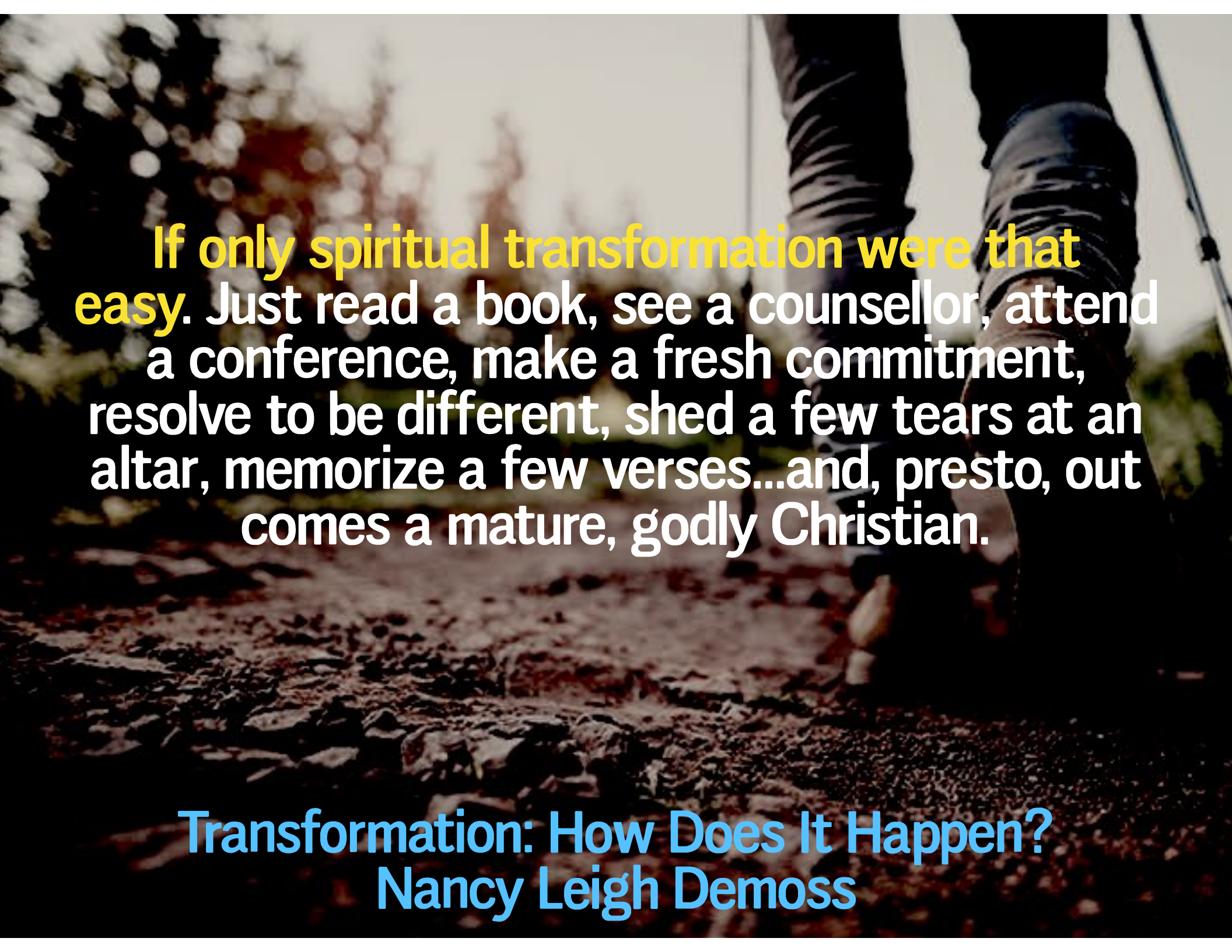




Sacred Rhythms

Habit of Holiness



If only spiritual transformation were that easy. Just read a book, see a counsellor, attend a conference, make a fresh commitment, resolve to be different, shed a few tears at an altar, memorize a few verses...and, presto, out comes a mature, godly Christian.

Transformation: How Does It Happen?
Nancy Leigh Demoss



To the contrary, the experience of many believers looks like this:

- Commit. Fail. Confess.
- Re-commit. Fail again. Confess again.
- Re-re-commit. Fail again. Give up.

