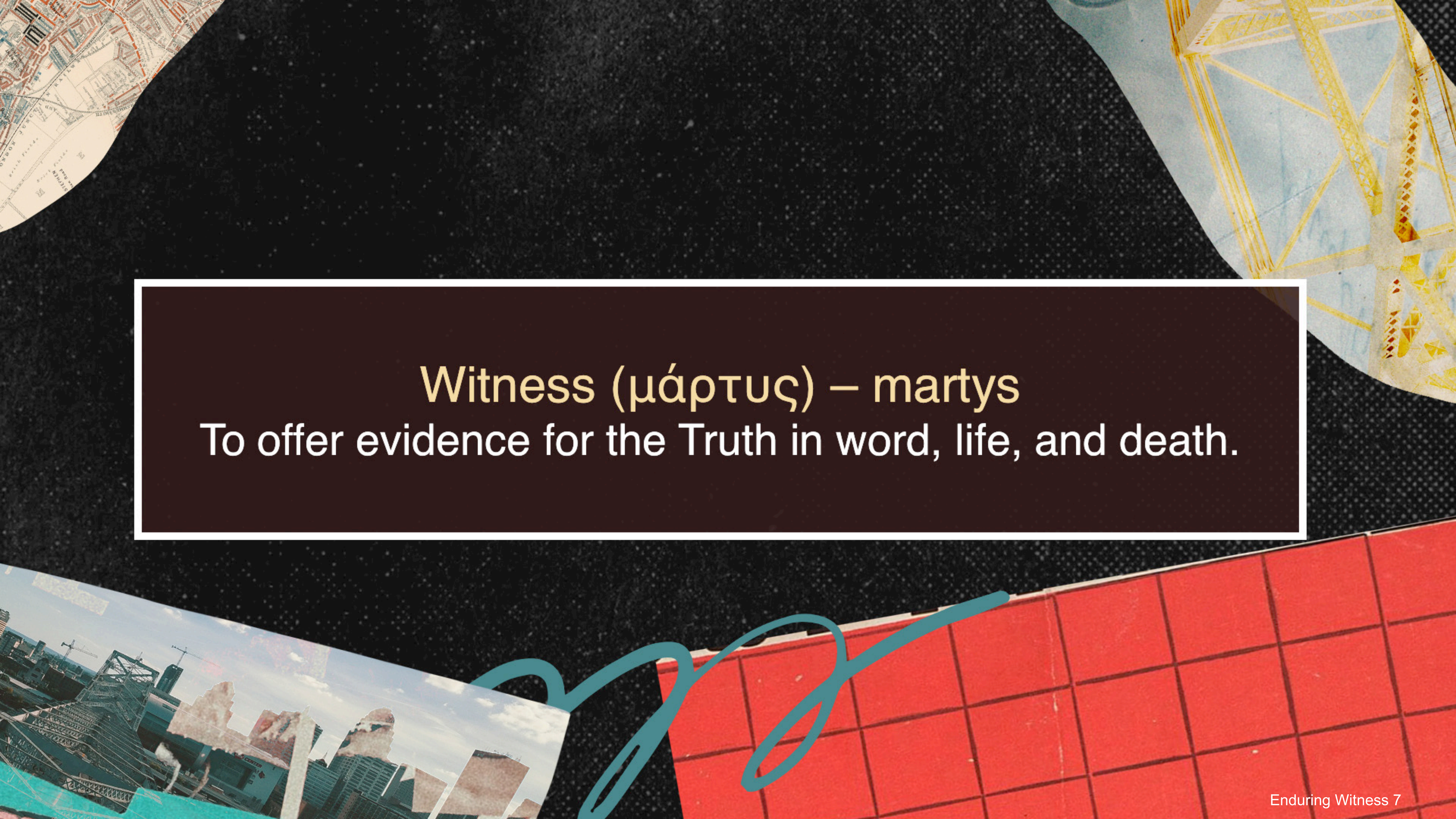


Witness (μάρτυς) – martyrs
To offer evidence for the Truth in word, life, and death.



Hebrews 12:1a

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great
a cloud of **witnesses...**




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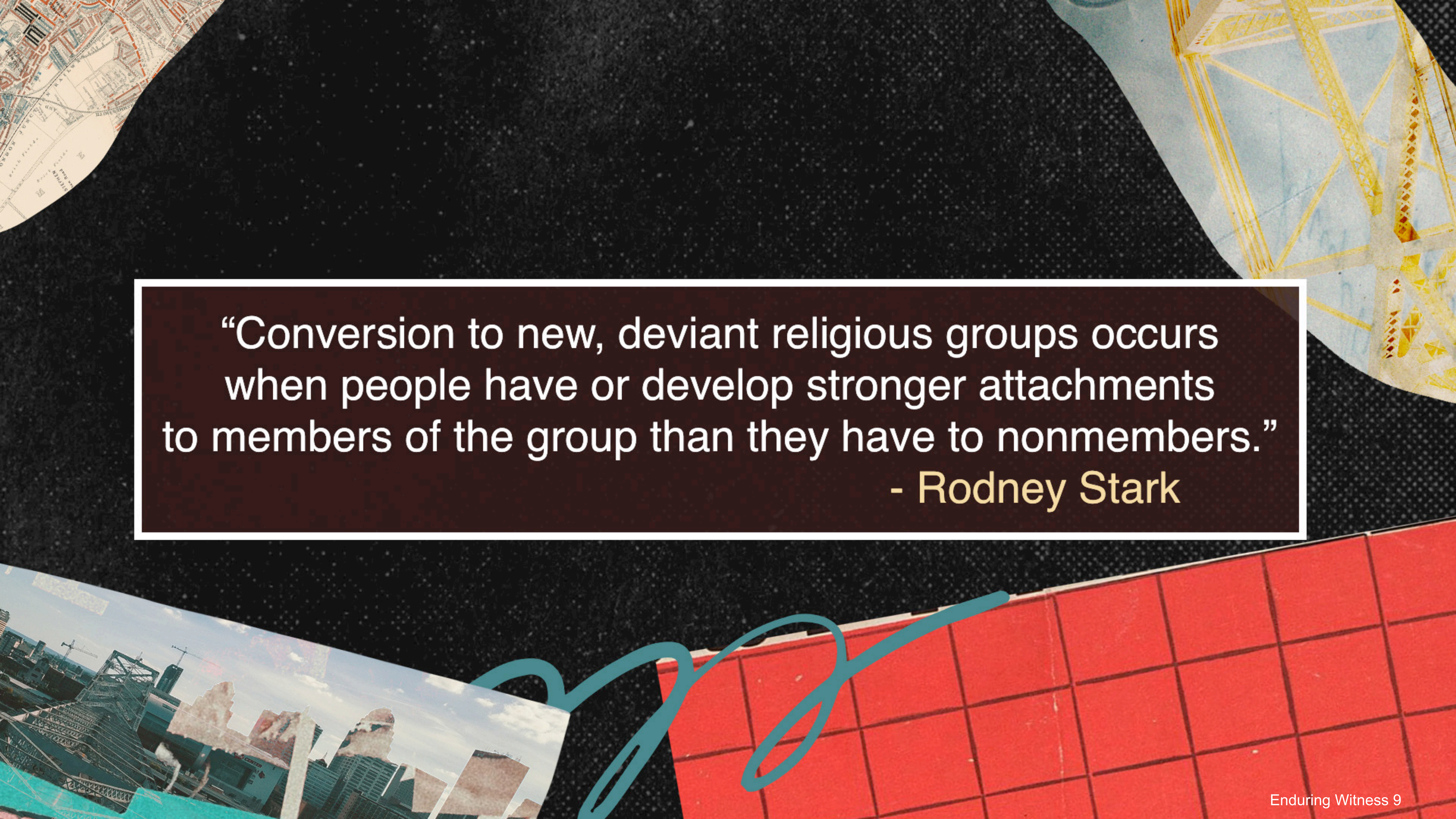
"A fresh, blunt and highly
persuasive account of how the
West was won—for Jesus."
—Newsweek

THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY




How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant
 Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries

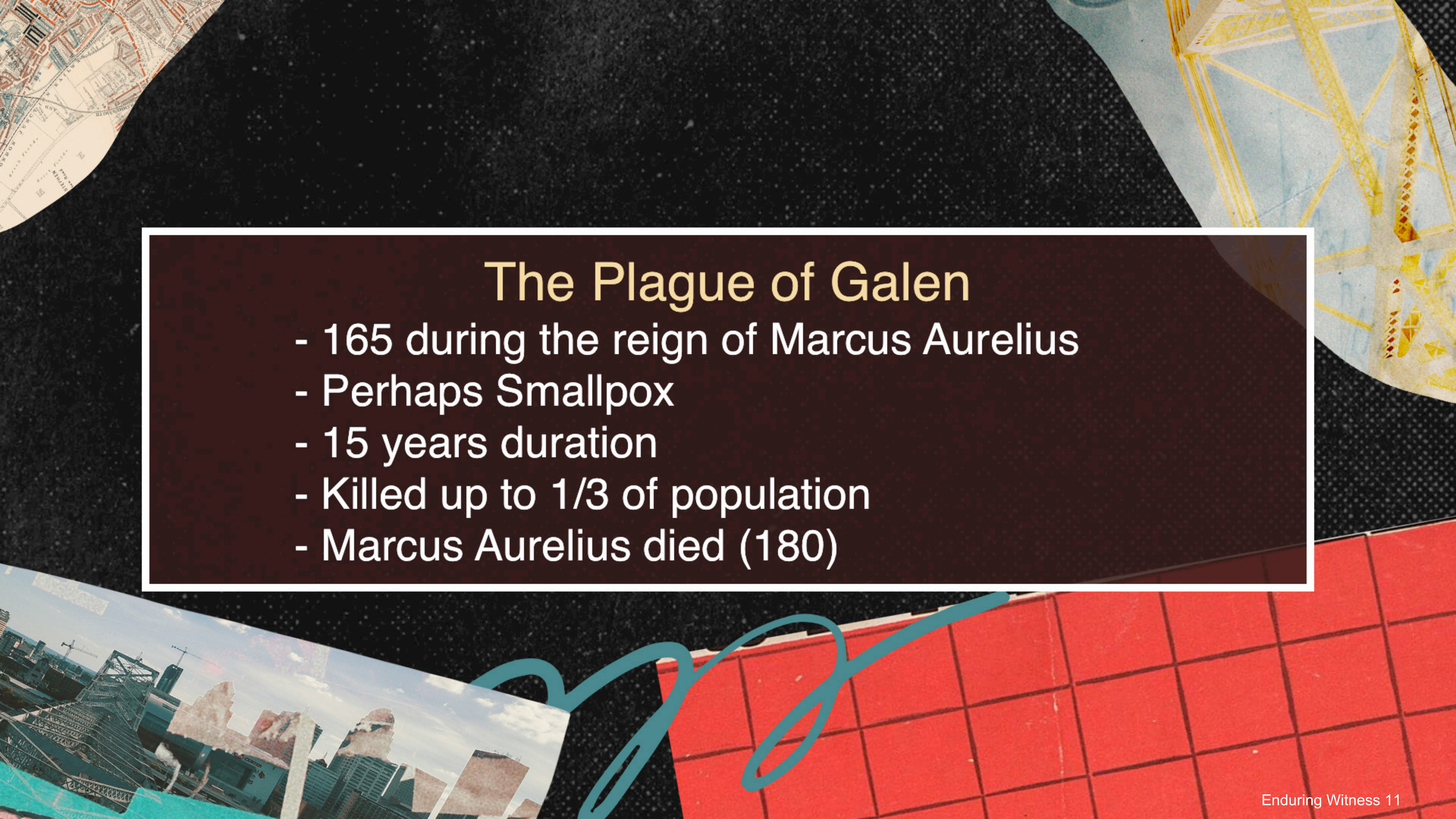
RODNEY STARK



“Conversion to new, deviant religious groups occurs when people have or develop stronger attachments to members of the group than they have to nonmembers.”
- Rodney Stark



A relationship with Jesus usually starts
with one of His followers.



