

PARKER J. PALMER

Author of Let Your Life Speak

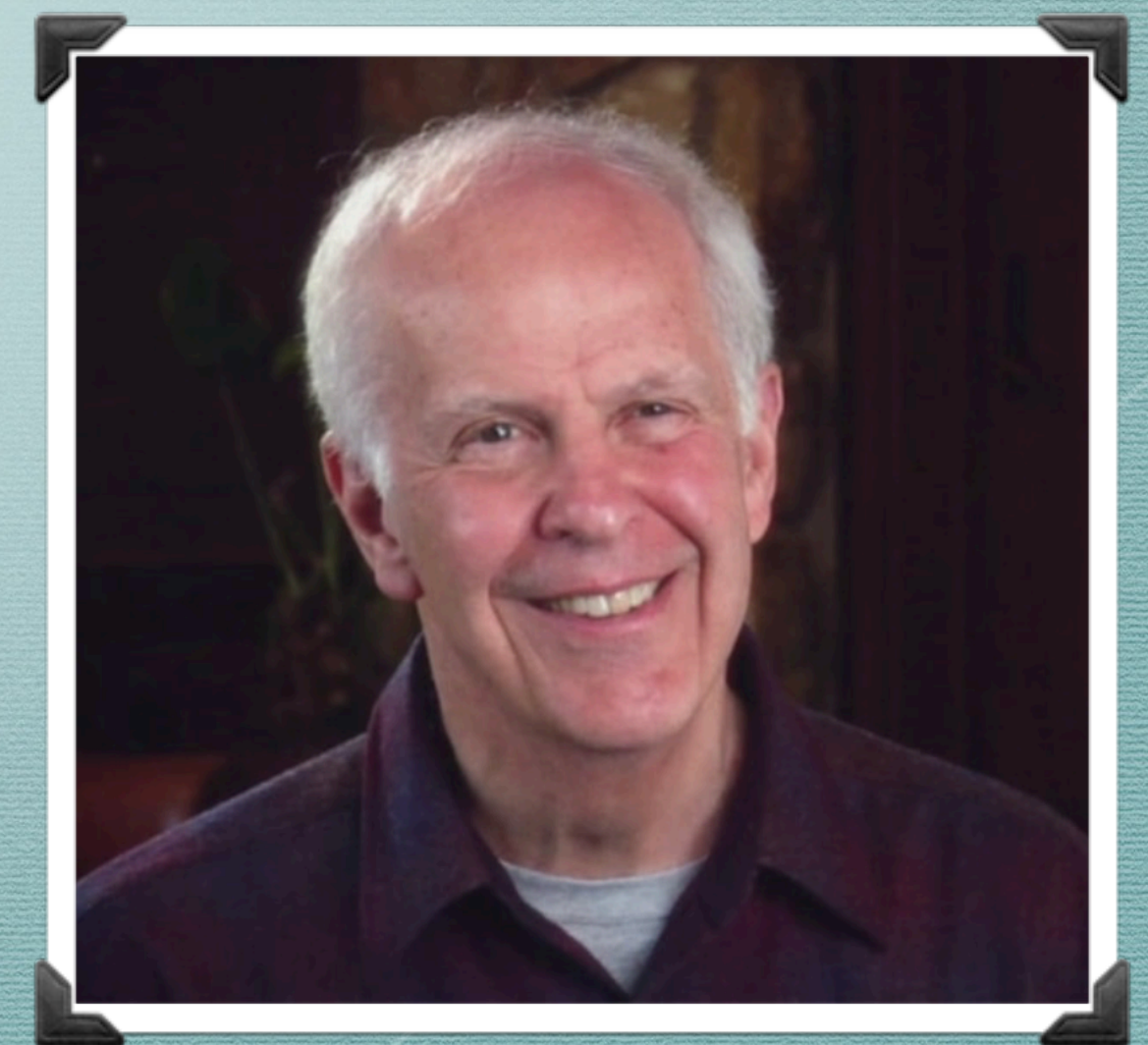
ON the BRINK
of EVERYTHING

Grace, Gravity & Getting Old

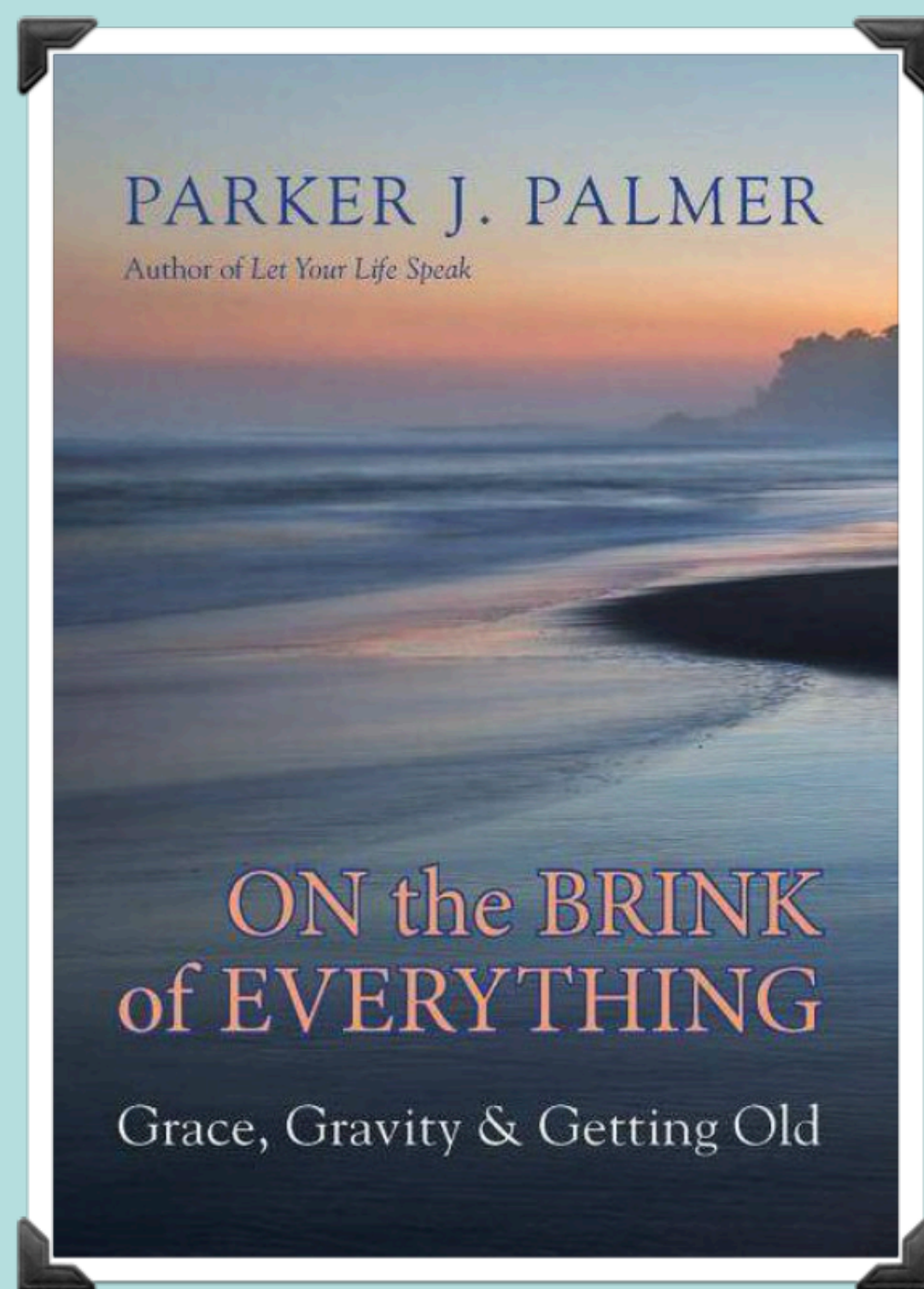
On the Brink of
Everything: Grace,
Gravity & Getting Old

Monday Night Book
Study at St. David's
United Church —

48 - 06



"We need to reframe aging as a passage of discovery and engagement. Not decline and inaction" (p.8)



Monday Night Book Study

with

WAYNE, JOAN & BRENDA

ST. DAVID'S BOOK STUDY TEAM

ACTS WINTER 2022

BEFORE WE BEGIN

OPENING with Frans Heynen



Reading Guide for Monday Nights

* **Session Seven: Chapter V March 7**

* **Session Eight: Chapter VI March 14**

* **Session Nine: Chapter VII & Postlude March 21**

* **Session Ten: Conclusions and Where to from here March 28**

housekeeping





PALMER'S STORY

Reflection on the meanings of “Work and Vocation: Writing a Life”

What is your vocation?
Why is this important?





“Naming the jobs by which I’ve made a living is not the same as naming the vocation by which I’ve made meaning.”

Palmer p. 85

Eleven Discoveries from Chapter Four

1. “I was the first person in
my family to go to College.”

Palmer p.86





DISCUSS

2. “Puzzling out one’s bafflement to go on to the next.”
“Forgetting a lesson and starting over.”
Palmer p.8

