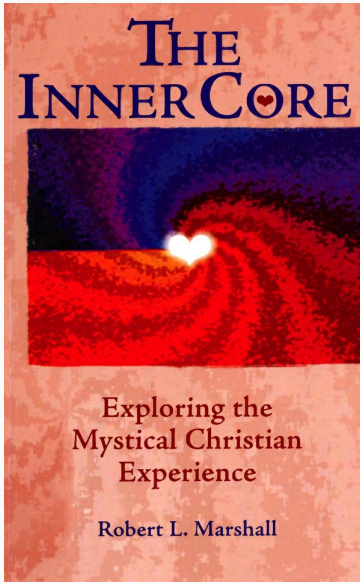




## The Inner Core — Trailblazing



### The Inner Core

by  
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### Chapter 4 — Trailblazing

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A number of years ago a friend took me backpacking in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We drove up to the trailhead, consulted our contour map, picked out the right colored trail marker, and started off on our two-day trek. We could check the map to see how far we'd gone, judging by the landmarks we crossed. We knew ahead of time what sights to look for. We had planned where we would camp and how many miles we would cover each day.

It was beautiful country, and my friend was much better at striding through the miles than I. Yet every time I suggested we stray off the trail a little way to explore something interesting, she cringed. Against her better judgment, she would follow me a couple hundred yards before insisting that we return to the trail.

Near the end of the trip, we met a man with his son and daughter (10 and 12 years old), who explained that they'd just come cross-country from an entirely different section of the forest. Using his map, they had cut their own trail and had seen some spectacular sights that he described.

My friend listened incredulously. How could someone do that? You could tell she thought he was crazy. Yet as he told his tale, something stirred inside of me. I yearned to explore the forest the way he had.

Some time later I had my chance to fulfill this desire in the Rockies. My parents live in a very secluded Colorado valley at 8000 feet, under East Spanish Peak. I had long ago looked up at that peak and decided I would climb it one day. The problem was that there was no trail leading to the top and I had no access to a map.

Others had tried it and ended up lost on the mountain for five days before a rescue party found them. People below had seen their night campfires at various points on the mountain during those five days. The valleys twirling off the peak are so confusing that it is

extremely difficult to end up in the valley you are heading for, and the whole territory is so deserted that you are totally on your own.

Finally, the day came when, in spite of the warnings, I set out upon my cross-country climb through the lower valleys and up the peak. I told those who asked why, "I'm going up on the mountain in search of a burning bush." Somehow this climb was to be a spiritual-vision quest for me, and the image of Moses finding that burning bush seemed like a great archetype for my journey.

My parents' dirt road narrowed to a trail two miles up the way. The trail ended in a high meadow. I climbed over the fence that separated known from unknown and started "freelance" through the woods. I came upon a trail, a few rolling hills in, and decided to follow it. It carried me around the mountain but not up. Finally, I left it behind and headed straight uphill again.

Periodically, I would reach a high spot where I could view the peak and select which hills, valleys, and ridges I had to use to get where I wanted to go. Then I'd drop behind a hill or enter a wooded area where I'd have to blindly follow the route I had seen for those few moments until I reached another vantage point.

As I crossed the final ridge to the base of the last 3000-foot climb, a storm blew in. I was drenched. I found a spring from which to refill my water bottle and managed to cook a meal before the last climb. I was waiting for the rain to stop, but it didn't.

Finally, I set out to make the big climb, in spite of the rain. It was then that I found out why no one generally climbs East Spanish Peak. It's all rock and everything moves. It's an oversized gravel pit all the way up.

The pieces of rock ranged from 1 foot in diameter to 4- or 5-feet long, but each was precariously balanced, and I had to be careful where my steps were placed. The climb was almost straight up, and I was not sure I would ever make it. The air was thinner, my leg muscles threatened to give out at any moment, and the sun had fallen behind the mountain. I wasn't sure I knew how to get back, but right then all I cared about was reaching the top. There were trees interspersed among the rocks. I grabbed them to help pull myself up.

Surprising myself, I cleared the trees and ascended the final stretch to the top, just in time to see the sun set. The view from 13,000 feet was stupendous. I could see my parents' home far below, beyond dozens of hills and valleys. For a time I was lost in the glory of the height.