Transformation: How Does It Happen?
Nancy Leigh Demoss

We have building full
of Christians that
don't resemble Jesus

6 weeks

3 years

10 years

40 years



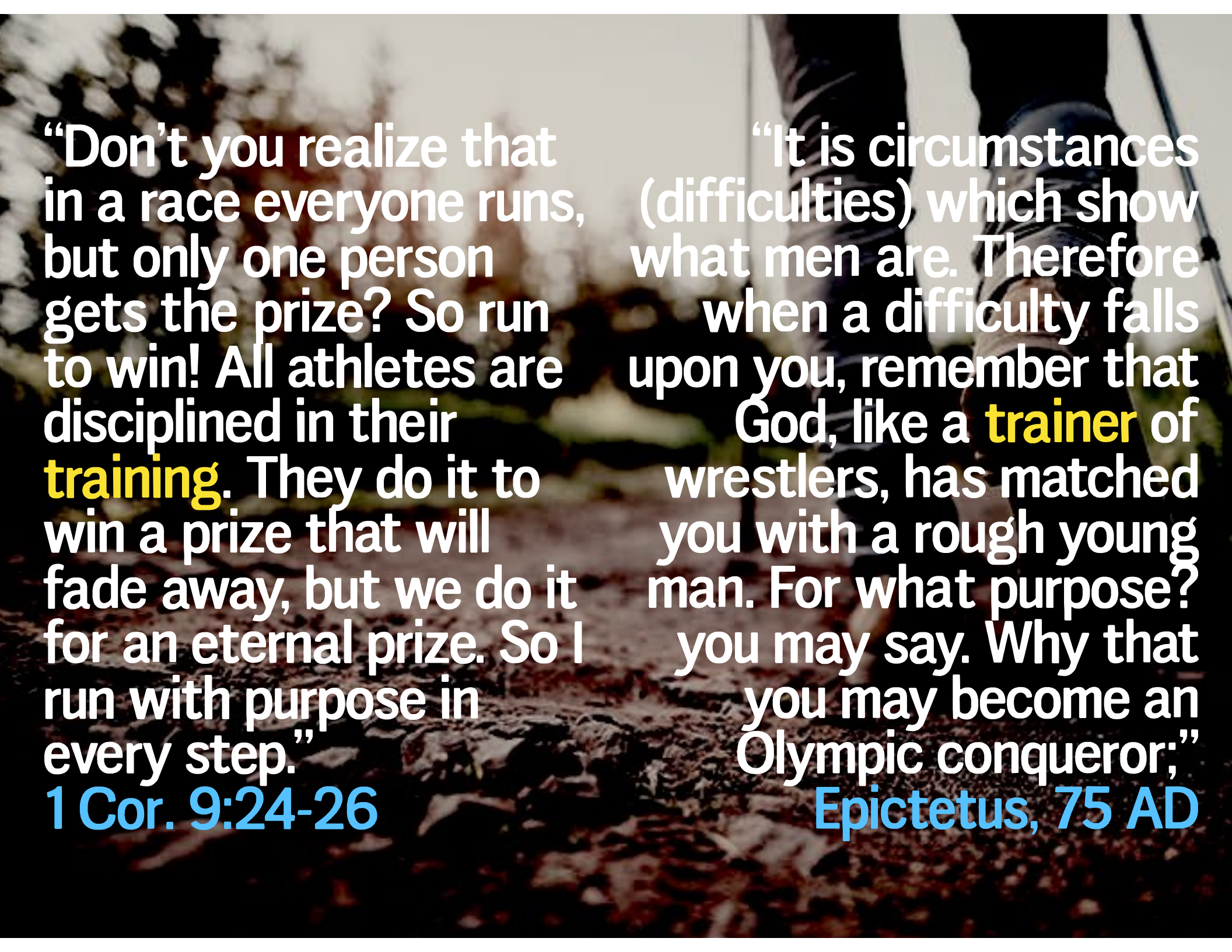
A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's legs in dark hiking pants and brown boots, walking on a rocky, uneven trail. The background is blurred, showing more of the trail and some greenery. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

“If the church exists to see people transformed, shouldn't we be clear about **what a transformed Christian looks like?**” **Gordon MacDonald**

“Holy **habits** are that: the **disciplines**, the **routines** by which we stay alive and focused on Him. At first we **choose** them and carry them out; after a while **they are part of who we are. And they carry us.**” **Mark Buchanan**