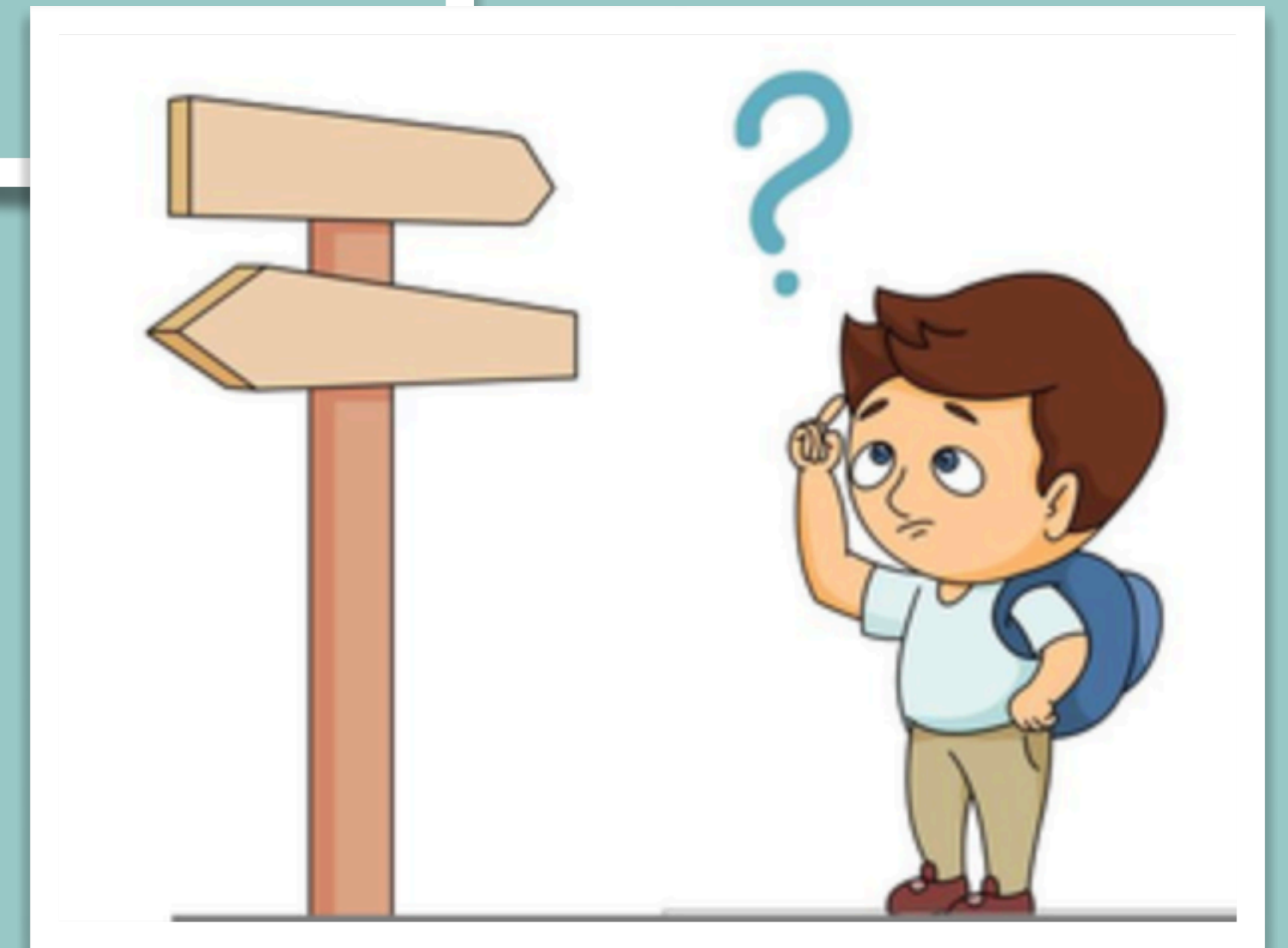


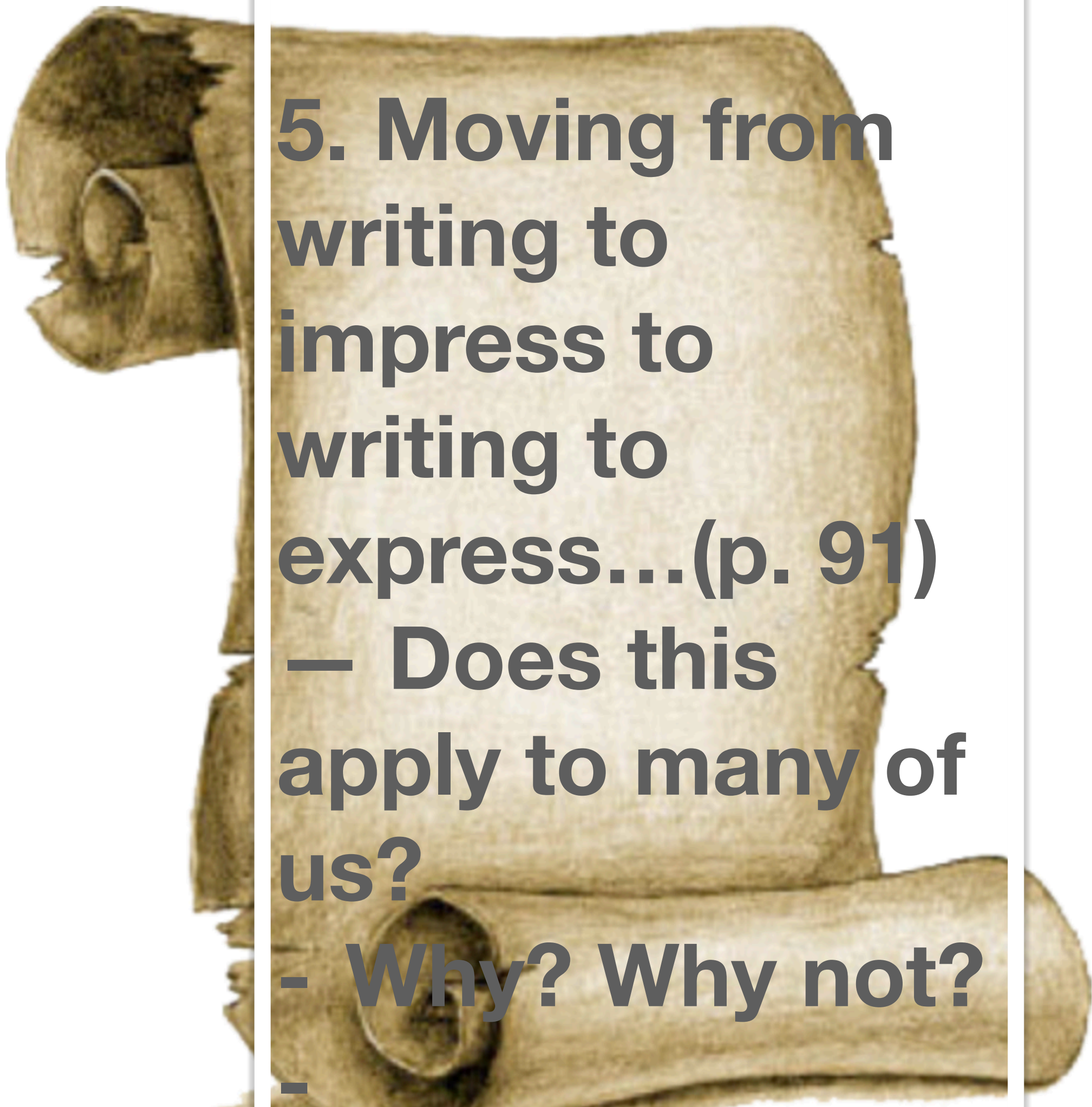
3. “With each step taken toward death, editing the lives we’ve written matters even more.”