Then reality set in. I was wet and cold. A huge storm was moving in. I had intended to spend the night on top of the mountain, but I couldn't get a fire started, even with all my training. There was no place to roll out a sleeping bag, much less put up a tent. My down-filled bag wouldn't keep me warm since it was soaked. The wind was already at 50 miles an hour, and the temperature was dropping rapidly. In spite of exhaustion, I decided to head down the mountain with the little remaining light. Even if I didn't find home, it would be warmer at lower altitude.

I took one last look at my destination way below. The fog cleared for thirty seconds. I burned into memory the lay of the land and took a compass reading. Then the fog took control, and I could see no farther than 30 feet. I slid from tree to tree coming down the steep descent. Periodically, I'd suddenly come upon a 100-foot drop-off and have to go around it. I had the sense that God was with me each step. After all, I could have catapulted to death dozens of times.

By dark, I was off the mountainside and into the maze of hills, valleys, and ridges that lay between me and home. I groped my way through the woods remembering ups and downs, broken-down fence lines, and clearings as best I could. I constantly compared my path with the fluorescent glow of my compass.

At one point I came upon a path that seemed to lead where I wanted to go. It was a God-sent gift. When I decided I needed to depart from the path, I had only a short distance to go before I broke into a meadow and saw a narrow road I thought I recognized. I knelt on the road in the dark and felt, with my hands, a hump in the road that I hoped meant the road would lead to my parents' home. Two miles later, at 11:30 p.m., I trudged across the dam and into the house.

Some higher Force had led me home, and I had a trust in It that went beyond any I'd ever experienced before.

I had gone in search of a burning bush. I found a raging storm. I endured the most strenuous physical test of my life. I gained a spiritual

strength I cannot explain to others. In my desk today are written instructions on how to climb East Spanish Peak. They show the lay of the land, the paths you will cross that will lead you astray, and the ones that will lead you by the most direct route. They show the spring, woods, valleys, and fence lines plus give an idea of what to expect when you get there. I will go again one day. Maybe even take someone with me. After all, now I know the way.

## Exploring the Spiritual Wilderness

A spiritual trek into the unknown is no less exciting or demanding than trailblazing on a physical mountain. The heights are even more glorious, and the knowledge gained is important to be recorded so others can go there. The same principles used to climb East Spanish Peak will be employed by the spiritual explorer as he or she pushes into the frontier. More important, the attitude of the trailblazer, whether physical or spiritual, is much the same. Without the explorer mindset, you can have all the tools of the trade and they will not take you to your destination.

There are two ways to hike through a wilderness. Many a backpacker is told to stick to the trail and follow the map. A few have curiosity and desire that lead them cross-country on their own adventure.

If you cringe at going cross-country, don't. Concentrate first on generating a desire for adventure which will triumphantly swallow your timidity and the belief that you are not up to the task. You will need to carry that thrill of adventure with you. Only that insatiable desire and the unreasonable knowing that a greater Force moves through you will enable you to persevere in the tough or the dry times. When the trip has been completed, in spite of any misery you might have gone through, you want to be able to say, "That was fun!"

## The First Principle

You are ready for spiritual trailblazing when, like that fool who climbed East Spanish Peak, you really want to approach a spiritual quality or experience one of the heights, in spite of the warnings. Thus you have the *first principle* of cross-country exploration: "Others have gotten lost or failed. You still want to try for it."

The real spiritual explorers are not intimidated by others' failed attempts. They glean what they can from their experiences and proceed. Warnings are merely helpful information to take on the journey; they are not a reason to turn back. Their own God-implanted desire is permission to succeed.

I admit to being frustrated by those who fearfully draw back from spiritual experience as well as those who blindly ignore warnings given to them. The first group miss the point of adventure entirely. The latter close their eyes in self-sabotage. Both approaches stem from fear.

Learn from others' failures. Listen to warnings. Don't accept fear. Don't let concerns dampen your confidence. Don't even accept them as valid until they are proven to be so. I suggest that you simply store them as preparedness, for they are the edge that may give you success.

When I climbed East Spanish Peak, I was careful in many ways that I would not have been, had I not known of the group which was lost for five days.

In the spiritual arena, I meditated upon the bottom chakra in search of healing life force, despite warnings of the possibility of awakening overwhelming sexual desire that would be difficult to deal with. When I did encounter exactly that, the warnings served me well. Rather than trying to ignore this pestilence, I turned to face and conquer it before going on.

## The Second Principle

The *second principle* of cross-country spiritual exploration is “Trails don’t always lead where you want to go.” They may just sidetrack you and go around the mountain. The trick here is to pick and choose.