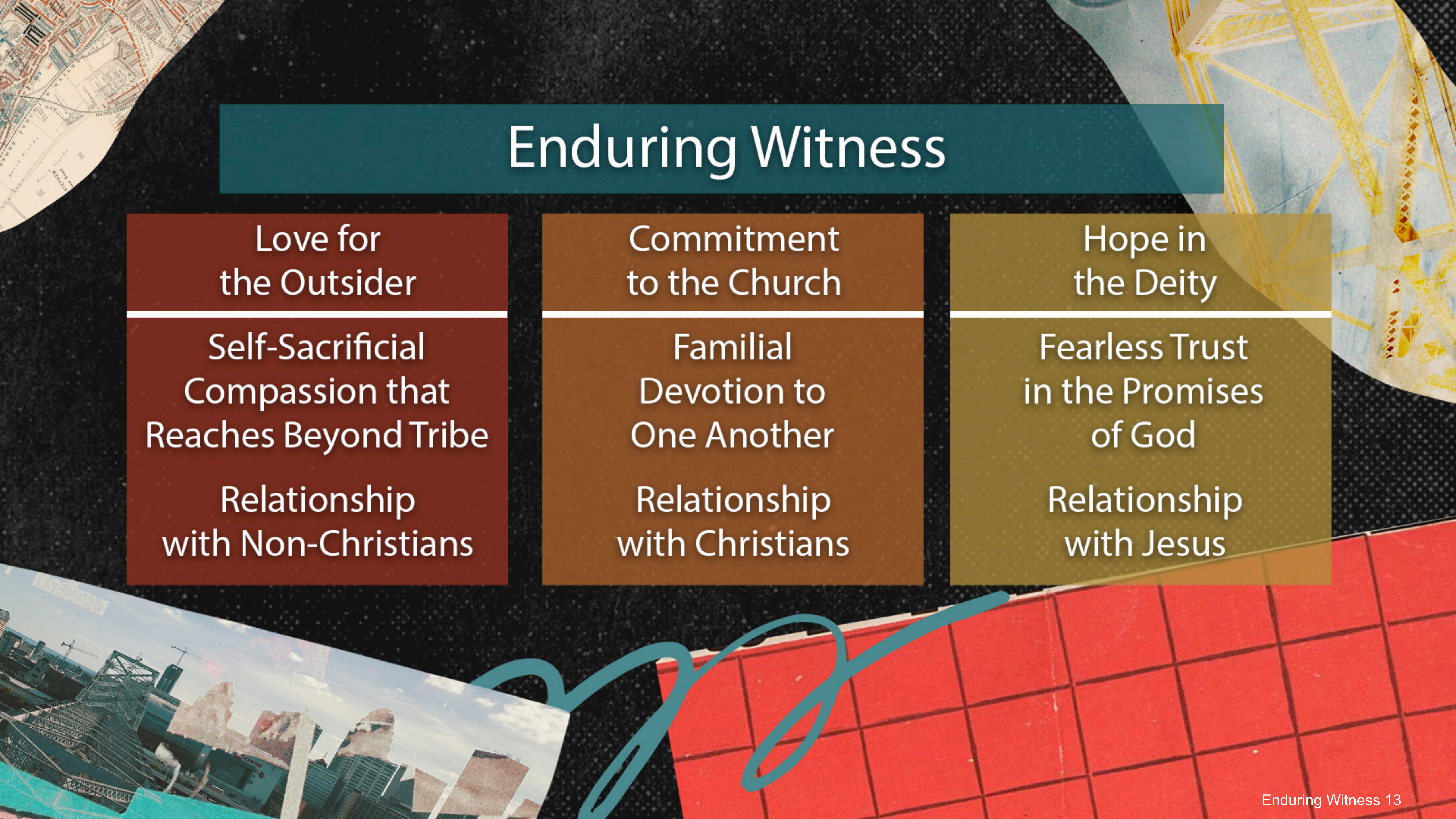
The Plague of Galen

- 165 during the reign of Marcus Aurelius
- Perhaps Smallpox
- 15 years duration
- Killed up to 1/3 of population
- Marcus Aurelius died (180)



The Second Epidemic

- Mid-3rd Century
- Perhaps Measles
- At peak, 5,000/day dying in city of Rome
- Dionysius, "There is not a house in which there is not one dead."
- Church fathers thought epidemics contributed to growth



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Love for
the Outsider

Self-Sacrificial
Compassion that
Reaches Beyond Tribe

Relationship
with Non-Christians

Commitment
to the Church

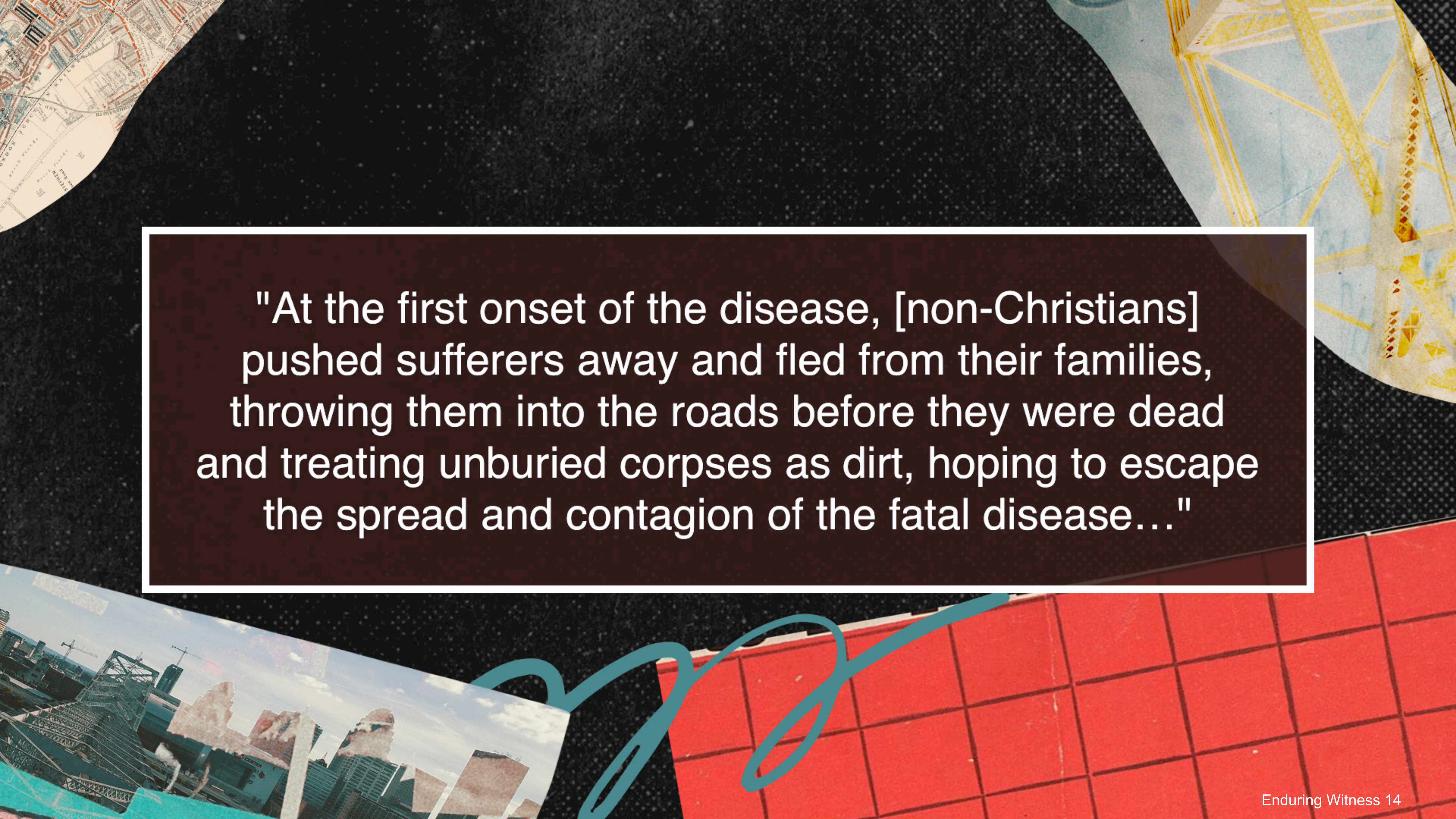
Familial
Devotion to
One Another

Relationship
with Christians

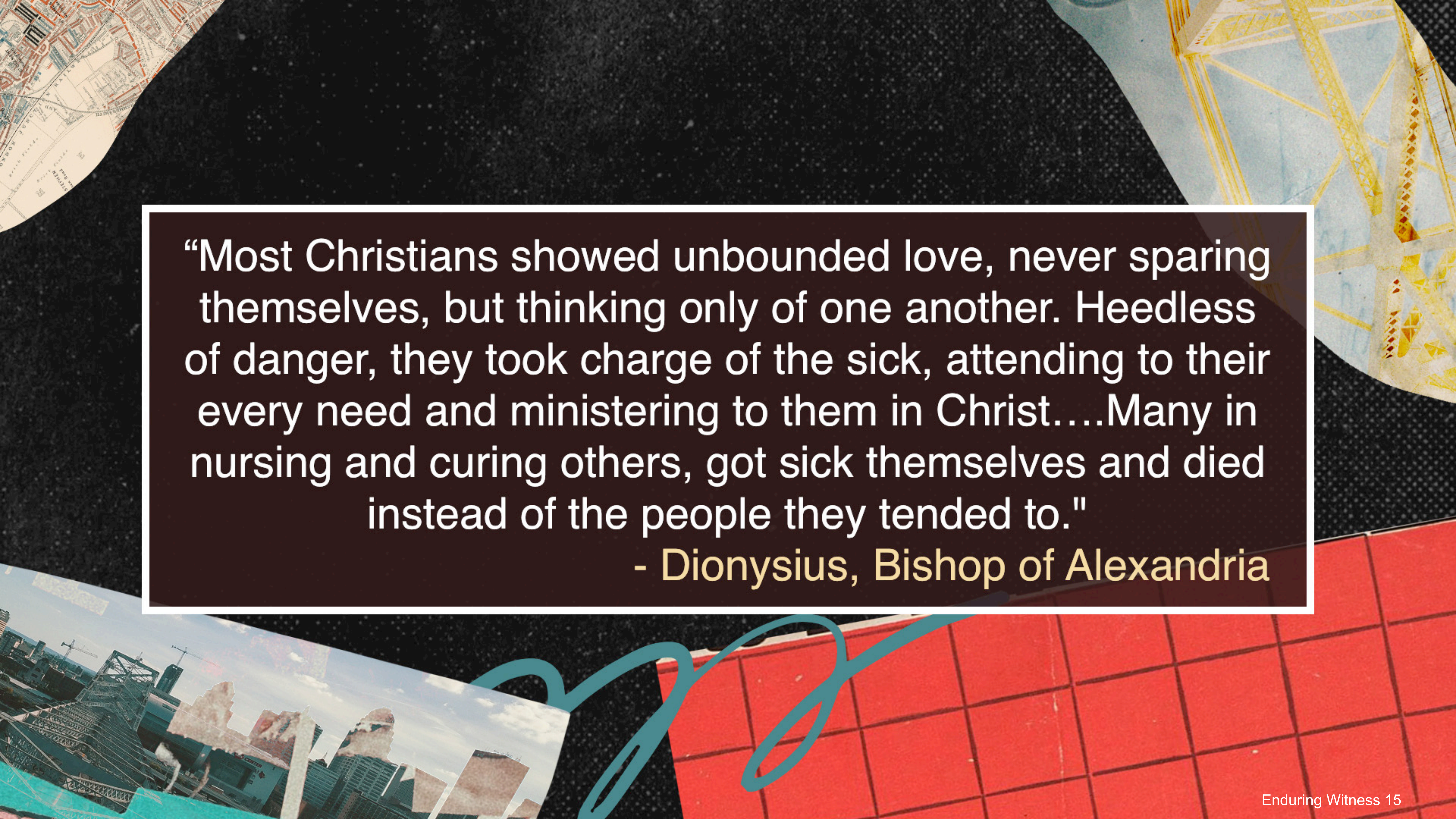
Hope in
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Fearless Trust
in the Promises
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Relationship
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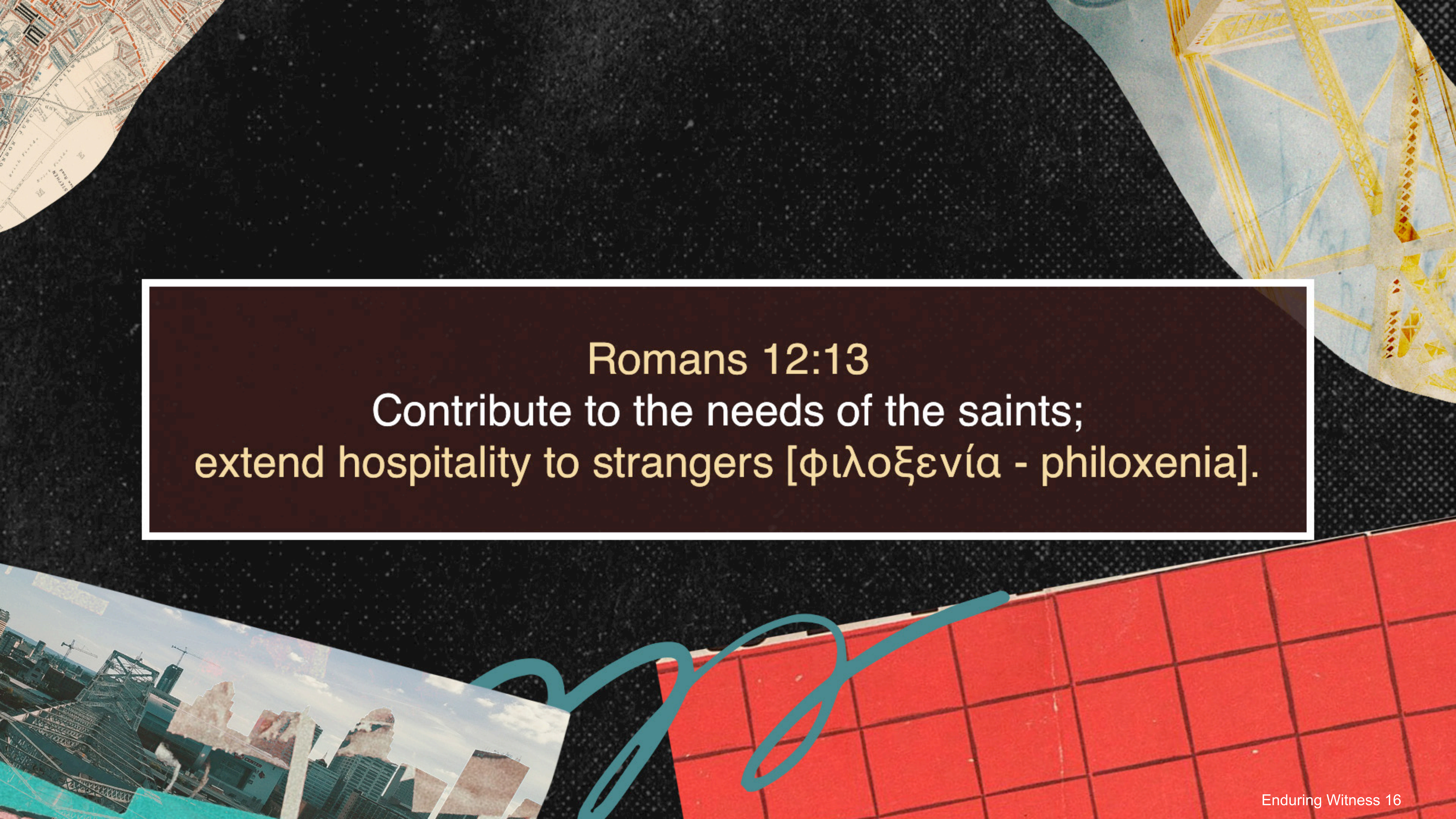


