SIMPLICITY & GENEROSITY

SPIRITUAL FORMATION SERIES

I want you to imagine walking into a room, a control room with a bunch of people, a hundred people, hunched over a desk with little dials, and that that control room will shape the thoughts and feelings of a billion people. This might sound like science fiction, but this actually exists right now, today. Because what we don't talk about is how the handful of people working at a handful of technology companies through their choices will steer what a billion people are thinking today. Because when you pull out your phone and they design how this works or what's on the feed, it's scheduling little blocks of time in our minds.

There's a hidden goal driving the direction of all of the technology we make, and that goal is the race for our attention. Because every news site, TED, elections, politicians, games, even meditation apps have to compete for one thing, which is our attention, and there's only so much of it. And the best way to get people's attention is to know how someone's mind works. Technology is not neutral, and it becomes this race to the bottom of the brain stem of who can go lower to get it.

This thing is a slot machine. Every time I check my phone, I'm playing the slot machine to see "What did I get?" There's a whole playbook of techniques that get used by technology companies to get you using the product for as long as possible. Silicon Valley is programming people. There's always this narrative that technology is neutral. And it's up to us to choose how we use it. This is just not true. It's not neutral. They want you to use it in particular ways and for long periods of time. Because that's how they make their money.

Tristan Harris

The thought process that went into building these applications, Facebook being the first of them, was all about: "How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?" And that means that we need to sort of give you a little dopamine hit every once in awhile, because someone liked or commented on a photo or a post or whatever…It's a social validation feedback loop…exactly the kind of thing that a hacker like myself would come up with, because you're exploiting a vulnerability in human psychology.

Sean Parker

New Technology =
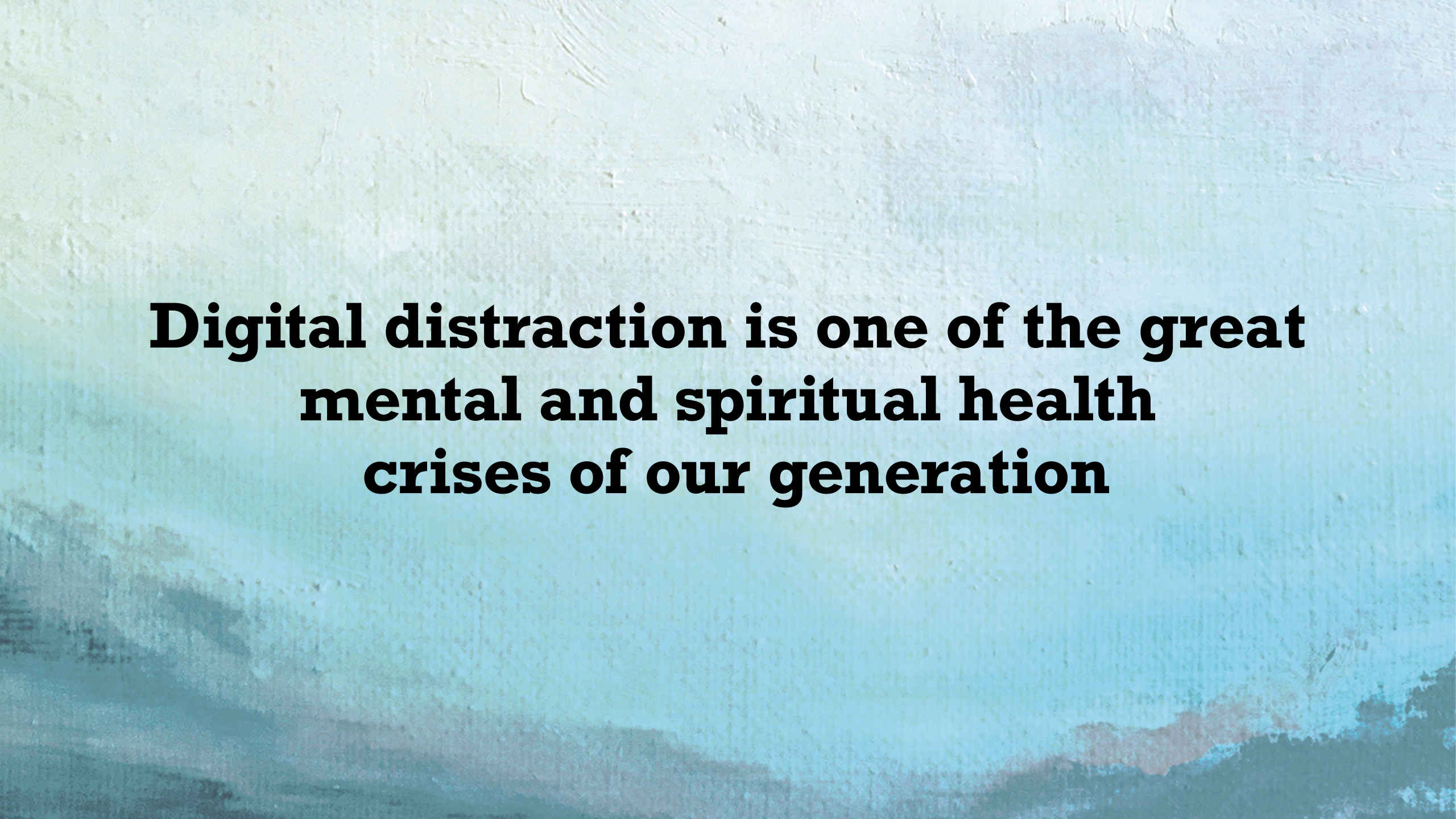# New Science + Social Architecture