There is no doubt that a defined spiritual path or one with instructions of a designated teacher is easier to walk than the tangled forest of untried experience. When you encounter such in the area that you have chosen to explore, the question you must ask is, Does this path lead to the mountaintop? If the answer appears to be yes, follow until it appears to be no.

Never pass up a well-worn path that appears to be going the right way. Just know when it is time to get off and freelance once again. Don’t let your desire for the shortcut keep you a disciple longer than serves your own inner spiritual purpose. It’s easy to become complacent, to get used to the shelter a path provides. Make sure the quest has really been altered if you decide to stay on that path and give up the mountaintop. However, if the path continues to head for the mountaintop, follow it all the way.

## The Third Principle

I went in search of a burning bush. I found a raging storm. Thus a *third principle* might be “What you seek on the mountain may not be what you find on the mountain.” Ponce de Leon went in search of the fountain of youth. He never found it. Yet what he did find changed the world.

The peak can look quite different from the valley floor than it does from the top. In fact, you may find this mountain has several summits, each with different views. The spiritual explorer is constantly striving for different perspectives. Seeming failure can be the path to success or the whip that turns us in a direction we shun but actually leads up the mountain.

With each experience, step outside yourself and try to look from a different direction at the path you are cutting. The light of this last step may cast a new shadow that points out a characteristic unseen before. The path you think you are walking will go through a number of transmutations. Roll with them.

Earlier I mentioned meditating on the bottom chakra in search of healing life energy. I had planned on missing the sexual desire that got released. However, it seemed to be part of the mountain. Dealing with it directly, I learned why Charles Fillmore had so often referred to the “sex lust” as being capable of robbing us of our life energy.

In a return “boxing match” with this energy, I succeeded in observing sexual energy fully without allowing it to carry me away. Shortly, intense sexual desire transformed into the most complete body rush of vitality and well-being I have ever experienced. It was no longer sexual, and it was evenly distributed throughout the whole body. The sexuality latent in the bottom chakra has never since been a problem for me, and I understand what is meant by “lifting” sexual desire.

This was a summit on the mountain I had not foreseen, an adjoining piece of the energy I sought. It was like climbing the back side of the mountain called healing life force. It gave me a new vantage point from which to approach the original peak.

## The Fourth Principle

This brings us to a *fourth principle* of “Use vantage points.” The freelancer cannot depend upon someone else’s map. Yet periodically the explorer is given a glimpse of the energy or state of consciousness pursued. This is similar to those high vantage points where I would catch a glimpse of the peak, gauge the direction I had to go, and memorize the landscape I would have to traverse to reach the peak. Then, as I dropped behind a hill or moved into the woods, I would remember what I had seen, using it constantly until I reached another vantage point.

Proceeding through the spiritual practices you develop, you will have times when you feel as if you are getting somewhere. You can taste a little of what you are seeking. You may even have a single spiritual experience that then eludes you. As you go through the dry times when nothing seems to be happening, remember the vantage-point experience. Constantly strive to enter that consciousness through memory and use it as a base from which to do your present work. The dry times will urge you to abandon a seemingly fruitless

effort. The vantage-point memory will keep you trudging forward one step at a time.

When you get your next glimpse of the spiritual realm to which you aspire, reassess your approach. You may have strayed off course slightly or you may see new approaches you haven't tried. Constantly contemplate all your breakthroughs. Add them together. Try to feel the flow of the path they have been leading you on. It all creates a connected picture, eventually.

Spiritual practice is the way you walk from one point to another. Your skill as an explorer is often measured by how creatively you can adapt these tools. If you've got to cross a river, you build a boat that you can paddle stroke by stroke to the other side. The spiritual explorer creates a practice that should serve the need and works with it.

Here the freelancer has an advantage over the path-bound disciple. The disciple considers everything he or she is taught as sacred, exactly the way the teacher presented it, and wouldn't dream of changing it. The explorer considers only the goal sacred and will borrow or bend a practice in any way that will prove helpful to the final goal.

## The Fifth Principle

The principle here is "Be creative!" There are some standby tools I'll go over in the next chapter but I suggest that you develop a knack for adapting them to your particular needs.

If you follow a teacher's instructions for a time, give the teacher the respect of following instructions as is until you experience what he or she is trying to show you. Having done that, you understand enough of what is truly important about what you've been doing to successfully adapt it to harmonize with the way you walk your path and to carry you toward the energy you desire. Remember anything that has worked. It can probably be adapted to other situations.