"At the first onset of the disease, [non-Christians] pushed sufferers away and fled from their families, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treating unburied corpses as dirt, hoping to escape the spread and contagion of the fatal disease..."



“Most Christians showed unbounded love, never sparing themselves, but thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ....Many in nursing and curing others, got sick themselves and died instead of the people they tended to.”

- Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria

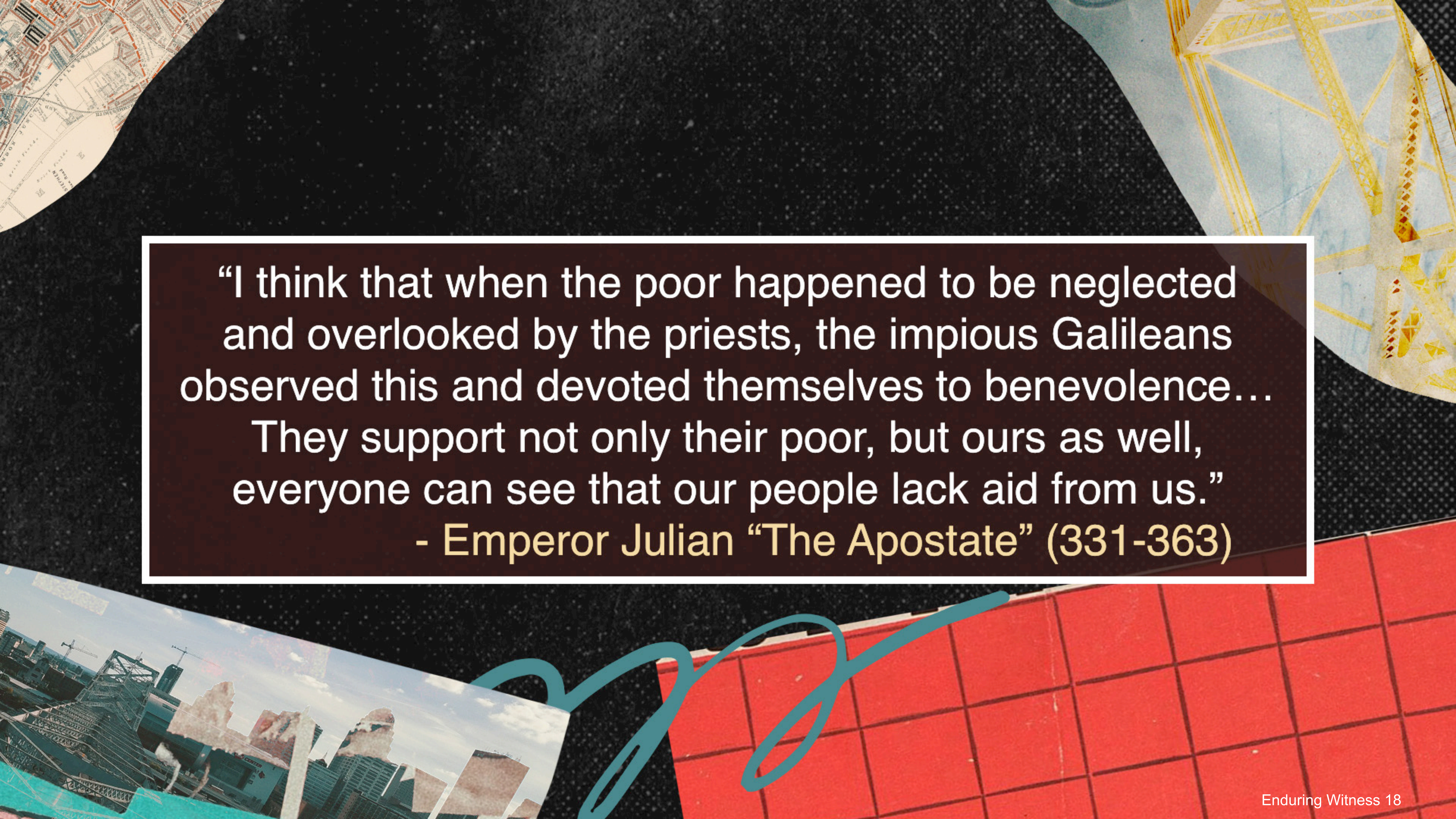


Romans 12:13
Contribute to the needs of the saints;
extend hospitality to strangers [φιλοξενία - philoxenia].

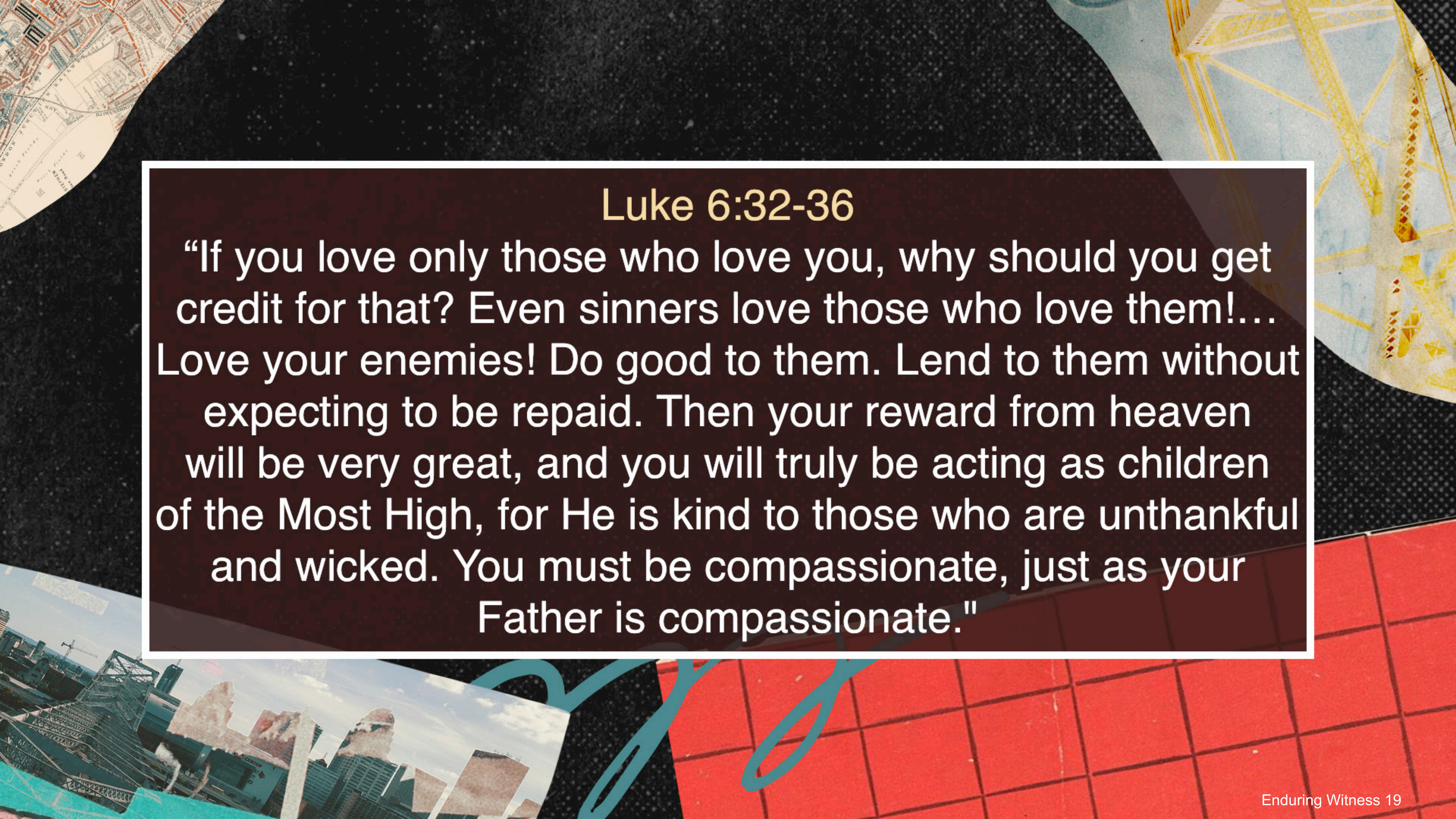


Hebrews 13:2

Don't forget to show **hospitality to strangers** [φιλοξενία - **philoxenia**], for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!