áskēsis

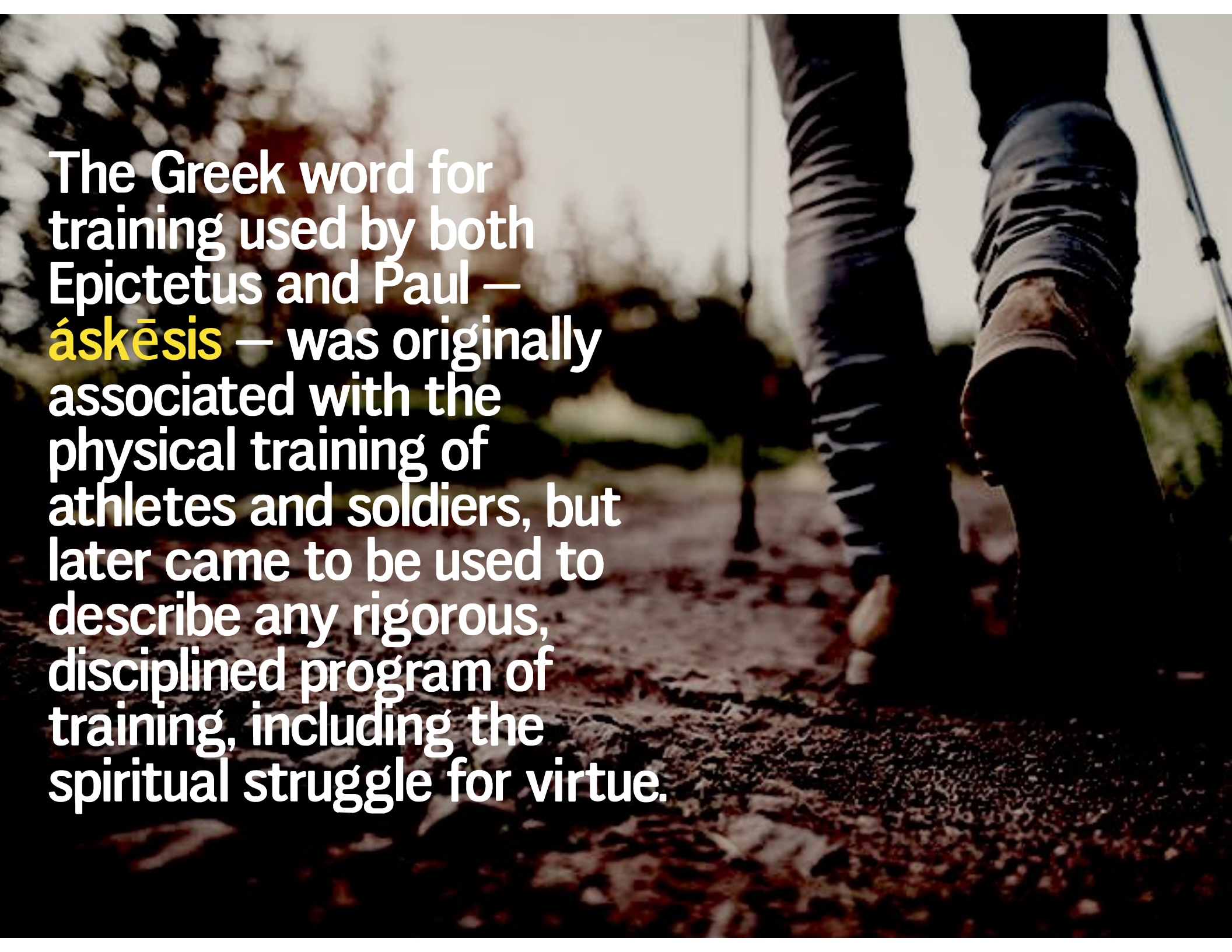
A person is climbing a rope on a rock face. The person's legs and feet are visible, wearing climbing gear. The background is a blurred rock wall.

“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their **training**. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step.”