Previous technologies introduced new ways to occasionally interrupt time alone with your thoughts, whereas the iPod provided for the first time the ability to be continuously distracted from your own mind… Compulsive use is not the result of a character flaw, but instead the realization of a massively profitable business plan…We've been engaging in a lopsided arms race in which the technologies encroaching on our autonomy were preying with increasing precision on deep-seated vulnerabilities in our brains, while we still naively believed that we were just fiddling with fun gifts handed down from the nerd gods.

Cal Newport

A recent study found that the average iPhone user touches his or her phone 2,617 times a day. Each user is on his or her phone 2.5 hours per day over 76 sessions. Another study on millennials put the number at twice that.

A Rising Mental Health Criss

Digital distraction is one of the great mental and spiritual health crises of our generation

CONTEXT

The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.
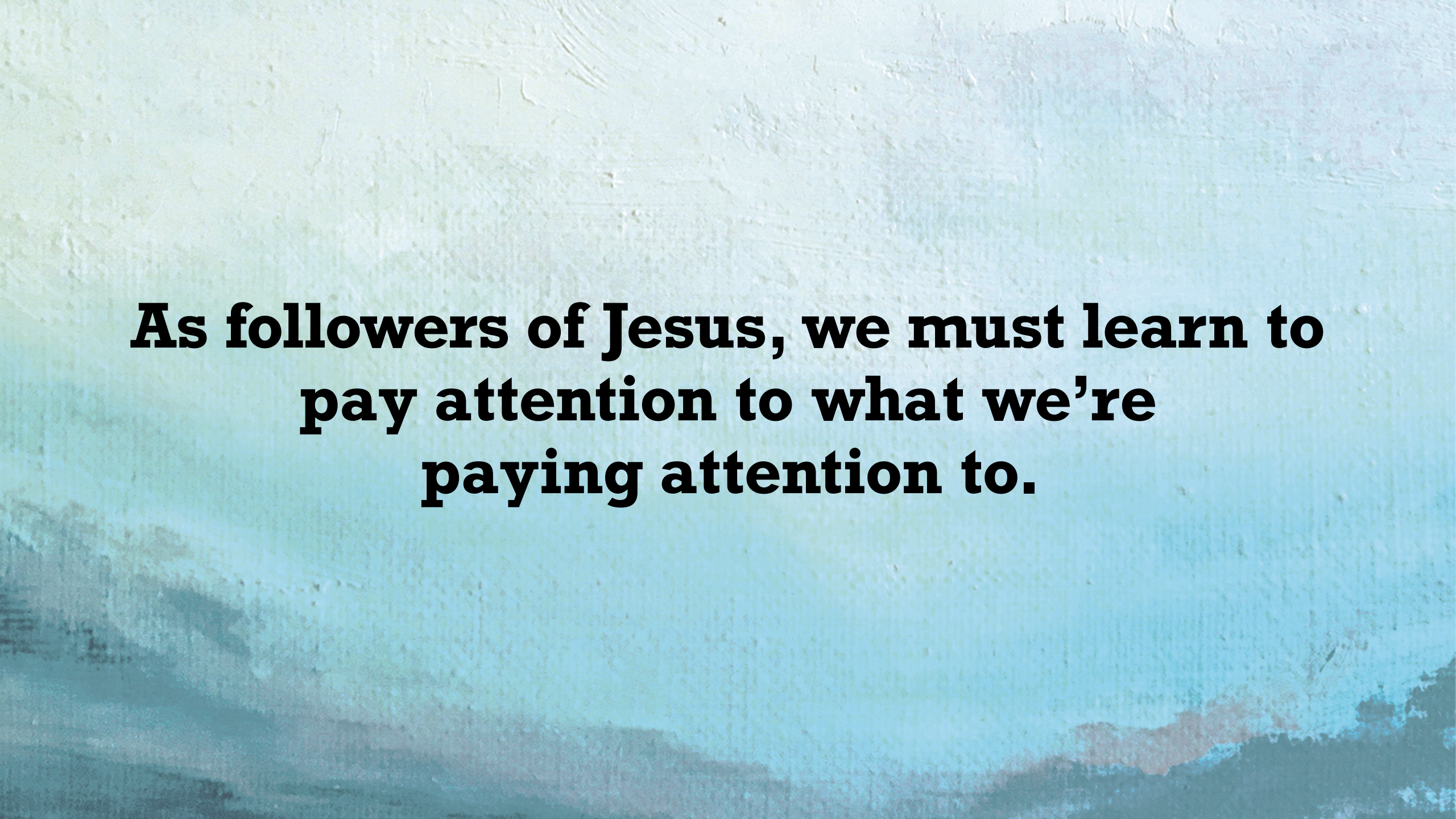
Henry David Thoreau