“I think that when the poor happened to be neglected and overlooked by the priests, the impious Galileans observed this and devoted themselves to benevolence... They support not only their poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us.”
- Emperor Julian “The Apostate” (331-363)

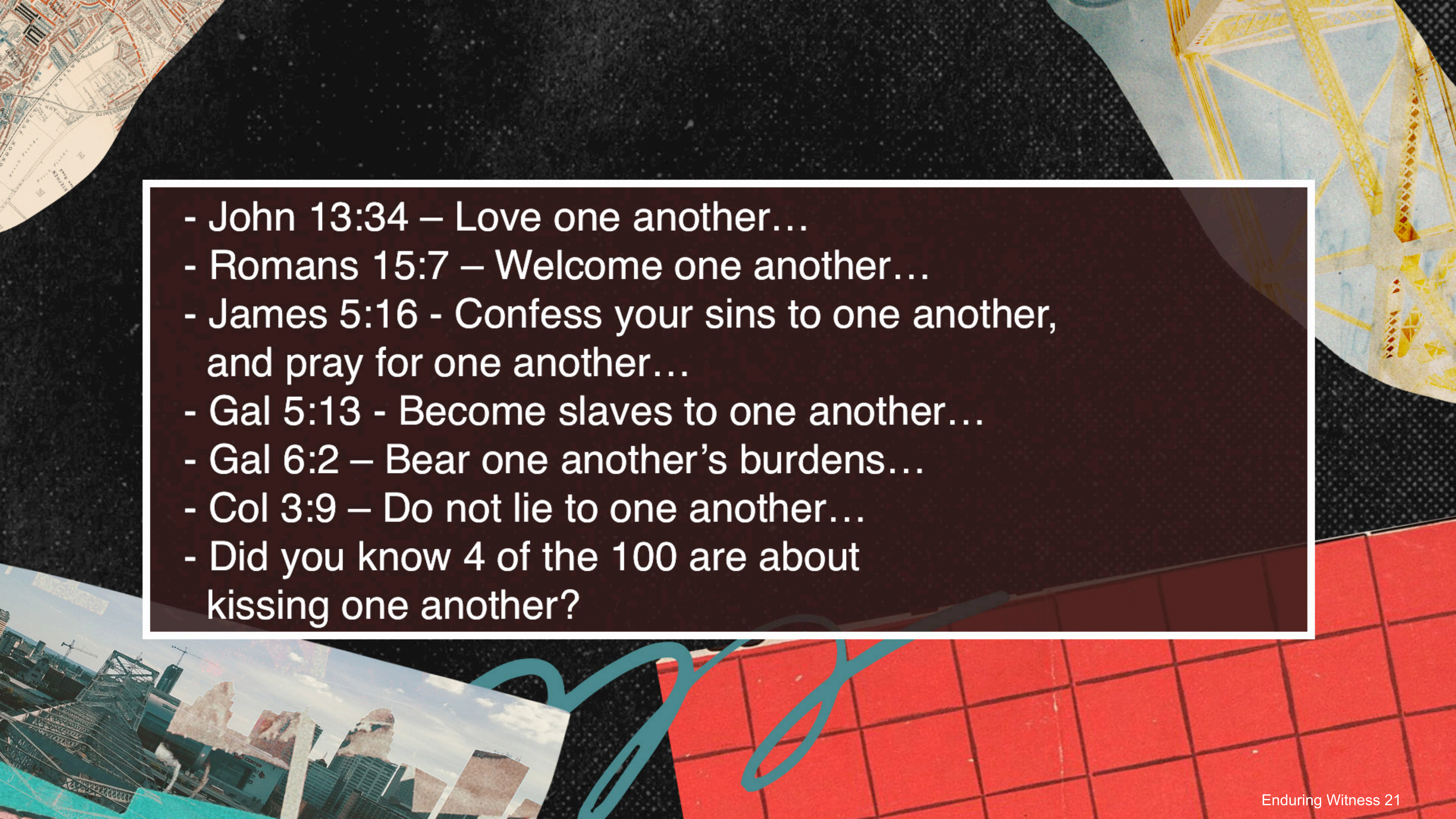


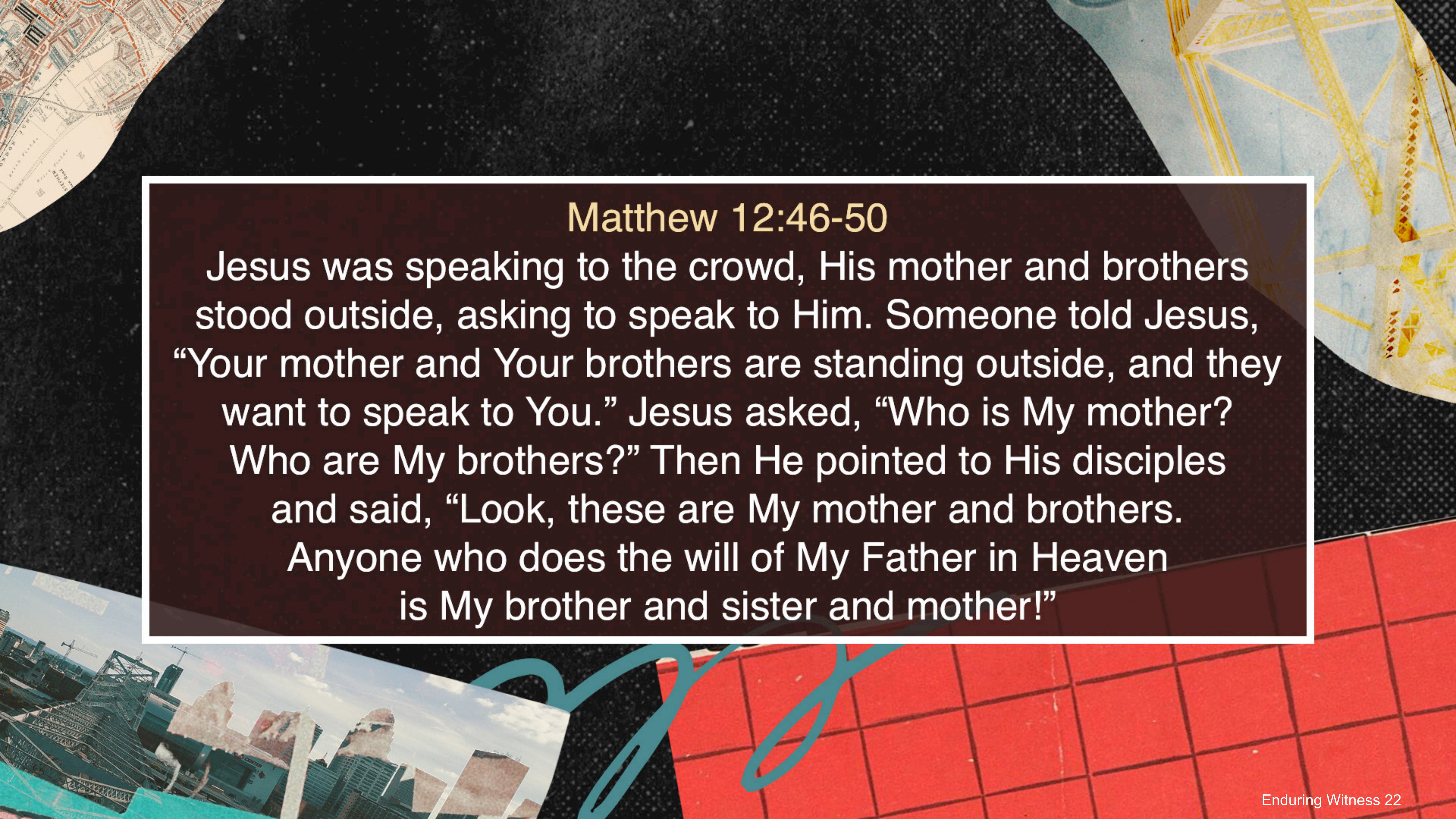
Luke 6:32-36

“If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them!... Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for He is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.”



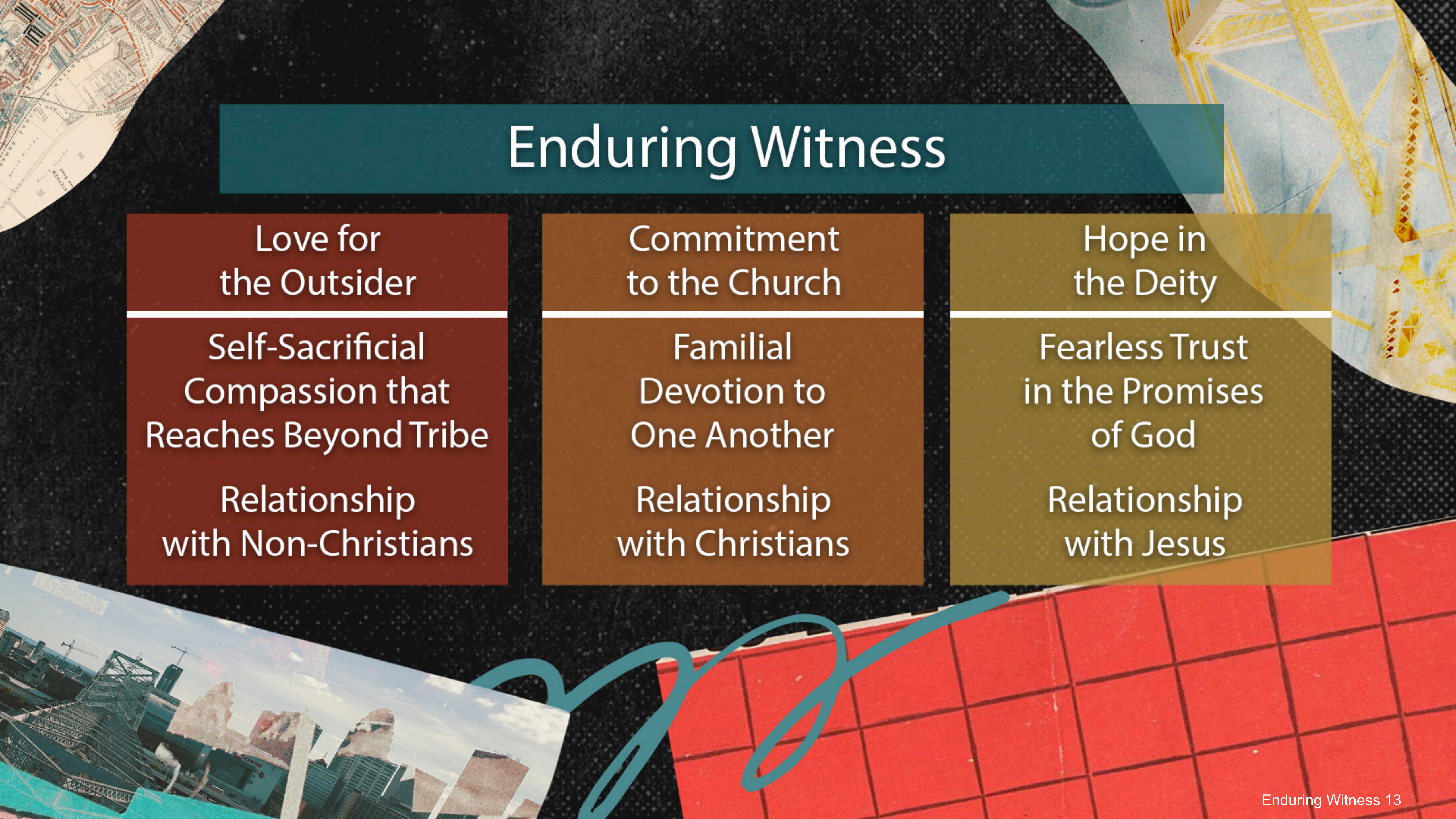
Commitment to the Church
Familial devotion to one another.
Approx. 100 NT uses of the word
ἀλλήλων (allēlōn - one another).

- 
- John 13:34 – Love one another...
 - Romans 15:7 – Welcome one another...
 - James 5:16 - Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another...
 - Gal 5:13 - Become slaves to one another...
 - Gal 6:2 – Bear one another's burdens...
 - Col 3:9 – Do not lie to one another...
 - Did you know 4 of the 100 are about kissing one another?



Matthew 12:46-50

Jesus was speaking to the crowd, His mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. Someone told Jesus, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, and they want to speak to You.” Jesus asked, “Who is My mother? Who are My brothers?” Then He pointed to His disciples and said, “Look, these are My mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother!”