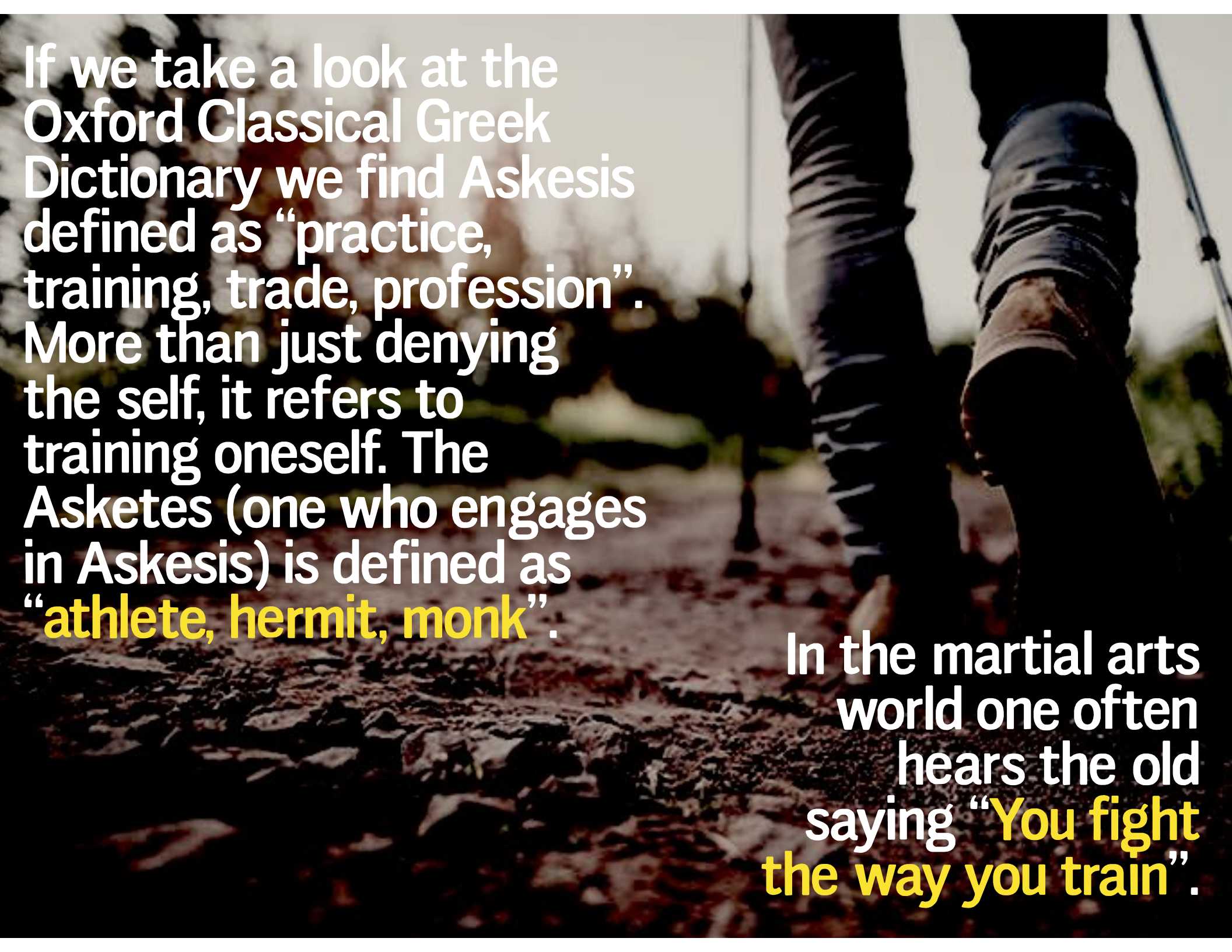
1 Cor. 9:24-26

“It is circumstances (difficulties) which show what men are. Therefore when a difficulty falls upon you, remember that God, like a **trainer** of wrestlers, has matched you with a rough young man. For what purpose? you may say. Why that you may become an Olympic conqueror;”