Palmer p.88



4. “Allow yourself to be mystified.”
Palmer p. 90





**5. Moving from
writing to
impress to
writing to
express...(p. 91)
— Does this
apply to many of
us?
- Why? Why not?
-**



6. “Caring more about the process of writing than the outcome.” (p. 92)



7. “Faith is what allows us to live in full awareness of our contradictions.”

(p. 95)



**8. “Writing is sometimes a prayer for me.”
“It allows my mask to fall away.” (p.98,99)**



9. “To write and
live in faith we
must **LET GOD BE
GOD.**” p. 105

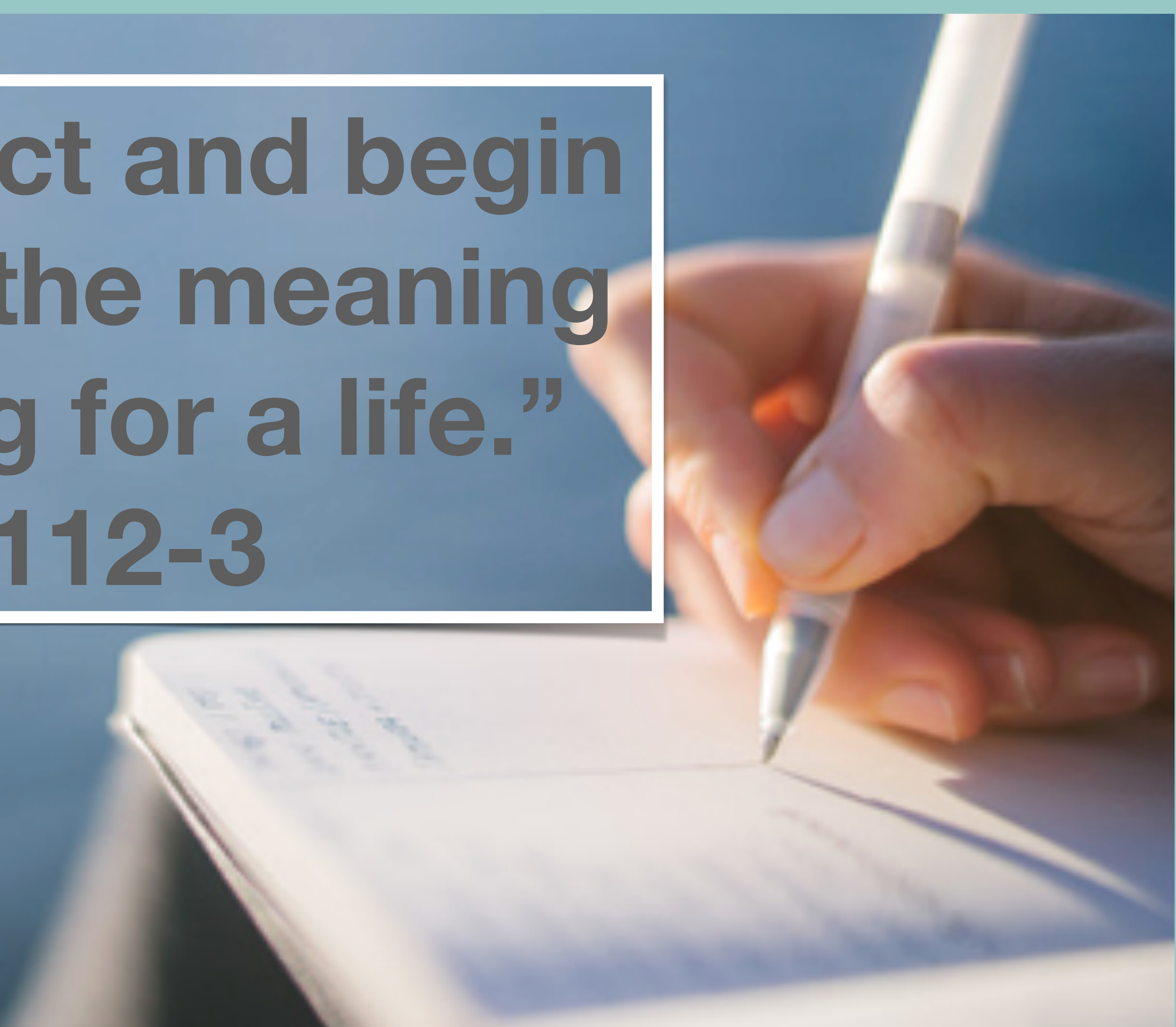
**LET
GOD
BE
GOD**



10. “‘Begin again’ are two words that help me get unstuck.” p. 110

11. “Reflect and begin again on the meaning of writing for a life.”