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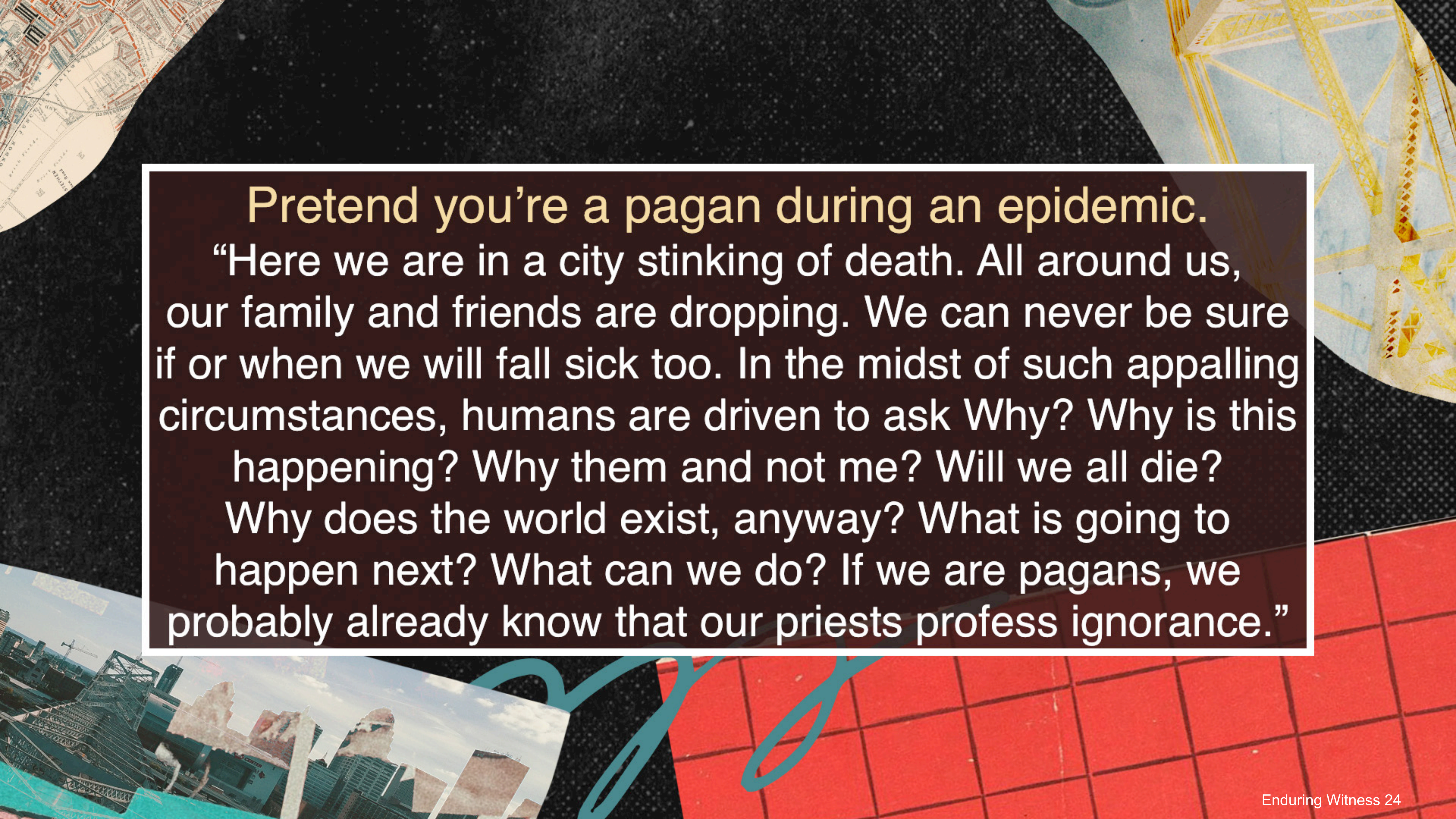
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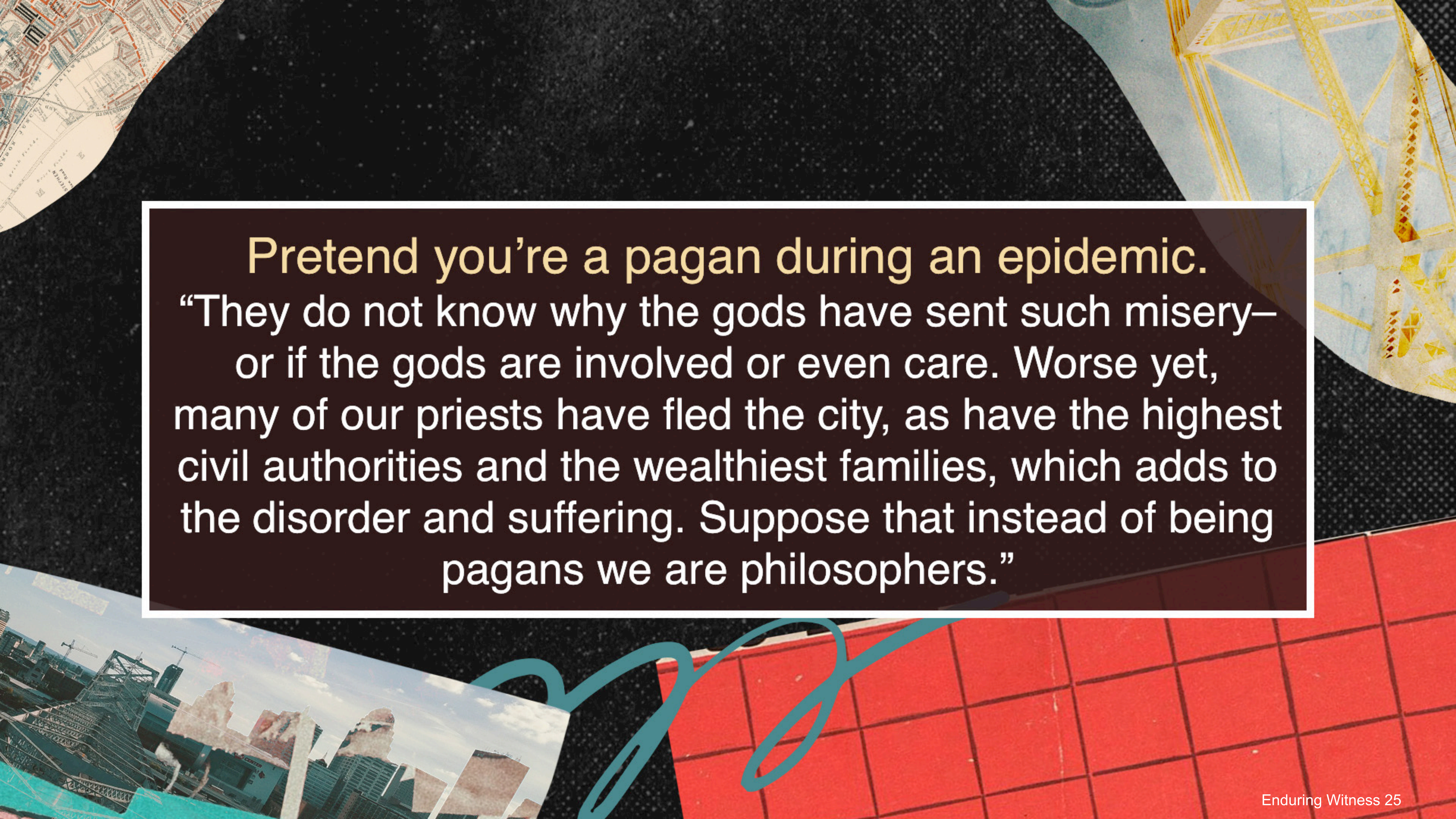
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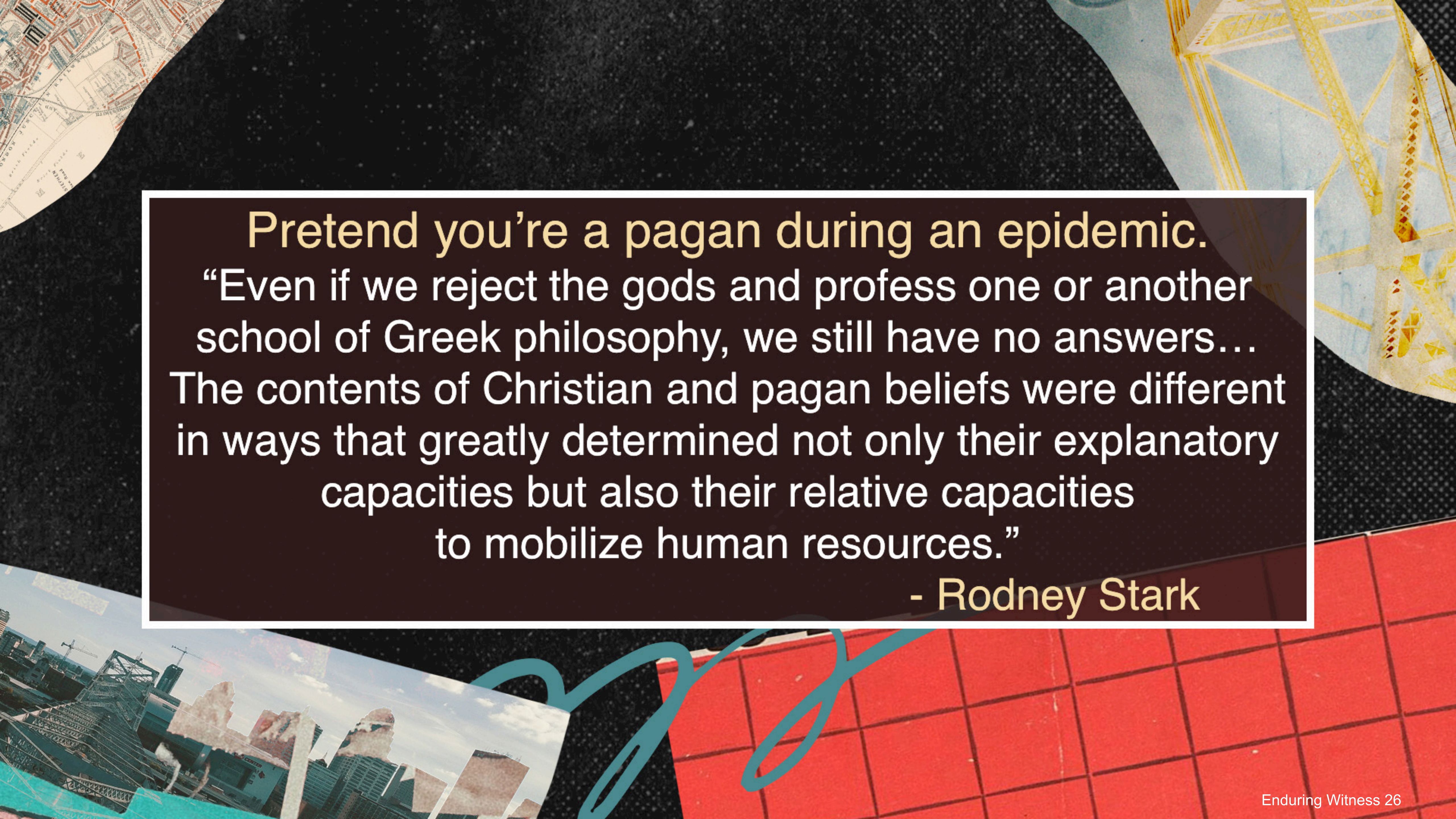
Relationship
with Jesus



Pretend you're a pagan during an epidemic.
“Here we are in a city stinking of death. All around us, our family and friends are dropping. We can never be sure if or when we will fall sick too. In the midst of such appalling circumstances, humans are driven to ask Why? Why is this happening? Why them and not me? Will we all die? Why does the world exist, anyway? What is going to happen next? What can we do? If we are pagans, we probably already know that our priests profess ignorance.”




Pretend you're a pagan during an epidemic.
“They do not know why the gods have sent such misery—
or if the gods are involved or even care. Worse yet,
many of our priests have fled the city, as have the highest
civil authorities and the wealthiest families, which adds to
the disorder and suffering. Suppose that instead of being
pagans we are philosophers.”

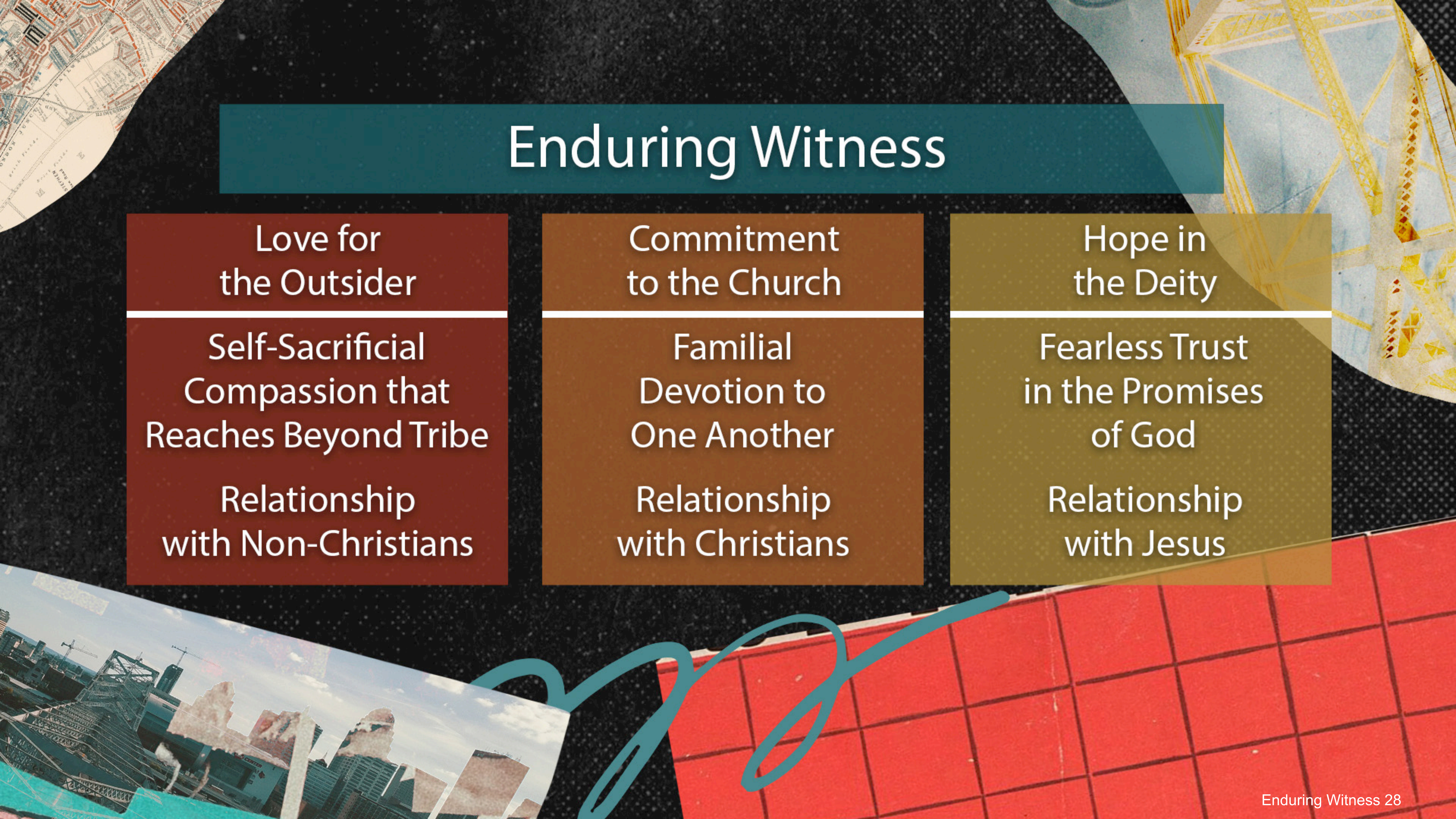


Pretend you're a pagan during an epidemic.
“Even if we reject the gods and profess one or another school of Greek philosophy, we still have no answers... The contents of Christian and pagan beliefs were different in ways that greatly determined not only their explanatory capacities but also their relative capacities to mobilize human resources.”

