

# Triangulate

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Today I would like to take you on a backpacking trip, but you won't have to get out of your seats to go. This adventure takes place in the Cascade Mountain Range east of Seattle, Washington. On this adventure, you will see the planning, the study of the map and the route to take. You will learn about the navigation tools available to the backpacker and how they might apply to the spiritual path that we are on. Hopefully, the details included in this trip will give you a new sense of the study and preparation needed to go backpacking. And we may be able to apply this to our need to study the Bible in preparation for our spiritual journey.

It starts with two friends, Dave and Dan, whom I had taken at different times to Terrance Lake. They're going with me on this trip. We have caught rainbow trout ranging from 15 to 18 inches on previous trips. The route we took the first and second times started out at 2600 feet elevation where the Wapatus River runs into the Cle Elum River. The trail proceeded up Davis Peak. The trail was actually going to a fire lookout at the top of Davis Peak, but we were going to take a side trip off that trail. It was a grueling six miles of switchbacks on the south side of Davis Peak directly in the sun the whole time. Heading north we reached an elevation of 6000 feet and it was at this point the trail entered a small bowl where two ridges came together. This is where we left the trail heading northwest climbing to the top of the ridge. We gained another 200 feet and then following the adjoining ridge a quarter of a mile or so before climbing another hundred feet to the top of that ridge. This was an awesome sight. Standing at 6300 feet looking to the southwest was Mount Rainier towering above. Then looking down to the northwest was Terrance Lake, close to 1000 feet below us. We would have to descend that 1000 feet going down rock slides without the benefit of a trail. Then we would have to climb back out without the benefit of a trail.

So we opted to take another route that was a little less grueling but a little longer distance about three and a half miles further. It had the advantage of the trail the entire way. It also started out 1000 feet higher and didn't go above 5800 feet. As an extra bonus, it went by Michael Lake for a little extra fishing.

The trail begins on the Cle Elum River about ten miles north of where the Wapatus River enters the Cle Elum River. The trail heads a southwest direction, switchbacking up the side of Goat Mountain Range into a saddle at 4600 feet. The trail continues in a southwesterly direction along Trail Creek that would eventually flow into the Wapatus River. This part of the trail was easy hiking, losing some that we had gained going up the switchbacks. Since we had gotten a late start, it began to get dark and we found a flat spot by Trail Creek to spend the night. The next morning, shortly after we set out, there was a fork in the trail at 4050 feet in elevation. Taking the trail to the right, we would start turning towards the northwest, dropping in elevation and ending up at

Waptus Lake. Going to the left, we would head in a southeasterly direction which would take us to our destination.

After leaving the fork, the trail started climbing up to 5200 feet before dropping back down at Michael Lake to 5100 feet. After passing Michael Lake and another mile and a half, we reached Terrance Lake. It was about mid-morning. We dropped our packs. If you've ever gone backpacking, when you drop your packs, it feels like you could fly, especially if you've hiked a long ways.

We started fishing and the fishing was a little slow but we managed to catch one fish before noon. Dave, who is a marine biologist, had been moving around the lake as he fished and noticed some fish carcasses on the shore. He explained that the lake didn't support natural reproduction because of the lack of a spawning stream. So the plants and fish were dying of old age and because of government cutbacks, the lake probably wasn't on the list to be restocked.

Disappointed, we cooked up the one fish we had caught and ate it for lunch. During lunch, we decided that we would hike back to Michael Lake to set up camp because we saw many fish breaking water when we hiked past it earlier that morning. That gave us the idea that the fishing had to be much better. So we headed back to Michael Lake, set up camp, and after a couple of days of gorging ourselves with fresh trout, we broke camp, packed up, and started to hike out. Now Dave decided that he was going to fish the lake a little while longer and would catch up to us. He was a pretty fit guy and I'm sure he thought my pace was a bit slow.

So Dan and I left Dave and headed down the trail. A few miles down the trail we came into view of Waptus Lake. It was probably about 2000 feet below us and several miles away. Our immediate reaction was that we had missed the fork in the trail. Now being a seasoned hiker, I remembered distinctly that after we passed the fork on the way in, I had looked back at it so that I would recognize it on the way out. Well, that explanation didn't convince Dan. He turned around and started to hike back up the trail to find the fork.

I told him it was time for a "map check." So he stopped as I dropped my pack and found the map. I set it on the ground lining it up with the view of Waptus Lake. I found a large peak on the map that was at 8000 foot elevation. Lining the map up with that while keeping it lined up with the view of Waptus Lake using two sticks to line up the points on the map with the lake and the peak, we could see that we were still some ways away from the fork.

Dan wasn't convinced by using this method of "triangulation" to orientate the map and to find our location on the map. So, he got his compass out to make sure the map was lined up correctly. This didn't change a thing and Dan was still worried. He had convinced himself that we had missed the fork. So he headed back up the trail by himself to find it.