Epictetus, 75 AD

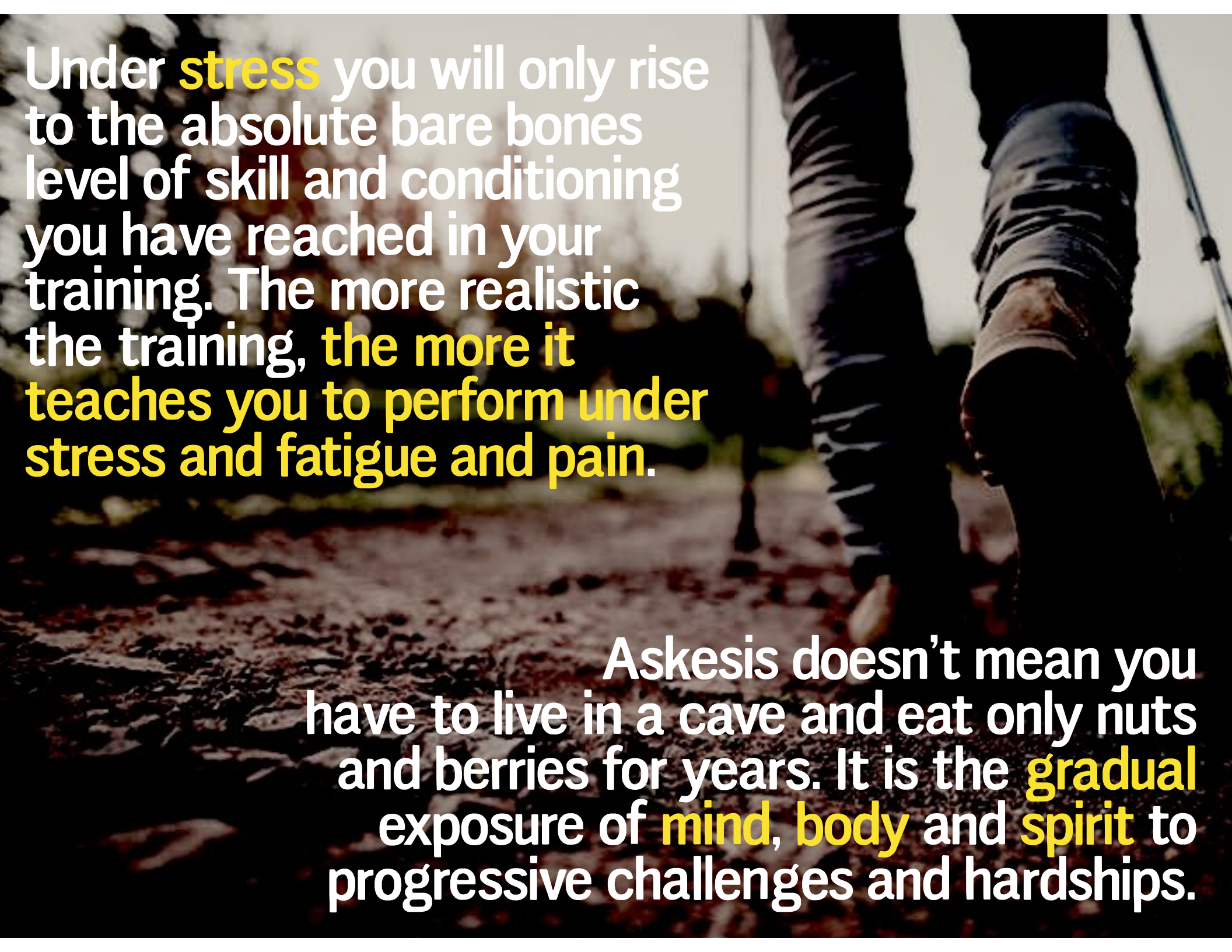
A low-angle, close-up photograph of a person's legs and feet as they run on a gravel path. The person is wearing dark athletic leggings and brown running shoes. The background is blurred, showing a natural outdoor setting with trees and a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Greek word for training used by both Epictetus and Paul — **áskēsis** — was originally associated with the physical training of athletes and soldiers, but later came to be used to describe any rigorous, disciplined program of training, including the spiritual struggle for virtue.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's legs walking on a rocky, uneven path. The person is wearing black leggings and brown, worn-in boots. The background is blurred, showing more of the path and some greenery. The overall tone is gritty and focused.

If we take a look at the Oxford Classical Greek Dictionary we find Askesis defined as “practice, training, trade, profession”. More than just denying the self, it refers to training oneself. The Asketes (one who engages in Askesis) is defined as “**athlete, hermit, monk**”.

In the martial arts world one often hears the old saying “**You fight the way you train**”.



Under **stress** you will only rise to the absolute bare bones level of skill and conditioning you have reached in your training. The more realistic the training, **the more it teaches you to perform under stress and fatigue and pain.**

Askesis doesn't mean you have to live in a cave and eat only nuts and berries for years. It is the **gradual** exposure of **mind, body** and **spirit** to progressive challenges and hardships.



yourself enemy

“You fight the way you train”

culture

spiritual disciplines are both
transformative and combative

Maturity Blockers

no time to train

The seed that fell on the **footpath** represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and **don't understand it**. Then the evil one comes and **snatches away** the seed that was planted in their hearts. **Matthew 13:19**

The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. Then Jesus said, "**Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.**" **Mark 6:30-31a**

Maturity Blockers

no time to train

“Busyness isn’t a virtue; it’s often a **vice**. Of course, God has told us as much: ‘It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. (Ps. 127:2)’ **The God of Scripture isn’t impressed by busyness**; he’s moved by love. When we remember he loves us and, at the end of all our work, we utterly depend on him for everything, we can rest well.” **Adam Mabry**

Maturity Blockers

no depth to the training

But since they don't have **deep roots**, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have **problems** or are **persecuted** for believing God's word. **Mark 4:17**

that we will be **mature** in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be **immature** like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. **Ephesians 4:13b-14**