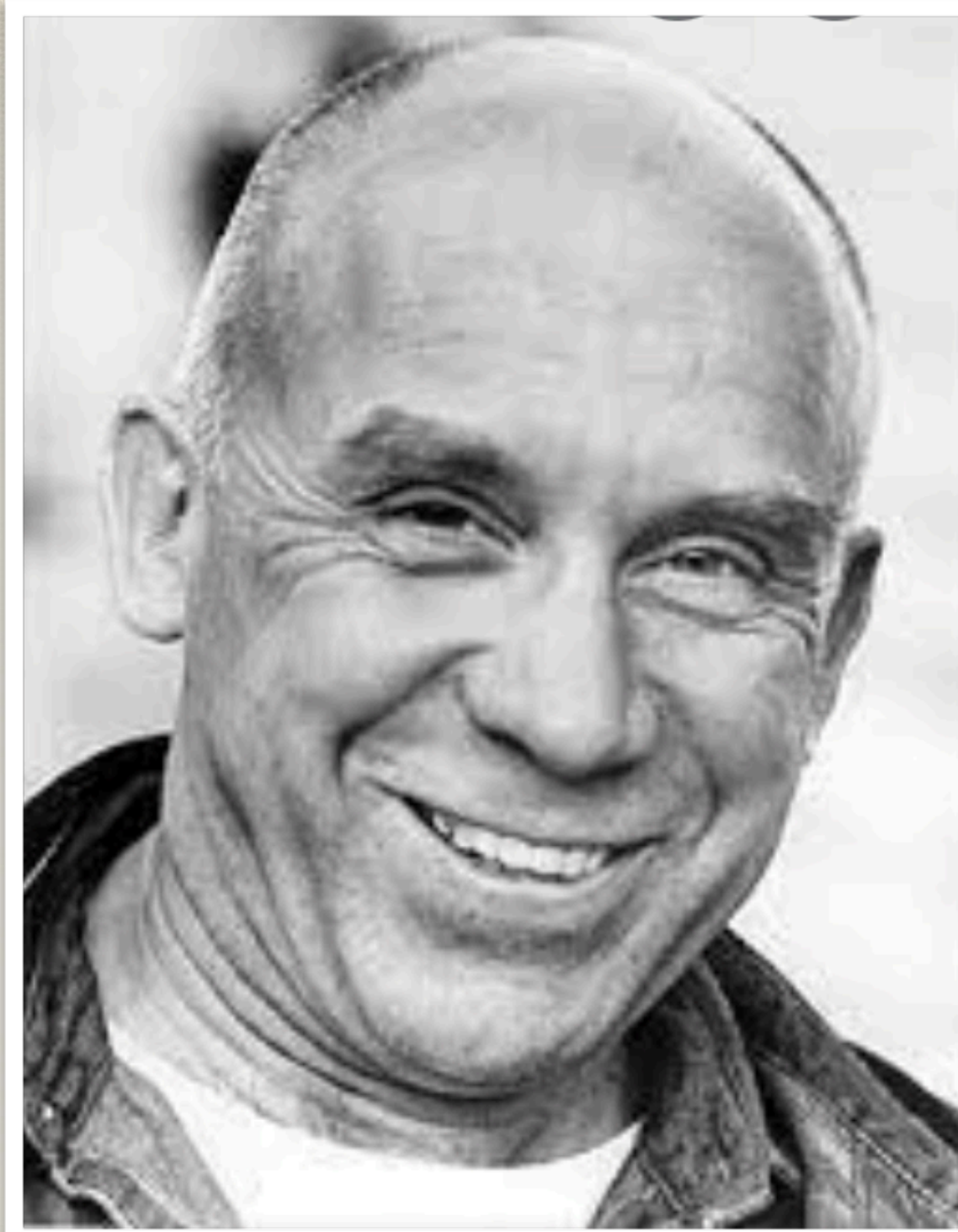
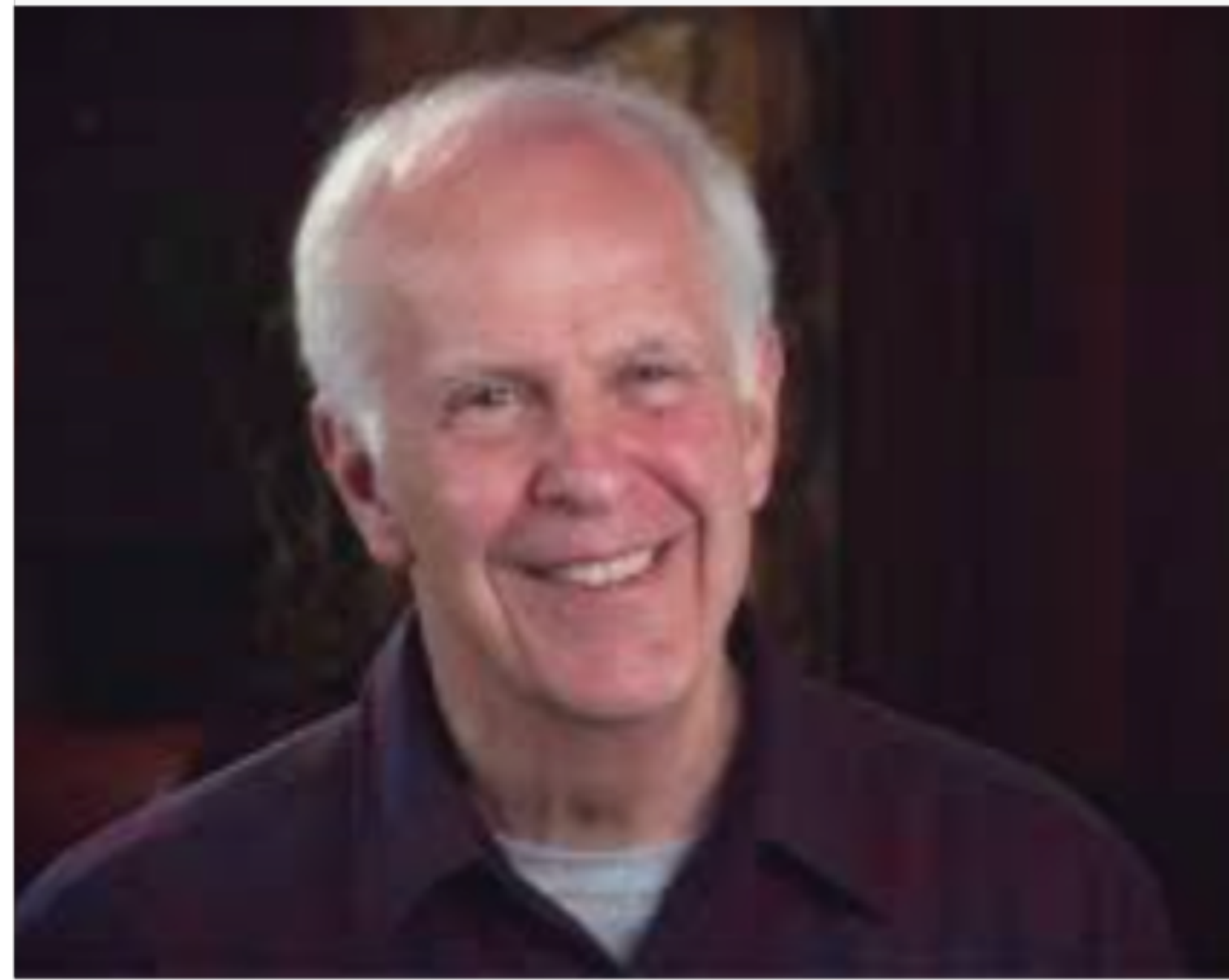
p. 112-3