I was convinced that the map gave us our location. So, I headed down the trail and a while later I came to the fork, dropped my backpack, and waited for my comrades to catch up. After sitting for a while, I started to wonder if Dave was still fishing and if Dan was almost back to the lake. Then I heard some voices. Then they came into view. Dan was a bit embarrassed when Dave told me how surprised he was to see Dan hiking towards him. He was only a couple of miles from the lake. Of course, Dave and I gave Dan a good ribbing about turning a ten mile hike into a twelve mile hike. Dave told him that he ought to take the fork towards Waptus Lake for a mile and a half, turn around and come back to the fork; then he could turn it into a fifteen mile hike and get some new scenery all at the same time. Win-win!

Today using the events in the story, I would like to make a few points about navigating in our spiritual lives. It's important in navigating in the wilderness to check where you are periodically as it is in your spiritual lives. We are instructed in 1 Corinthians 11:28 to do just that.

**1 Corinthians 11:28.** *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (KJV)*

Examining yourselves—is this not checking to see where we're at?

With Passover just eight weeks away, we need to begin this process if we have not already. In the story, we used the map and two methods of checking to see if we were still on course—triangulation and the compass. In past sermonettes, I've used the map as an analogy of God's word. I still think that is a very good analogy because both contain all the information needed to get to our destination and both need to be studied and used for guidance, but it is up to us to do the walking.

Methods of checking are tools to use in conjunction with the map to make sure you are still on the path. Invariably, people will bring up GPS when talking about navigating, but at the time of this story only the military had access to this technology. And when hiking in the woods, it is the least important tool to have in your backpack. Having said that, I can hear my lovely wife saying, "Now, tell me again why you just had to have one." Well, because it's really cool. It gives the precise altitude, direction, longitude, and latitude so that you can pinpoint where you are at on the map. At the trailhead you can set way points as a beginning point. And if you leave the GPS on while hiking, the GPS will show you the way back to your starting point without ever having to look at the map.

With it being so wonderful, why is it not the most important tool? It has limitations. Dense fog and trees will keep it from finding satellites. It essentially triangulates off the satellites to find your position. If it can't find enough satellites, it can't show your position. It also relies on batteries to operate. And, because you don't need to study the map, the map becomes less important, which means that you are less in tune to the topography around you. You might even decide that you don't need the map.

I was talking about GPS navigating with my son, Aaron, trying to figure out a good analogy. He made the point that it would be like the seed that falls on stony ground found in Matthew 13:20-21.

**Matthew 13:20.** *But that which was sown on the stony places is this: he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.*

*21) But he has no root in himself, and it is temporary. For when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, he immediately stumbles. (NKJV)*

That does fit in some ways. “He has no root in himself,” means he didn’t study his map. He didn’t understand which path to take when he came to the fork in the trail. When he went to his GPS, the battery had run out of juice. Now tribulation or persecution arises. He hadn’t packed the map because he had his GPS—latest greatest technology.

It’s kind of like modern Christianity saying all you need to do is accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. It’s so easy. Christ suffered so that you don’t have to. Have you heard these things? So, now he’s stumbling not knowing where to go. He makes the obvious choice to go back to what he knows.

Consider also the ten virgins and the oil in their lamps. The oil is like the battery and the lamp is like the GPS. The lamp doesn’t function without the oil and the GPS doesn’t function without the battery. If everything is working, it’s pretty awesome. And, as a backpacker, I would have it in my pack, but I would not exclude the other navigational tools. And I would know how to use them in case the GPS failed for some reason or another.

Another tool that I didn’t have on this hiking trip is an altimeter. Don’t tell my lovely wife, but I have one now. It’s pretty cool and it can serve a couple of functions. It’s basically a barometer, giving you the barometric pressure. As you go up in altitude, the barometric pressure decreases. Because barometric pressure is always changing, there is an outer ring to turn and line up the needle with the elevation that you are at. This can create a problem if a storm is coming and the barometer is falling. To offset this, it is important to check against the map known elevations. In the story I gave several known elevations on the map such as the starting point at 3600 feet, the saddle in the Goat Mountain Range at 4600 feet, the fork in the trail at 4050 feet and the max altitude the trail reached before starting to drop at the lake to 5200 feet and then Michael Lake at 5100 feet.

If you were hiking with an altimeter, it wouldn’t be necessary to check all these locations, but it would be wise until you got used to using it. Definitely you should check it on the morning you leave Michael Lake. But if you didn’t and you were hiking down the trail and came to the view of Waptus Lake as Dan and I did, take out your map and your altimeter. You’ll see that you are at 3900 feet. You would see on the map that you are below the fork in the trail at 4050 feet.

