

## **Repetition is the Purest Form of Mastery**

Every single morning, when I ride the bus, I snapshot out the window—practicing the same exact shot of the same exact landscape every single day. There’s something to be said about mastery, about timer photography, and how we can achieve greatness through repetition. I believe that repetition and consistency are what lead to success in any endeavor in life. Photography is no different.

*The more you walk, the more you see.*

*The more you see, the more you photograph.*

*The more you photograph, the more curious you become.*

*The more curious you become, the more you go out there and achieve the goal of making more photographs.*

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## **Climb a Mountain**

One of my favorite things to do is stand on top of a cliff, a mountain, or a bridge with a vantage point, where I can look out and see the horizon. When you have a panopticon view of your surroundings from an elevated position, it fuels you with inspiration.

I don’t believe you find inspiration in people, or even in words, books, etc. The purest form of inspiration comes from nature, from the source of creation—the divine. When you tune out the noise and listen to your inner conscience, especially in the wilderness—on a trail, in the woods, on a hill, away from the hustle and bustle—you can truly hear your inner voice calling.

Think of Elijah, the prophet, rising to the mountain, listening to his conscience, after fleeing Queen Jezebel and hiding in a cave. While he was in that cave, he heard loud sounds—wind, an earthquake, and then fire. But after the fire, he heard a still, small voice. His conscience. It told him to rise and return to the world.

For the past two years straight, I've marched in the wilderness along the trail in Philadelphia, rising to the mountain behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, standing on the cliff each and every day. I've canceled out all the noise and simply listened to my inner voice—my conscience—and allowed that to guide me back into the world, finding my place in the chaos of urban life.

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## Eliminate Decisions

When I walk along this trail:

- If I turn left, I'll fall into the river and drown.
- If I turn right, I'll get hit by a train.
- The only option is onward and upward—to the cliff.

This is where I seek to be. Eliminate decisions. Eliminate fatigue. The mental fog of endless decisions clouds our perception and fills our lives with noise.

Think of your camera choices—endless brands, lenses, features. But by eliminating all these decisions and sticking to **one camera, one lens**, and moving forward daily with **repetition**, you can achieve mastery.

Even in food—there are a million options. But if you eat the same thing every day, at the same time, you'll find discipline and vitality. The more physical vitality you feel, the sharper your thoughts become—and your spirit will rise to new heights.

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## What is Spirit?

When I consider spirit, I think about the **Holy Spirit**, in the Catholic tradition: *The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit*.

I believe the Holy Spirit is the conscience. That inner voice that calls you out into the world to do, to think, to create, to explore. It tells you what's right, what's wrong. But the conscience can also become corrupted—especially if it arises from weakness.

**Consider this:**

- **Person A:** Weak, anemic, depressed, and lacking vitality
- **Person B:** Strong, metabolically healthy, joyous, full of vitality

Which person is more likely to seek power over others?

The answer might surprise you. It's **Person A**—because those who feel powerless often envy the strong. They may lash out with bitterness, jealousy, or hate.

My theory:

- Lower vitality = lower testosterone
- Lower testosterone = higher sense of powerlessness
- The more powerless a person feels, the more they seek to destroy

But the strong man—full of vitality—will uplift others.

This is not absolute, but there's wisdom in it. Epictetus taught that we should only focus on what's **within our control**. That's where real power lies. If you chase what's outside your control, you will feel powerless. And when you feel powerless, your content of character suffers.

*True power: Physical, mental, and spiritual vitality*

*Weakness: Chasing what's outside your control*

## The Joyous Giant

On the bus ride to work, there are these children who sing and chant with joy. They remind me: *life is not that serious*.

When you embrace your inner child, everything becomes **play**. When you rise early to catch the sunrise and feel its warmth on your skin, it fills you with love. And when you're full of that love, you naturally want to share it.

The **future man** I envision is:

- Physically strong
- Mentally sharp
- Spiritually radiant

He changes the world not by force, but by **being the change**:

- Smiling at strangers
- Giving compliments
- Listening deeply

These small acts create ripples. They only come from inner abundance.

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## Tap Into the Source

During my Peace Corps service in Zambia, I learned the power of **water**.

Every village had a **church** (for moral/spiritual vitality) and a **well** (for physical vitality). But a well needs a **source**. Without it, the well runs dry.

**We are the well.**

God is the source.

If you tap into the source, you overflow with life—able to nourish others.

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## Be Like a Tree

I'm surrounded by trees every day at the Centennial Arboretum. Some date back to 1876. There's one towering tree that stuns me every time I see it.

Its limbs stretch to the sky. Its roots are deep in the soil.

### **We too must become like trees:**

- Rooted deep
- Reaching for the light
- Competing, struggling, thriving
- Growing through pain and rain

And when we grow tall, we bear fruit—sweet, plump, nourishing figs. This is the fruit of our spirit: kindness, love, light.

When you grow your roots into the earth and rise to the sun, you bear fruit that feeds the world.

*Grow deep.*

*Reach high.*

*Bear fruit.*

*And fly like a dove.*

*A free spirit.*