10. Key theme of this study -

“We need to reframe aging as a passage of discovery and engagement, not decline and inaction.”



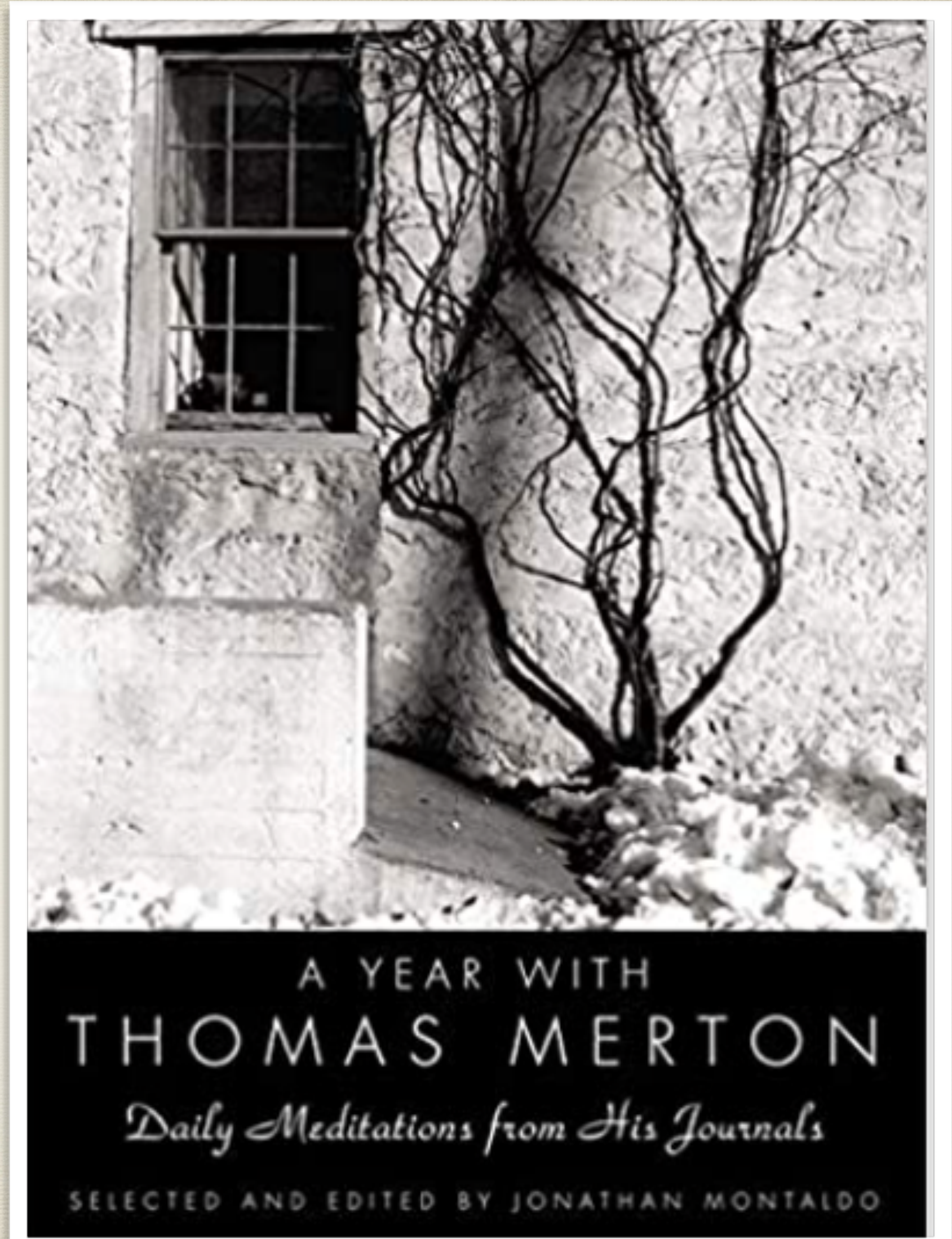


Parker Palmer Ph.D.

<https://www.newcomerpalmer.com/home>

<https://onbeing.org>

The Growing Edge Podcasts



February 28 from “A Year with Thomas Merton”

A Life of Clashes and Discoveries:

I begin my jubilee year not exactly clear what I am doing, for everything is always beginning again. If everything in my life remains indefinite to some extent (though it is superficially definite), I accept this as a good thing. As a serious and perhaps troubling thing, always faced with possibilities, I must recognize that many of the possibilities are so illusory or so impossible as not to be worth considering. And at times I will not know which to consider, which not.