- Rodney Stark



Christians have a living hope.
A hope in the future based in the past that changes the way
we approach adversity in the present.



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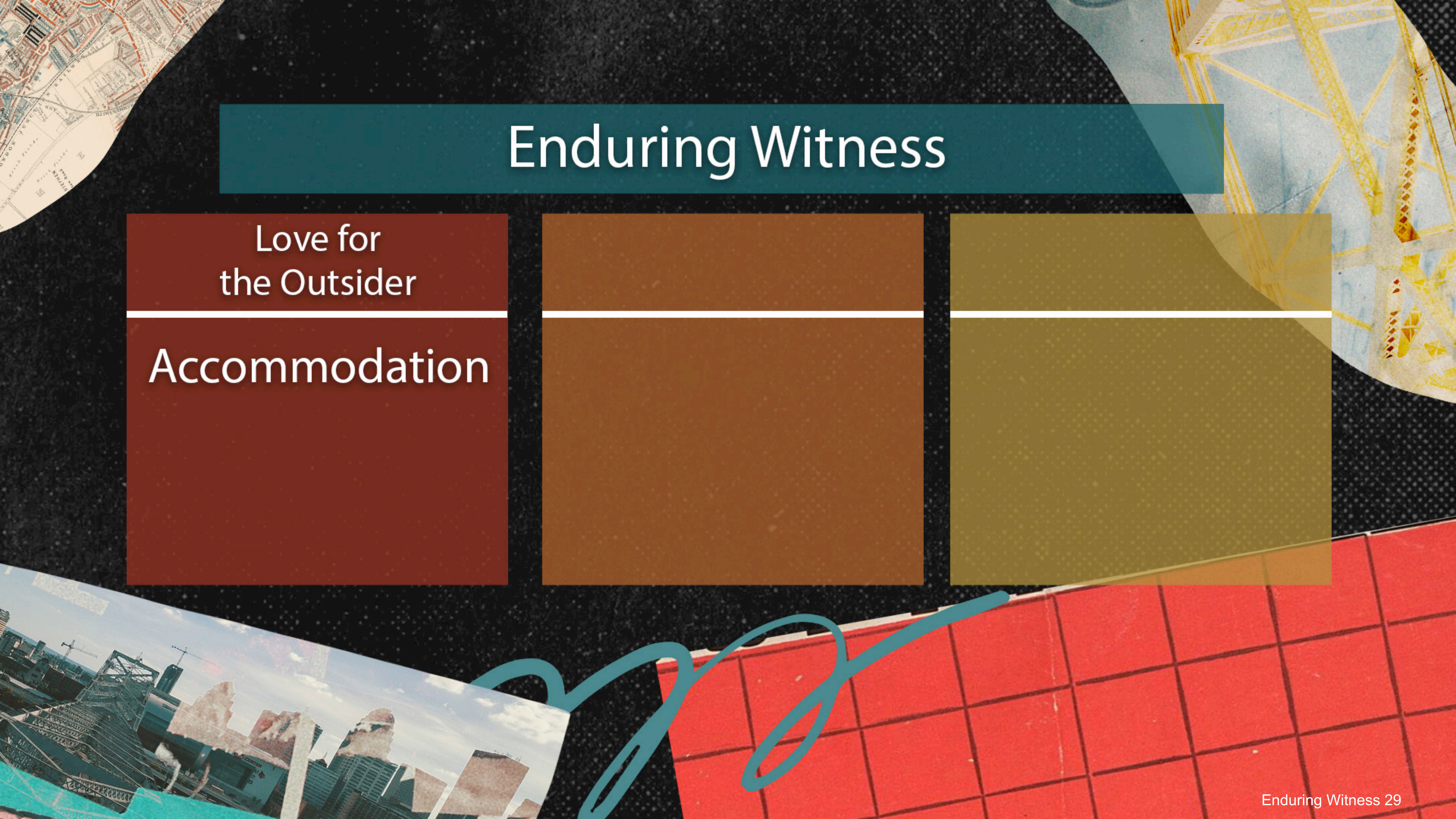
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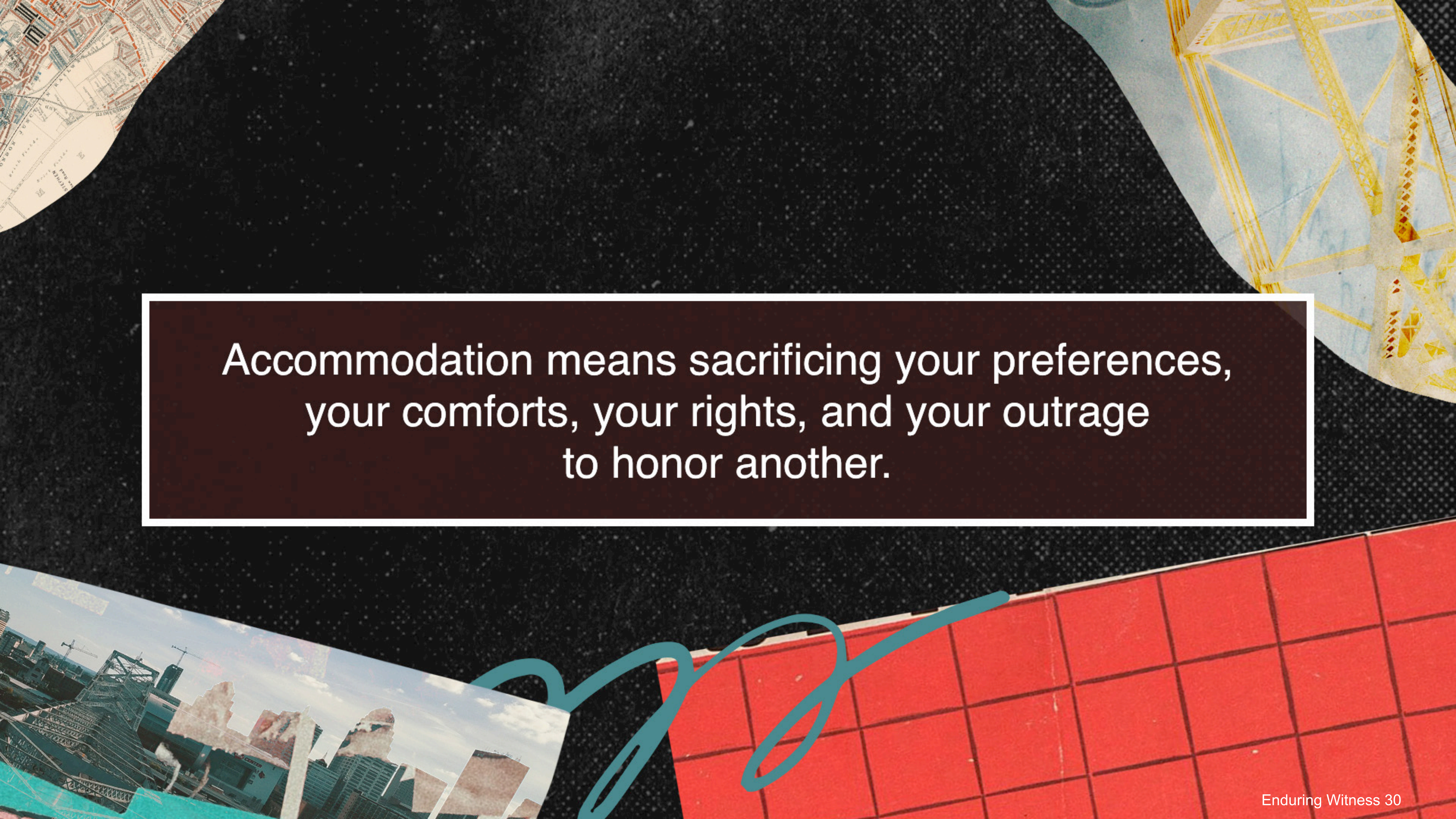
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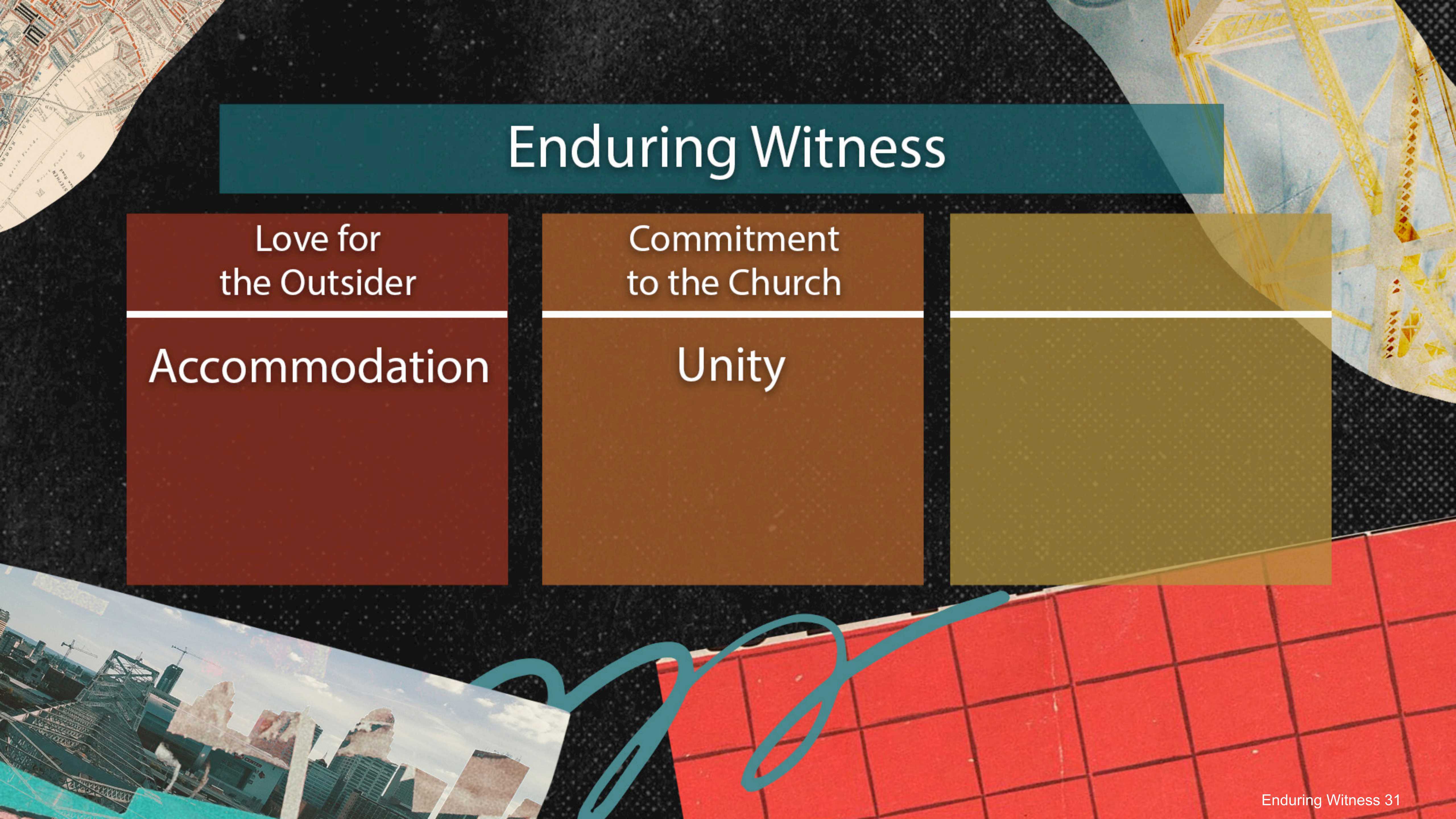
Enduring Witness

Love for
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Accommodation



Accommodation means sacrificing your preferences,
your comforts, your rights, and your outrage
to honor another.