Creating a practice out of nothing is not that hard. Contemplate the spiritual energy state you seek. Imagine how you might use this energy, once attained, in your life. From that, devise ways to practice, trying to do the things you would do if you had already developed the quality. Open your mind to suggestions. Something will come to you.

Remember how important my compass was on the trip down the mountain in the dark. Constantly taking a compass reading is a cross-country principle all unto itself. We must explore so many cracks, crevices, and ravines along the way that dedicated explorers must constantly stop to ascertain whether or not the wonderfully interesting phenomena they are encountering are really leading them in the direction of their ultimate goals. The serious explorers continually choose to return to the goal, even when the distractions seem to be a lot more exciting.

The sliding rocks and sudden drop-offs of East Spanish Peak also have their lesson for spiritual explorers. The ascent to any serious spiritual height has its treacherous aspects. There are things to avoid and others that will just have to be endured. The pitfalls of ego and fantasy have already been addressed. Fear in its many disguises is a formidable adversary.

Pain and misery often go with the territory when stretching consciousness boundaries beyond the known and the comfortable. To the real trailblazer, it is all worth it. The gain is always worth any pain that may accompany it. In the end, pain and misery are only measurements of resistance to change. As such, they are manageable qualities.

Like the physical climber, the spiritual climber may find that everything he or she steps on moves. Learn to be comfortable in constant motion. We are creatures who love a stable foundation under our feet. When we are changing our sense of reality, nothing is stable.

Herein lies the real menace to the explorer. You may reach the height, gain the goal. If you do, you will most certainly rip the fabric of reality. The world will never be the same again. You can never return to life as you knew it. The explorer thrives on this, but he or she may go through a temporary state of devastation, nonetheless.

One spiritual climber unexpectedly found his heart shattered by a spiritual light that flooded his whole world and remained for four days. During this time a friend had to care-take him, help him through the mundane duties of life while he endured an ecstasy so intense that it created the most pain he'd experienced in his life.

All that love and beauty were more than he could take. He emerged from his experience shaken and changed forever. Reality as he had known it no longer existed. It is one thing to believe in expanded reality. It is entirely another to enter it through the shattered ruins of a world that once felt solid. Seven years later he still searches for the key to the experience that will never again allow him to be like others in this world.

This is a rather dramatic example of “reality tearing.” It doesn’t often take such an intense or lengthy form. If, however, you have the attitude of the trailblazer, this example will not scare you. It will intrigue you, even call to you.

## The Sixth Principle

The *sixth principle* could be stated: “Love the heights, but the real task is getting back down.” No one goes up on a mountain to meditate, achieve illumination, and sit there in bliss for the rest of his or her life. The vision from the heights is always worth the agony of the climb. The explorer loves the heights. The breakthrough is the thrill he or she thirsted for. It carries with it the responsibility of integrating this new energy into everyday life.

Some will return wanting nothing to do with everyday life. That only prolongs the adjustment period. The challenge now is to weave this energy into daily activities. Don’t just leave it as a strange trip you once took.

It’s also time to make your map, to record your journey. You went cross-country. You have a legacy to leave.

## The Seventh Principle

The final ingredient of the trailblazer consciousness is the most important. This one can compensate for weaknesses in several other areas. Without it, successful cross-country travel is almost impossible.

I decided to climb East Spanish Peak because I believed to the depth of my being that God would guide me through the whole experience. Coming down the mountain in the dark, I knew I was terribly outclassed by the adversities I faced. Yet there was a strange calm that settled over my whole being. I did not make that trek alone. A Presence enveloped me. I still had to make competent decisions, field each little crisis, and painstakingly place one foot in front of the other for what seemed an eternity. But everything fell into place. Though I didn’t know exactly how everything was going to unfold, I knew “God was there with me and God was in charge.” *This is the seventh principle.*

This same attitude must accompany the spiritual explorer. Each time I’ve set out after the experience of a certain spiritual quality, I’ve known God would show me how to reach the goal. Though each spiritual journey has been a lot of work, things have always come together. God has always shown me my way through the maze.

The tools necessary to complete your consciousness climb will be provided along the way. Look for them. Keep aware. Start climbing. And trust the spirit that moves you along your path. It is because God knows the map that you don’t need one.

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