Narcissism accounts for our heartaches, pragmatism for our headaches, and restlessness for our insomnia. And constancy of all three together account for the fact that we are so habitually self-absorbed by heartaches, headaches, and greed for experience that we rarely find the time and space to be in touch with the deeper movements inside of and around us...It is not that we have anything against God, depth, and spirit, we would like these, it is just that we are habitually too preoccupied to have any of these show up on our radar screens. We are more busy than bad, more distracted than nonspiritual, and more interested in the movie theater, the sports stadium, and the shopping mall and the fantasy life they produce in us than we are in church. Pathological busyness, distraction, and restlessness are major blocks today within our spiritual lives.

Ronald Rolheiser

The process of spiritual formation in Christ is one of progressively replacing destructive images and ideas with the images and ideas that filled the mind of Jesus himself.

Dallas Willard

As followers of Jesus, we must learn to pay attention to what we're paying attention to.

For prayer is awareness, attention, intense inward openness. In a certain way sin could be described… as anything that destroys this attention.

Douglas Steere

Attention is the beginning of devotion.

Mary Oliver

Prayer is absolute attention.

Simone Weil

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this habit of attention. It is, to quote 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…the highest intellectual gifts depend for their value upon the measure in which the owner has cultivated the habit of attention.

Charlotte
Mason

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at a the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians
3:17-18

I keep the LORD in mind always. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 16:8

What is Simplicity of Tech?

What it all adds up to is a set of nudges, disciplines, and choices that can keep technology in its proper place - leaving room for the had and beautiful work of becoming wise and courages people together.

Andy Crouch

Digital minimalism is a philosophy of technology in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support things you value, and then happy miss out on everything else.

Cal Newport

Limiting our use of technology in order to give our full attention (body and mind) to worshiping God and becoming people of love.

How Do We Simplify our Tech?

Reclaim your attention through a digital fast

More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.