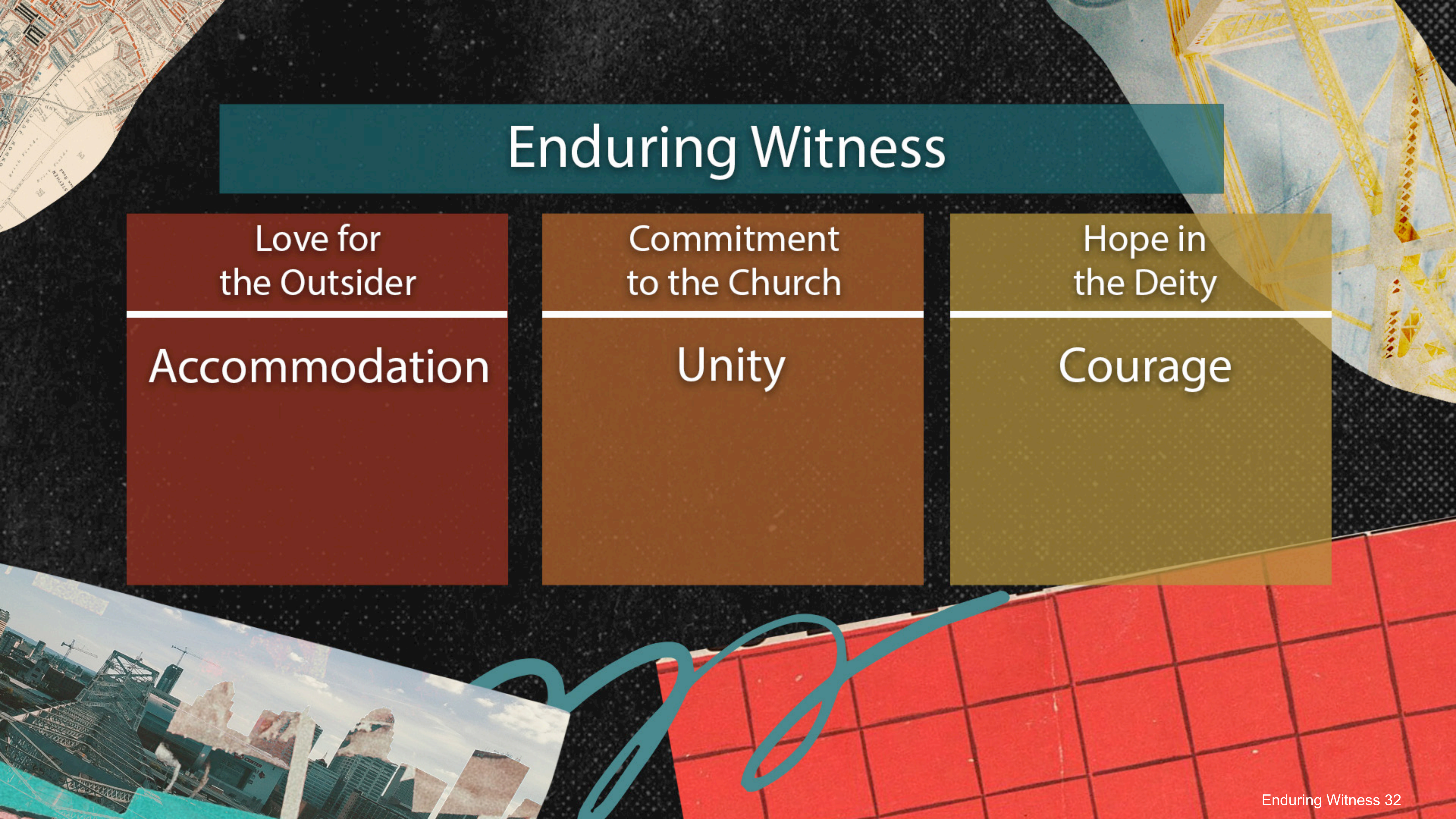
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Accommodation

Commitment
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Unity



Enduring Witness

Love for
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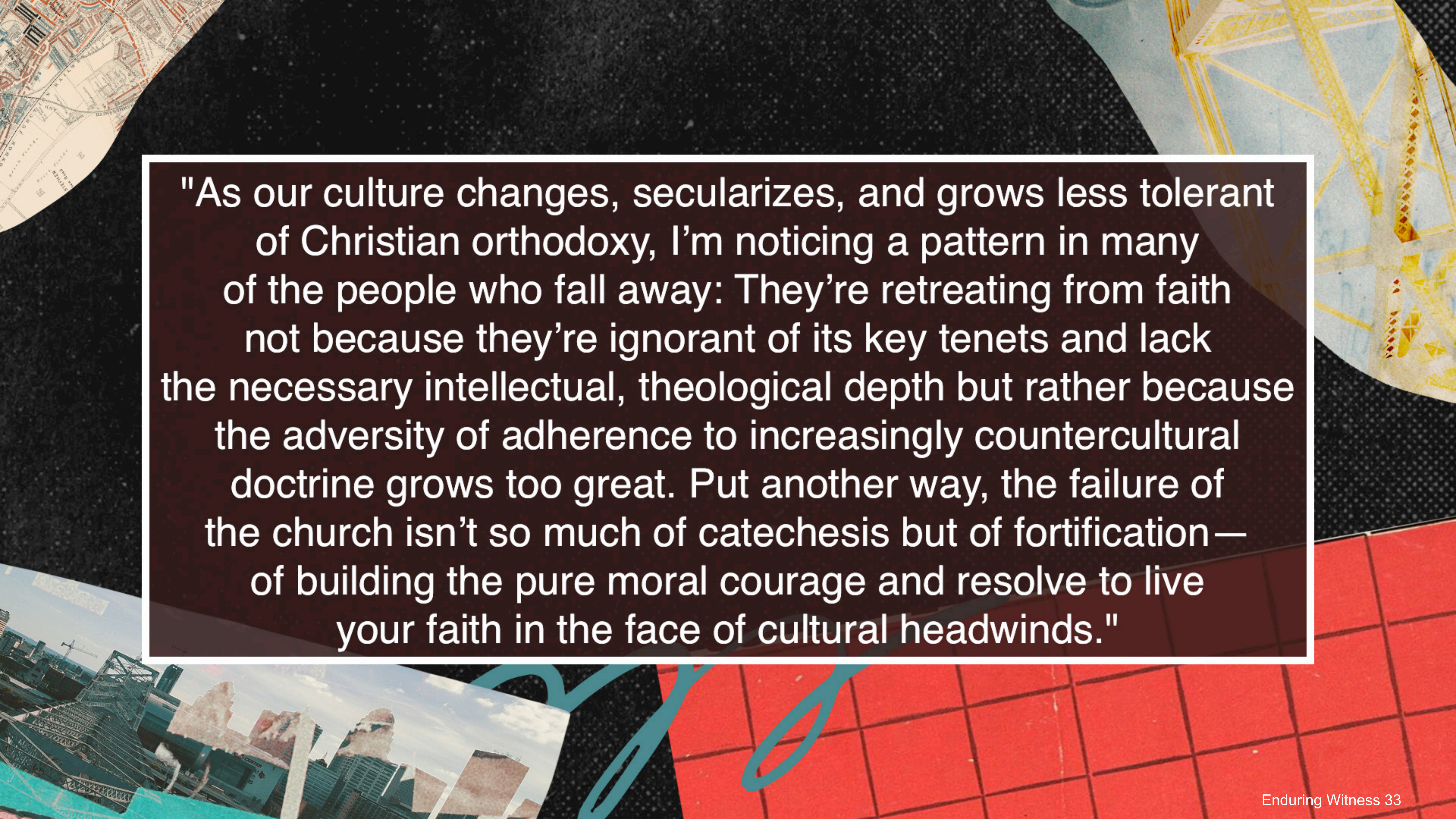
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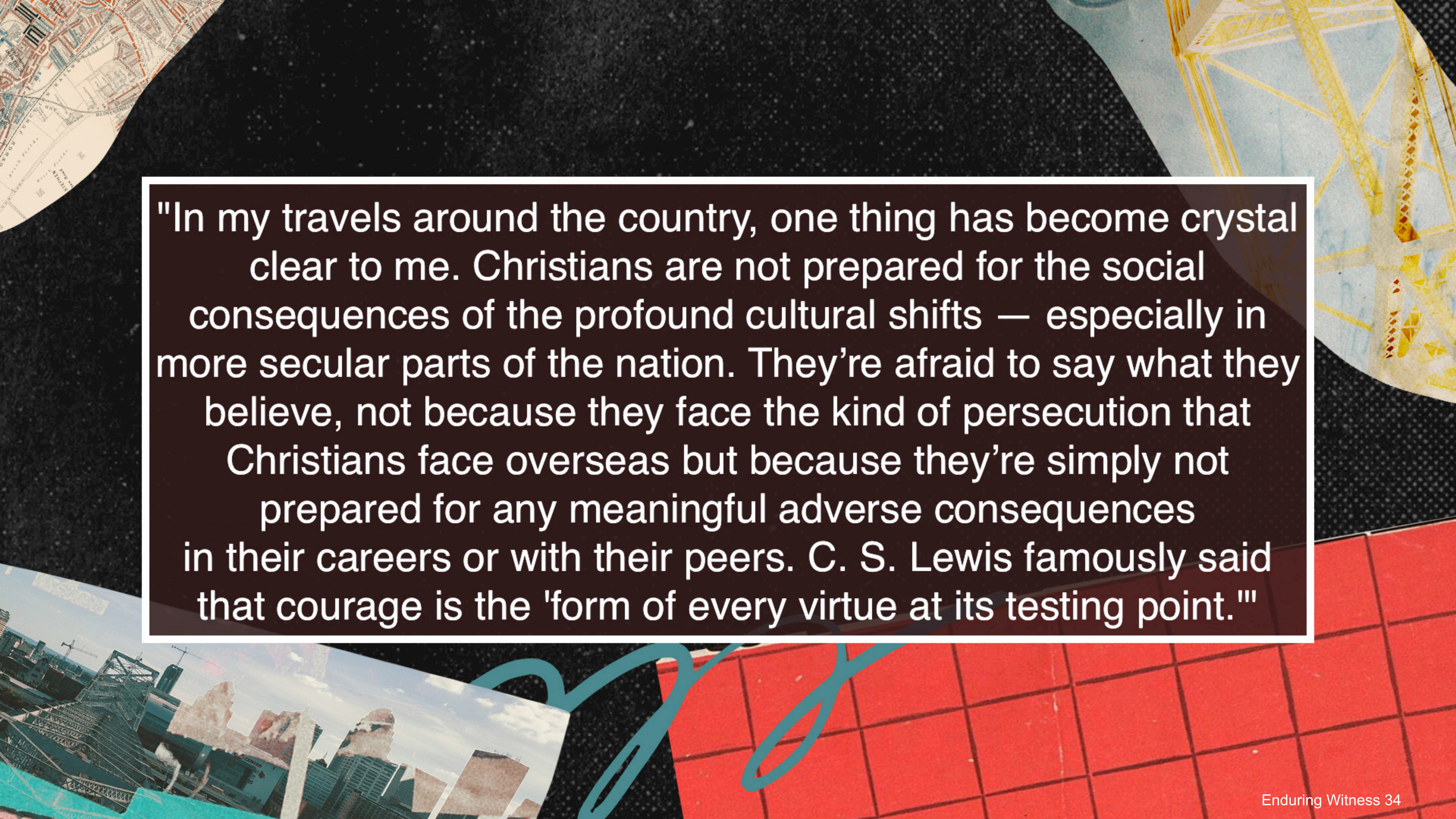
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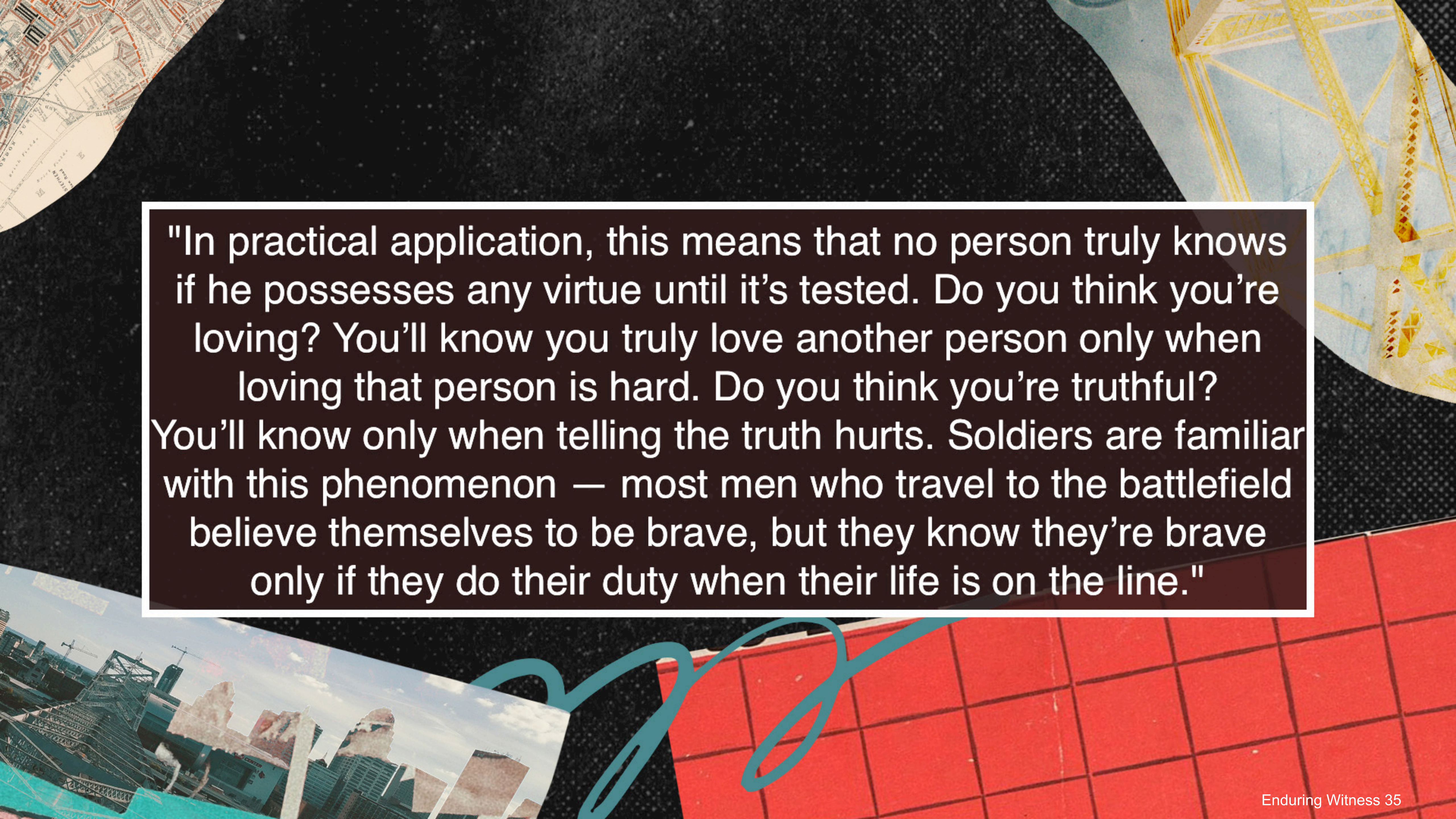
Courage