Maturity Blockers

no depth to the training

“The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for **deep people**.” **Richard Foster**

“**Deep people are those whose lives are organized around Jesus**, his character, his call to a serving life, and his death on the cross for their sins...They love the world, mix well with people, but are wary of spiritual entrapments. They are known for their wisdom, their compassion for others, and their perseverance in hard times.” **Gordon MacDonald**

Maturity Blockers

no discipline to the training

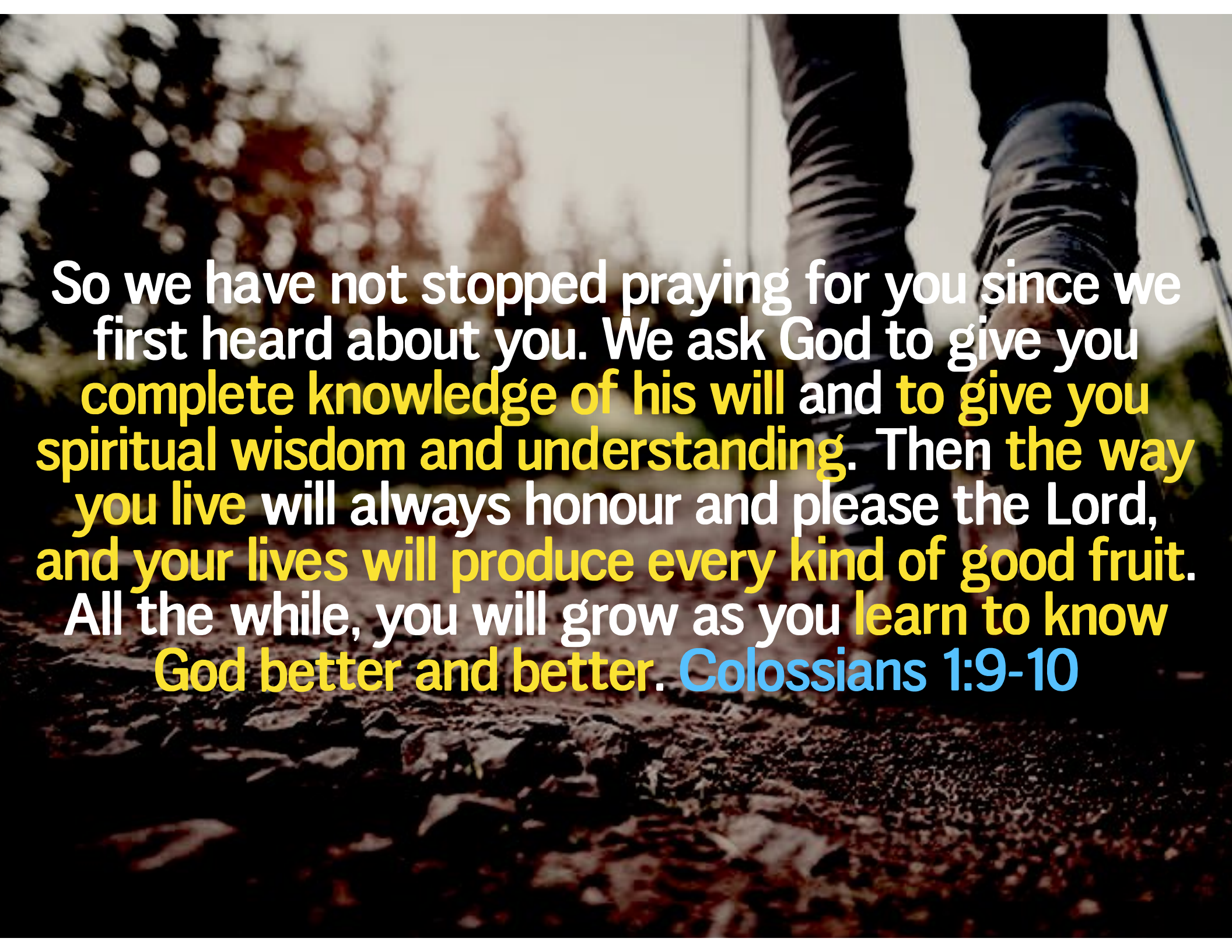
but all too quickly the message is **crowded** out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. **Mark 4:19**

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. **But I discipline my body and keep it under control**, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. **1 Corinthians 9:25-27**