Richard Foster

The only thing that consoles us for our miseries is diversion. And yet it is the greatest of our miseries. For it is that above all which prevents us thinking about ourselves and leads is imperceptibly to destruction. But for that we should be bored, and boredom would drive us to seek some more solid means of escape, but diversion passes our time and brings us imperceptibly to our death.
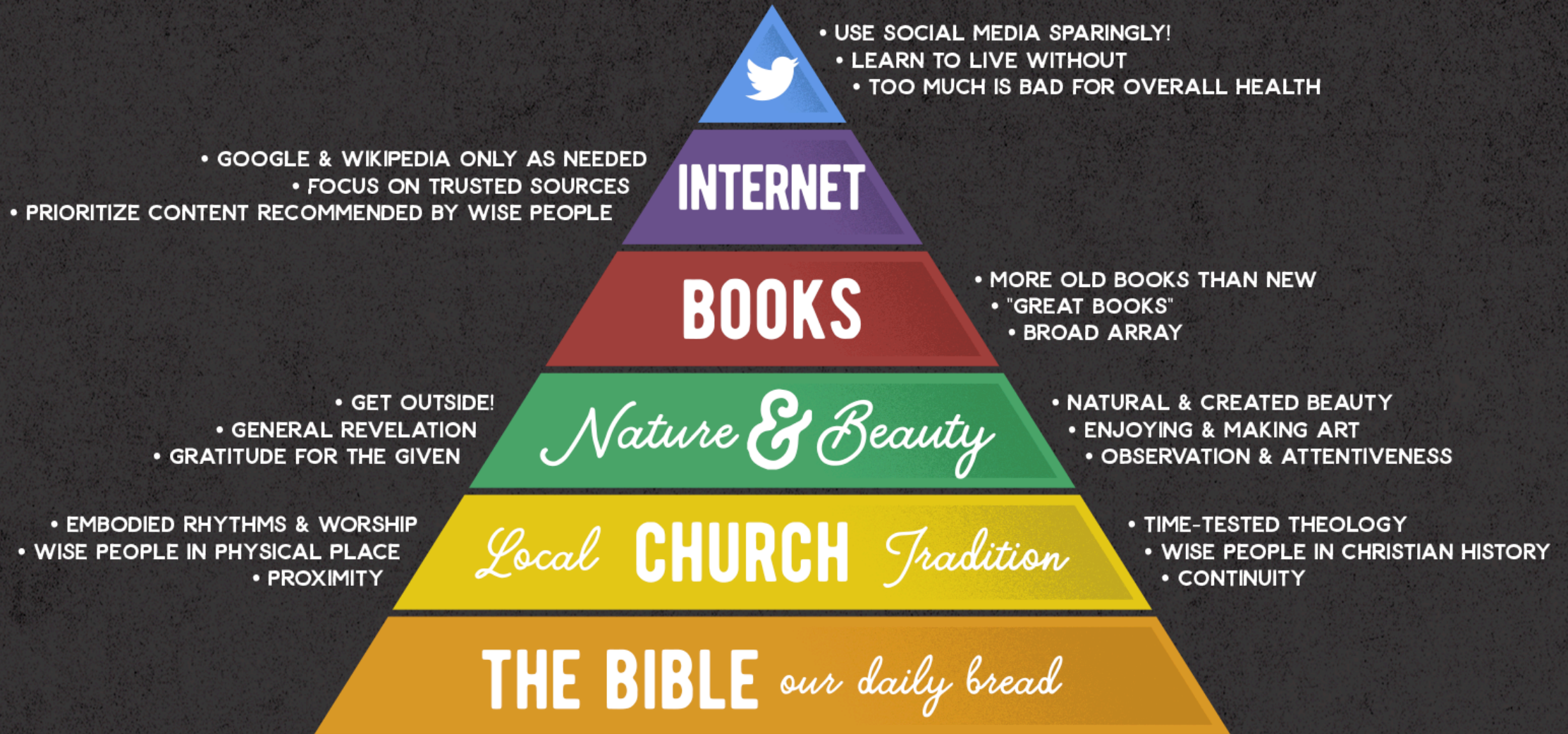
Blaise Pascal

Reorient your attention to God, others, and a flourishing life

Wisdom Pyramid

- USE SOCIAL MEDIA SPARINGLY!
- LEARN TO LIVE WITHOUT
- TOO MUCH IS BAD FOR OVERALL HEALTH

- GOOGLE & WIKIPEDIA ONLY AS NEEDED
- FOCUS ON TRUSTED SOURCES
- PRIORITIZE CONTENT RECOMMENDED BY WISE PEOPLE

INTERNET

BOOKS

- MORE OLD BOOKS THAN NEW
- "GREAT BOOKS"
- BROAD ARRAY

- GET OUTSIDE!
- GENERAL REVELATION
- GRATITUDE FOR THE GIVEN

Nature & Beauty

- NATURAL & CREATED BEAUTY
- ENJOYING & MAKING ART
- OBSERVATION & ATTENTIVENESS

- EMBODIED RHYTHMS & WORSHIP
- WISE PEOPLE IN PHYSICAL PLACE
- PROXIMITY

Local **CHURCH** *Tradition*

- TIME-TESTED THEOLOGY
- WISE PEOPLE IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY
- CONTINUITY

THE BIBLE *our daily bread*

Digital Rule of Life

Amish Hacking

Ten Tech-Wise Commitments

1 We develop wisdom and courage together as a family.

2 We want to create more than we consume. So we fill the center of our home with things that reward skill and active engagement.

3 We are designed for a rhythm of work and rest. So one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year, we turn off our devices and worship, feast, play, and rest together.

4 We wake up before our devices do, and they "go to bed" before we do.

5 We aim for "no screens before double digits" at school and at home.

6 We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone.

7 Car time is conversation time.

8 Spouses have one another's passwords, and parents have total access to children's devices.

9 We learn to sing together, rather than letting recorded and amplified music take over our lives and worship.

Other Ideas;

- Digital sabbath
- Minimize apps and notifications
- Freedom app to block time
- Batch texts and social media usage
- No device zones
- Default is do not disturb

This week's practice:
Digital Fast & Rule of Life