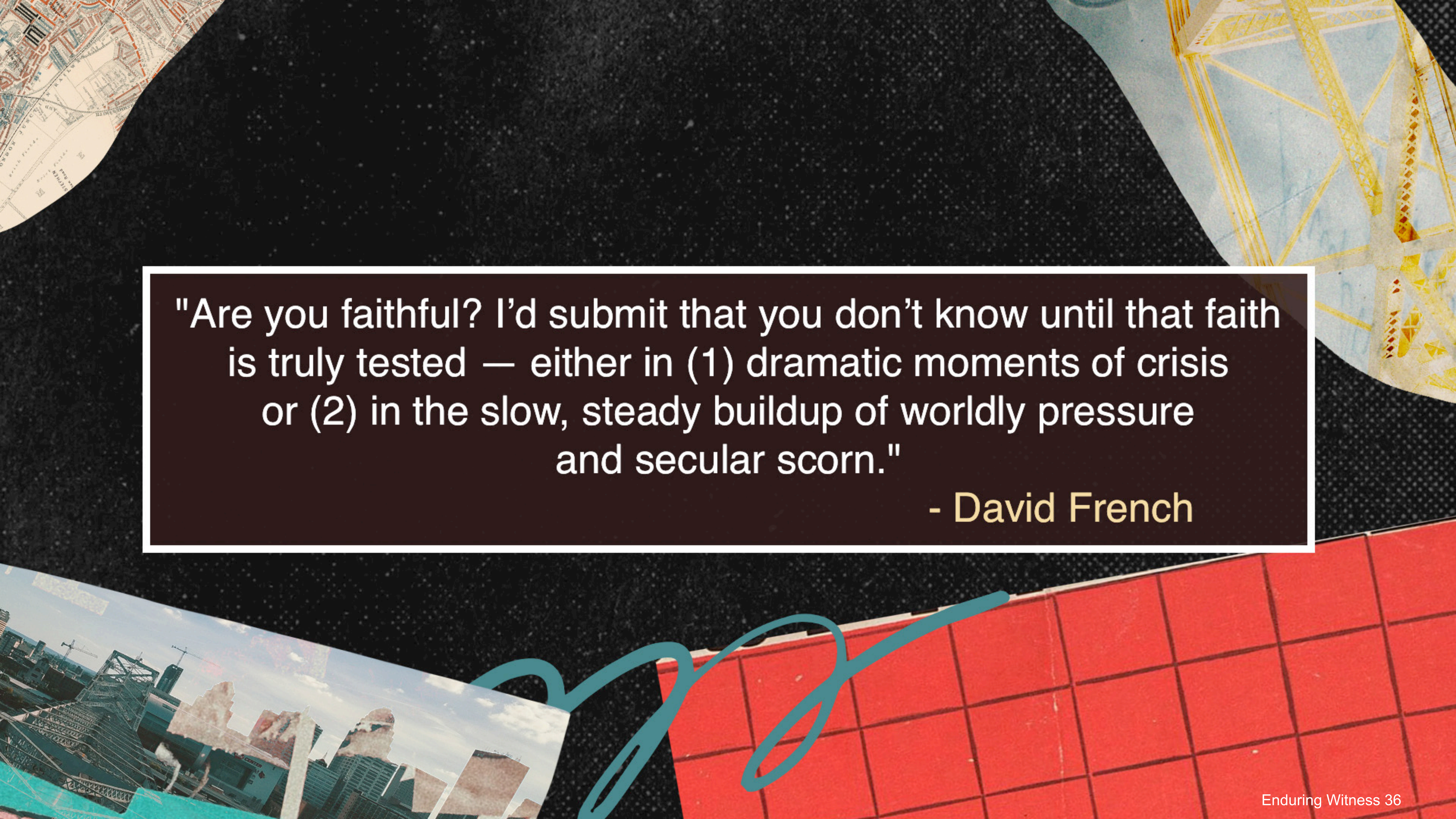
"As our culture changes, secularizes, and grows less tolerant of Christian orthodoxy, I'm noticing a pattern in many of the people who fall away: They're retreating from faith not because they're ignorant of its key tenets and lack the necessary intellectual, theological depth but rather because the adversity of adherence to increasingly countercultural doctrine grows too great. Put another way, the failure of the church isn't so much of catechesis but of fortification—of building the pure moral courage and resolve to live your faith in the face of cultural headwinds."



"In my travels around the country, one thing has become crystal clear to me. Christians are not prepared for the social consequences of the profound cultural shifts — especially in more secular parts of the nation. They're afraid to say what they believe, not because they face the kind of persecution that Christians face overseas but because they're simply not prepared for any meaningful adverse consequences in their careers or with their peers. C. S. Lewis famously said that courage is the 'form of every virtue at its testing point.'"

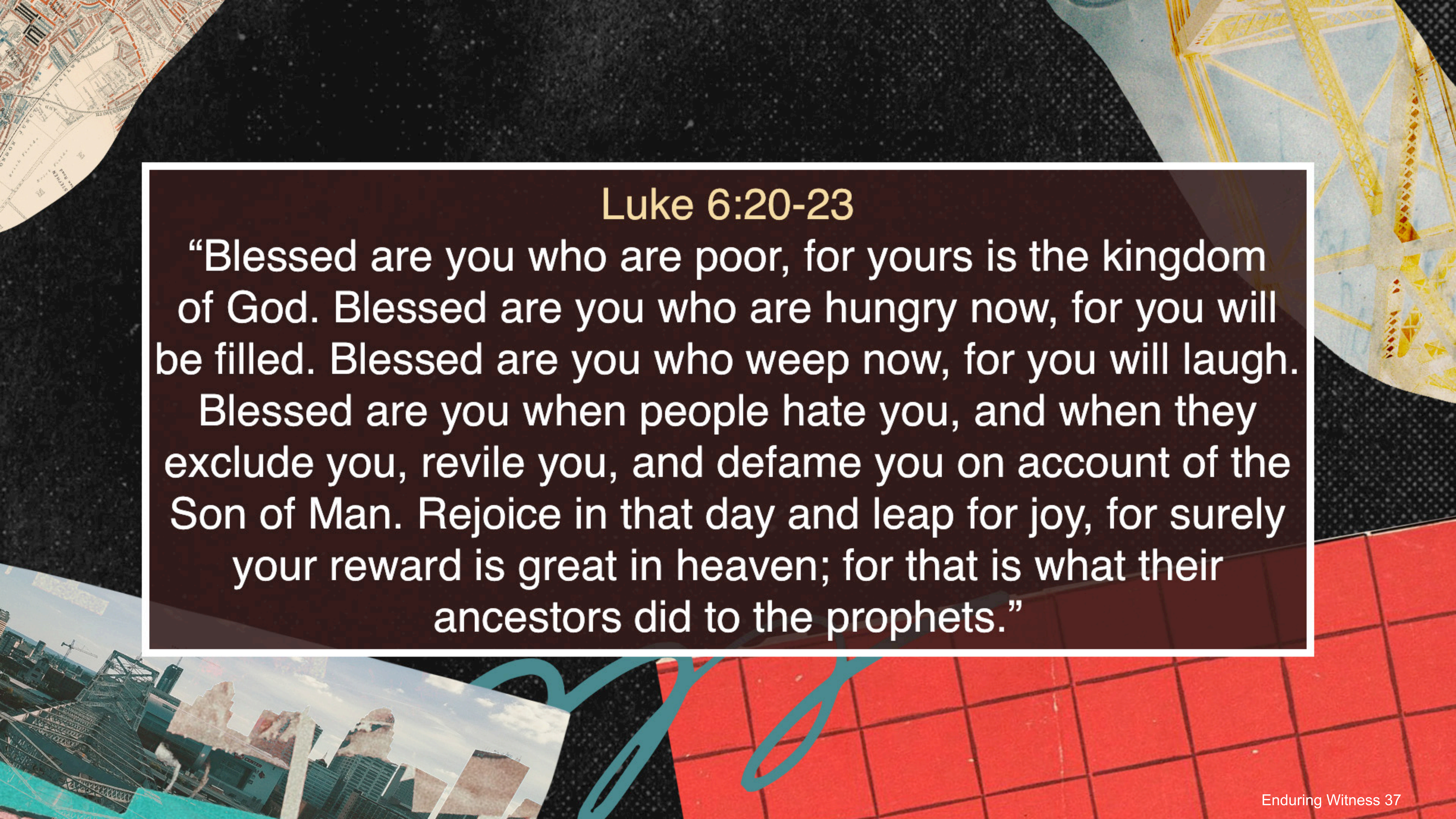


"In practical application, this means that no person truly knows if he possesses any virtue until it's tested. Do you think you're loving? You'll know you truly love another person only when loving that person is hard. Do you think you're truthful? You'll know only when telling the truth hurts. Soldiers are familiar with this phenomenon — most men who travel to the battlefield believe themselves to be brave, but they know they're brave only if they do their duty when their life is on the line."



"Are you faithful? I'd submit that you don't know until that faith is truly tested — either in (1) dramatic moments of crisis or (2) in the slow, steady buildup of worldly pressure and secular scorn."

- David French



Luke 6:20-23

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.”