Coming to grips with my reality — as if this were not going on all the time — coordinating, incorporating in a living regime all that I can reach to make relevant my presence here, on its way to ending... The religious depth ... the tedious subtleties ... and always, the Bible. Meetings of opposites, not carefully planned exclusions and mere inclusion of the familiar. A life of clashes and discoveries, not of repetitions: and yet also deep dread before God, and not trivial excitement. 1964



1915-1968
at 49

QUOTES TO CONSIDER

“I’m a teacher-and-learner, a vocation I’ve pursued through thick and thin in every era of my life.”

Parker J. Palmer

**“Born Baffled ... Allow yourself to be mystified...
The soul needs its secrets...”**

“With every move we make... we’re dictating the next few lines of the text called our lives, composing it as we go.” Mary Catherine Bateson

“... yet I never stopped writing. My daemon (good spirit) would not let me go, nor has it to this day.”

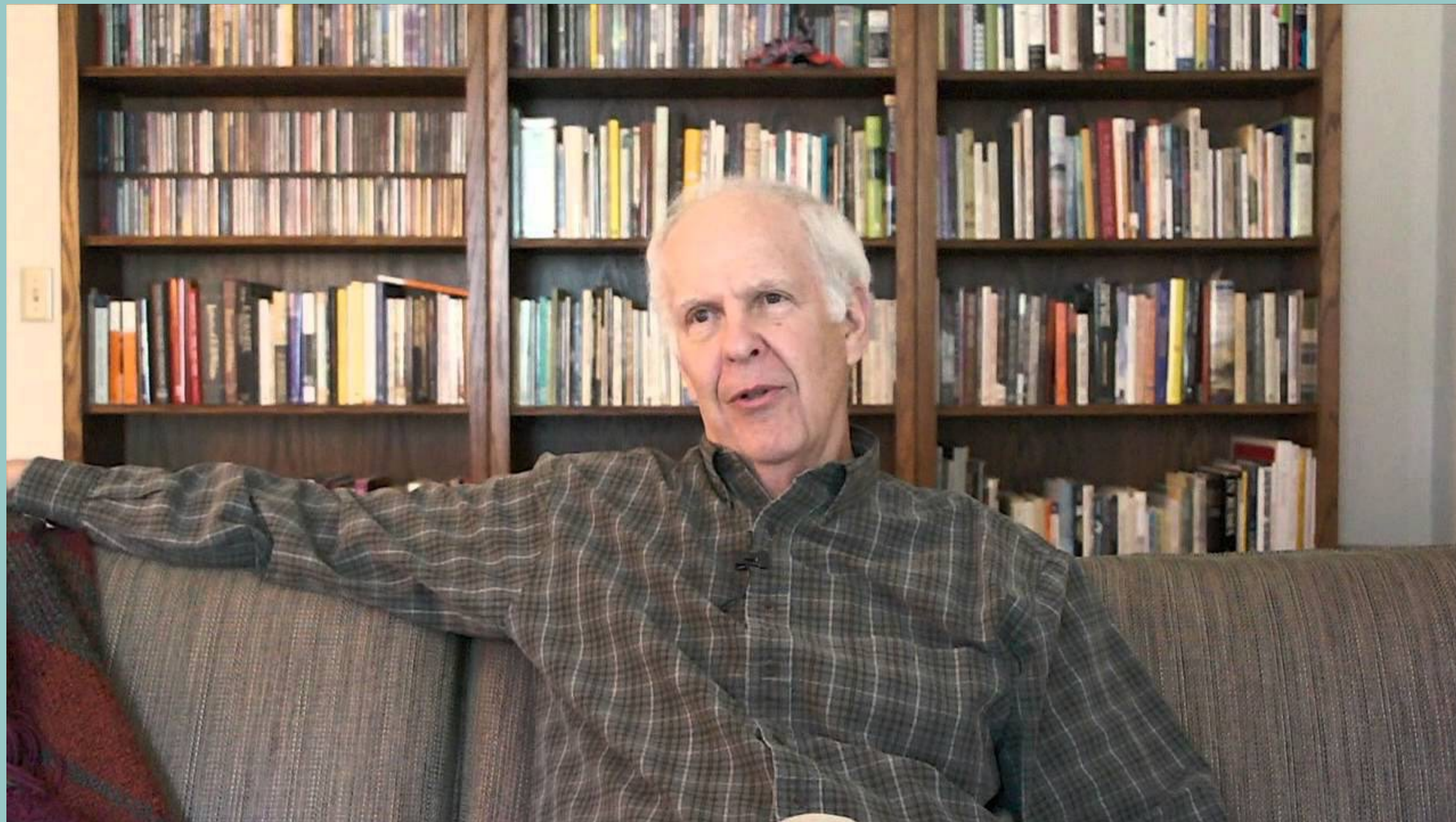
***“In religious terms, the treasure is God; in secular terms, it’s reality.”**