But unknown to you a storm was approaching and the barometric pressure has dropped 1.5 inches of mercury. The altitude would register about 1500 feet lower than your elevation. So what do you do? You hike back to find the fork that you thought you had passed but didn't, like my friend Dan, and make a ten mile hike into a twelve mile hike.

What kind of an analogy can we make with this? Consider all the books and the publications that are available to help you in your spiritual walk. They have a lot of useful information in them that could be beneficial and biblically accurate, but then other things not so much. You can't take everything that is written about God's word as being accurate or without the spin of the writer. So, if you use materials such as these, it would be necessary to check them against scripture and to check often.

Turn over to 2 Peter 3:15-16. This is where Peter gives us a warning about people perverting the scriptures because of their lack of understanding. This is probably related to them not checking out other parts of the scripture for a better and fuller understanding and then teaching others what they don't understand.

**2 Peter 3:15.** *and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (NKJV)*

As we know, most of modern Christianity has done this with their understanding. Since there are not many publications that have been produced by people who have the truth and the publications that would speak to following God and the path that God would have us to follow, many publications might have opinions mixed in with the facts. We need to be careful what we use for reference. What other people say either from their speaking or what they have written can contain enough of the truth to take us down the wrong path or make us turn around and go back only to find out that we were heading down the right path initially. And do you know what? We've just added a couple more miles to our hike.

If we take the wrong path, how long will it take us to determine it? A couple of miles? Regardless of how far we hike down the wrong path to get back to the right path, it will require us to backtrack until we come to that fork in the trail. If you set your altimeter with the Word of God and do it often as you see a storm approaching that will affect your reading of the altimeter. If you know that the altimeter may be off because of that coming storm, you will know to stay on course or possibly use another tool to determine where you are at.

Could that other tool be a compass? To use this tool to navigate we need to understand declination. Not many people understand what declination is in reference to a compass. Most people think that if the compass points north and you head in that direction, you're going north. Well, if you did that in this region, you would be heading

19 degrees to the east of true north. So within a ten mile journey, you would be 3.3 miles off track. Declination is *the difference between true north and magnetic north and is a result of the magnetic field of the earth not aligning perfectly with the axis the earth spins on*. So it distorts the magnetic direction that the compass points to. Literally, the declination is the pulls of the earth. And, as part of the analogy we're building, declination is the pulls of the world that take us off course.

The declination changes based on which altitude you're at or which longitude you're at. The only place in the United States that the declination is not a factor is along the Mississippi River where the declination is zero. If you head to the west of the Mississippi River, the declination is to the east; and to the east, the declination is to the west.

You could access a world map on the internet that shows you the declination lines so you can easily see what it is in the region you're in. There is even a map that shows what the declination was in the 1500s and it shows the declination in this region to be at zero. And at that same time, the Mississippi area was a minus 20 degrees. This shows that it changes over time and is kind of fluid. Topographical maps have the declination printed on them and it is for the year the map was printed. So if you have a map printed back in the '50s, you might be a little bit off course.

But the declination on the map helps you adjust your map to the correct position with the compass. This way when you pick out the topographical features, they'll be in the correct orientation of the map.

Let's say you were dropped into the middle of the wilderness with a compass and a map. You didn't know where you were at except for the map. It could help you orientate yourself to the map, help you start to figure out the surrounding features, and pick out a destination to get yourself out of the wilderness.

You always hear that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but I'm here to tell you that here in the northwest, the mountains are steep and have many obstacles that would make it virtually impossible to do that unless you have rock climbing gear in your backpack and know how to use it. It would also be extremely exhausting climbing straight up the mountain and then down the other side only to repeat that process again and again.

When you look at maps and analyze the route the trails take, you can begin to see that they take the easiest route, avoiding obstacles and unnecessary altitudes gains. If you think that the trail is making you go further because it's not a direct path, you can leave it. But I can tell you from experience that it's a harder path and you might have to backtrack or use the compass to get back on the path because of a cliff or a ravine that you encounter. The compass by itself is never going to be able to show you exactly where you are at on the map. It can point you in the right direction providing you have a clue where you're at and you know where your destination is in relation to where you're at.

As you can begin to see, navigating in the wilderness requires more than just a compass, but to find where you are you will need a GPS, an altimeter or a triangulation. We've discussed the shortcomings of the GPS and altimeter and in the story how I triangulated to find our location on the trail.

The basic tenets of triangulation are locating at least two prominent points to form a triangle between where you're standing and the other two points. If you are unsure, you can pick another point. The beauty of this method is that it only requires the map and for you to study the map so that you know the mountains you're looking at after you study the map. You'll know the ones that are in the distance and the ones that are close up. You'll know where the valley you're walking through is going or the altitude you're gaining on the trail is to avoid a cliff or go around a ravine in the side of the mountain. This will allow you to see where you are at with the map in front of you and the fixed points around you to triangulate off of, fixed points that don't move or change shape over time.