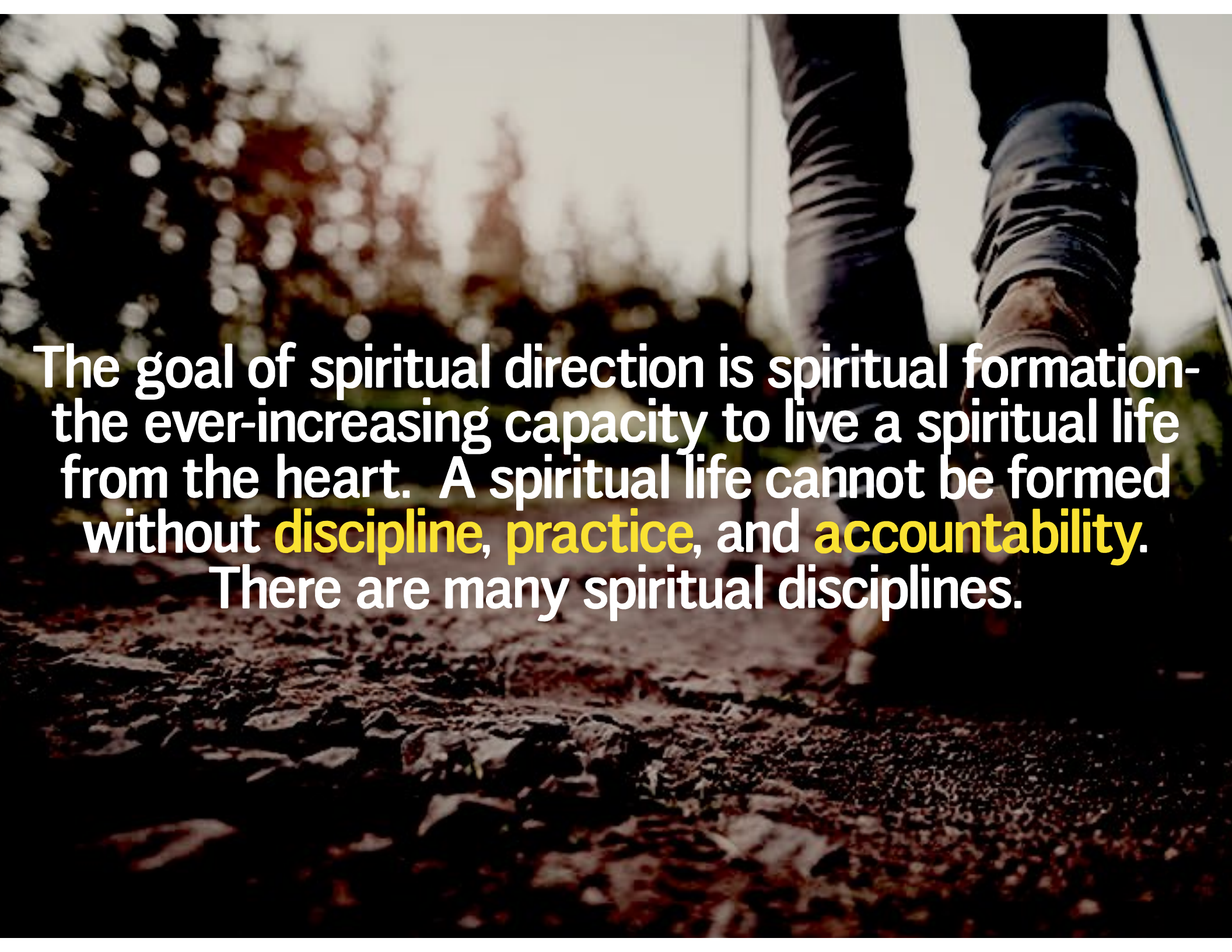
Maturity Blockers

no discipline to the training

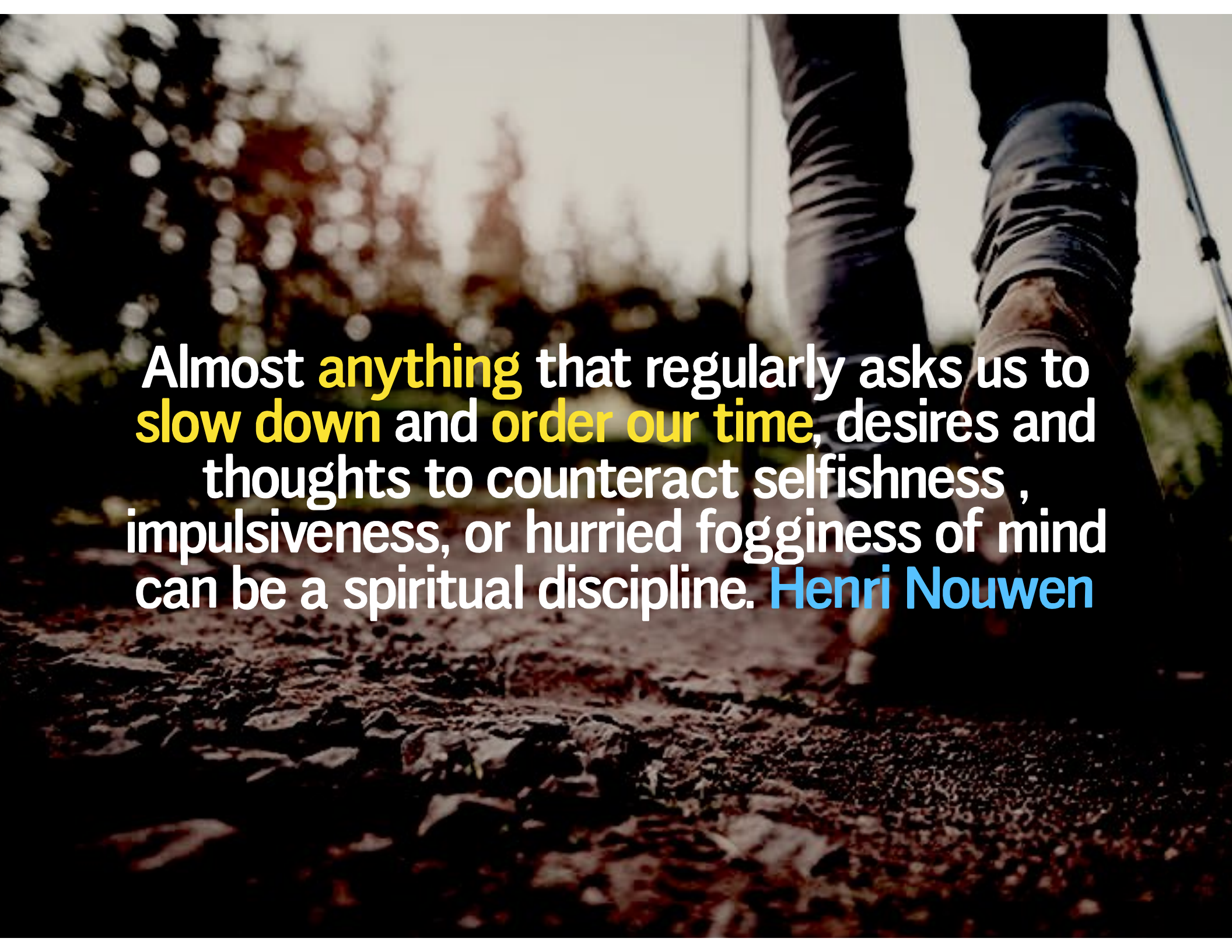
“The Christian life demands change, and the toughest kind. **It often means turning from the things that come easiest; things that satisfy our natural urges.** But the ability to freely choose to say no to our urges and impulses is what makes us distinctly human (this is why we do not lock up dogs and chimpanzees for rape and murder). To say no—and yes!—at the right time is what makes humans happy. This is true freedom.” **Matt Nelson**

A person is hiking on a rocky trail. The person's legs, wearing dark pants and hiking boots, are visible in the foreground. The background is a blurred landscape with trees and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you **complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.** Then the way **you live** will always honour and please the Lord, and **your lives will produce every kind of good fruit.** All the while, you will grow as you **learn to know God better and better.** **Colossians 1:9-10**

A low-angle, close-up shot of a person's legs and feet as they hike on a rocky, gravelly trail. The person is wearing dark, worn-in hiking boots and dark-colored pants. The background is heavily blurred, showing a path leading through a wooded area with trees and a bright, overcast sky. The overall mood is one of outdoor adventure and physical exertion.

The goal of spiritual direction is spiritual formation—the ever-increasing capacity to live a spiritual life from the heart. A spiritual life cannot be formed without **discipline, practice, and accountability**.
There are many spiritual disciplines.

A low-angle, close-up shot of a person's legs and feet as they hike on a rocky, uneven trail. The person is wearing dark, rugged hiking pants and brown leather hiking boots. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and some dry leaves. The background is heavily blurred, showing a mix of green and brown foliage and a bright, overcast sky. The overall mood is one of quiet determination and outdoor activity.

Almost **anything** that regularly asks us to **slow down** and **order our time**, desires and thoughts to counteract selfishness, impulsiveness, or hurried fogginess of mind can be a spiritual discipline. **Henri Nouwen**