***“We are all dictating words with our lives.”**

***“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, in the expert’s mind there are few.” SHUNRYU SUZUKI**

***“In truth, I am a novice in every new moment of the day — each of them presents possibilities unknown and untried.”**

PORTRAITS OF FAITH WITH PARKER PALMER



**2014: SPIRITUAL INSIGHT— What is your concept of God?
(18:00 to 23:40)**

Grace, Gravity & Getting Old

Break out Rooms

2022: Some things to discuss

- * Vocation?**
- * Retreats?**
- * Spiritual Insight? My Concept of God? “Let God Be God”**
- * Hope for the future?**
- * Healing the Heart of Democracy — Parker’s Growing Edge**

Feedback and Summary

**Great ideas and
stories that need to
be shared**

NEXT WEEK:

Session VII — March 7, 2022

Read Chapter Five:

Keep Reaching out:

Staying Engaged with the World

Check out ‘Pause to Consider’

VOLUNTEER FOR OPENING

AND/OR CLOSING Next Week



CLOSING WITH HEATHER ANN MCGILVARY



ON THE BRINK OF EVERYTHING

Parker J. Parker

Chapter IV: Closing Remarks

WORK & VOCATION



“The way I’ve earned my keep has changed frequently, but my vocation has remained the same: I’m a teacher-and-learner” (P.85).





“Born Baffled is about a birthright gift that’s animated my writing from the get-go. I’m not an expert on much, but I’m curious, easily confused, even lost, and often in need of finding a way through and out” (p.87).





LIFE EXPERIENCES

“Even when I was cleaning restrooms at a public beach, I was learning a lot about the human condition” (P.85).

I'M A TEACHER AT HEART

“One way or another, I’m a teacher, no more and no less” (p.100).





WRITER'S BLOCK

"I'm using words to try and force something into being, to *reveal* something that's not really there- or I've not yet found the words with the power to make reality show up on the page" (p.102).

IMPOSTER'S SYNDROME

"Speaking of fakery, one of the great temptations of being a writer is to absorb the projections of readers who think you're an expert on some subject just because you've written a book about it"

When my ego becomes bloated with the illusion of expertise, I risk losing the gift of bafflement that has always animated my best writing" (p.96).

APPLICATION TO BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS

The World Once Green Again

“..just as trees grow from the seedbed of my experiences, just as trees grow from the earth, then return to the earth to feed the roots of worlds unsung” (p.87).

“Evocative questions are always more helpful than advice” (p.92).

Naming the Vocation: Making Meaning

“ A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people”- Thomas Mann (p.101).





The Poem I Would Have Writ

*My life has been the poem I would have writ
But I could not both live and utter it.*

—Henry David Thoreau

The first words are the hardest. Sound surrounds you in the womb, grows louder when you're born. You listen. You know the day will come when you must speak words, too — that's how we make our way through this trackless landscape called the world. But how? And what to say?

And what does saying do?

Later, words come easily. You learn to speak the language of what you want and need, to help you find a pathway into and through your life, to make it clear what you believe, reach out to friends, find work to do, heal your wounds, ease your fears, get chance on chance to give love and receive. Sometimes words leap out of you in ways you soon regret — or in ways so magical you silently rehearse them, hoping never to forget

how these words came out of the blue, begging to have life breathed into them by you. You live a life of words.

Then you learn that first words aren't the hardest. The hardest are the last.

There's so much you want to say, but time keeps taking time and all your words away. How to say — amid the flood of grief and gratitude you feel — "Thank you!", or "How beautiful, how grand!", or "I'm so glad I survived...", or "I was changed forever the day we two joined hands and lives."

As you reach for your last words, you realize, this is it — this ebbing tide of language called your life, words trailing into silence, this unfinished poem you would have writ — had it not been for the heartache and the gift of all the years that you've been living it.

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