As we brought out before, God's word is our map. If we look back at discussing these and keep this idea that God's word is our map, we can find fixed points within this map to triangulate from, which will show us exactly where we are. These fixed points in God's word, they never change. Think about God's law. Has that ever changed? There are ten fixed points within the Law. And what about the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 that magnify the law? Look at the lives of biblical characters. Do these stories ever change? They can give us a reference to what we might be doing wrong or right. Going between these fixed points in our lives, we can see where we are at—triangulate.

Remember the sermon from last Sabbath? It started with defining stubbornness and showed us through scripture that stubbornness is also selfishness. Many think that rather than being stubborn they are steadfast. Steadfast, as defined by scripture, doesn't have the component of selfishness found in stubbornness. As explained in the sermon, are you able to see the stubbornness that is present in your life? Do you have that fixed point of humility to see this? This is triangulation.

During this time of year when we are examining ourselves, we need to use humility as one of the fixed points. Without triangulating off of this point, we may not be able to see what we need to change to move us further down the path. Consider the well-known story of David and Bathsheba found in 2 Samuel 12:1-13, which reads:

**2 Samuel 12:1.** *And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.*

*2) The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:*

*3) But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.*

4) *And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.*

5) *And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:*

6) *And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.*

7) *And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

8) *And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.*

9) *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.*

10) *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*

11) *Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*

12) *For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*

13) *And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. (KJV)*

Here David has violated two of the fixed points of God's law by committing adultery with Bathsheba and having Uriah killed to cover it up. When Nathan presents the story to David in telling David that he is that man, David has a humility—another fixed point—to see that he was, indeed, that man and had, indeed, sinned against the Lord. David triangulated. He had the humility to see that He had violated God's law. And it all showed where David was at so that he repented.

We need to triangulate our fixed points off the fixed point of humility, through any of the fixed points of God's law, the Beatitudes, or the fruits of the spirit. By doing this, we can see where we are. We've examined ourselves. Just as a backpacker picks up his backpack after triangulating his position, he is now ready to move down the trail. He is not confused or anxious about where he is but comfortable that he knows where the path is leading.

He knows that this path he is following is on the map. To us, God's word is our map. Turn with me to Matthew 7 where we'll read 13 and 14.

**Matthew 7:13.** *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.*



*14) But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (NIV)*

Here is the beginning of the trail: “Enter the narrow gate.” And the trail that leads to life is narrow and only a few find it—the ones God has called. God is the mapmaker. He made this trail for you to follow with the proper amount of difficulty and obstacles. It is not a straight line. There can be switchbacks to get you over the ridge or up the side of a mountain. It can take you down and around to avoid a cliff and maybe a little higher to go around a ravine. There are forks in the trail; which way are you going to go? The map tells you if you look at it.

You might have companions with you to get you to backtrack, telling you that you’re misinterpreting the map. Are you steadfast in your examination of where you are? Sure that you will not backtrack or go down the wrong path?

With all the tools available to us, the most important tool is the map. Earlier I suggested being dropped off in the middle of the wilderness with a map and a compass. Consider that if it was only a compass and no map. How would you figure out which way to go? The goal would be to get out of the wilderness, but which way? Can you picture how this would look? You look around you and all you see are trees, mountains, and valleys. You don’t see any roads or trails. You are totally lost.

How is that compass going to give you direction? Are you going to go North? South? East? West? The only thing you can do is hike to the top of the ridge or the mountain; and see if you can see anything from higher up, but all you see are more mountains and valleys. Are you in California? Oregon? Washington? Canada? Or maybe you’re somewhere in the Rocky Mountain Range. Are you picturing how this would feel being totally lost not seeing anything familiar? At this point, all you could do is pick a direction and head that way until you came to a path or a road. Or start following a valley until you find a stream, a stream that flows into a river, a river that ultimately flows out of the wilderness.

Consider if you had a GPS. You would pretty much be in the same boat as with the compass. What good are precise altitude, direction, longitude and latitude if you have no idea where you are? Then the altimeter would be pretty useless.

But if you were dropped in the middle of the wilderness with only a map, you could study that map. You could climb to the top of the ridge and start to see the trail on the map, pick up reference points. And pretty soon you would be able to triangulate your position. You would then see the closest trail that leads to a road that will take you out of the wilderness.

Brethren, knowing where you are is so important. And, as you can see by our backpacking analogy, the map and triangulation are how you will know where you are. The other tools just make it a little easier if we have the map. But the map—God’s word—you need to study it so that you know the direction you’re going. It tells you

when you study. No matter where you look in God's word, you'll find something that might point you in the right direction or confirm that you're heading in the right direction.

In closing, brethren, it says in Isaiah 30:21:

***Isaiah 30:21.*** *And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*  
(KJV)