



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman

#5.24– Joy in the Middle Weeks

December 10, 2025

✨ Joy



These middle weeks of December have always felt different to me.

Not quite the beginning of the season, not yet the end — just this space where everything feels full and unfinished at the same time.

There's a certain kind of joy that shows up here.
Not loud, not dramatic, not “holiday joy” with a soundtrack.
More like a small lift in the spirit.

A breath.
A reminder that something inside us is still alive and responsive, even when life is busy or heavy or complicated.

Some traditions have a rhythm of “joy in the middle” at this time of year.
But you don't need a religious background to understand the deeper idea:

Joy has a way of rising in the middle of things, not at the end.

And that's something anyone on a spiritual path — in recovery or otherwise — can relate to.

The Heart of the Week: **Joy, Waiting, and the Temptation of “Right Now”**

As a kid — and let’s be honest, even as a teenager (and maybe an adult) — I remember the pull of December waiting.

The wondering.

The trying to guess what I might be getting for Christmas.

The little thrill of anticipation and the little ache of wanting to know right now.

And sometimes, I gave in.

- I’d sneak a look.
- Shake a box.
- Find a hiding place.
- Convince myself I was only “checking,” not spoiling anything.

But here’s the thing: whenever I did manage to discover something early, the joy changed.

Sometimes it faded.

Sometimes it twisted into disappointment — like the year I thought I’d uncovered one specific gift I desperately wanted... only to realize on Christmas morning that it was actually something else.

Something equally good — but not what I had built my excitement around.

So there I was: grateful, surprised, and disappointed all at once. What a mix.

Looking back, I realize how much of December joy lives in the middle —

- in the not knowing,
- in the anticipation,
- in the ordinary days leading up to the moment.

When I tried to rush the joy, I missed the real thing.

When I tried to control the outcome, I robbed myself of the surprise.

And when I assumed I knew how joy should look, I almost missed how it was already arriving.

Joy is subtle like that. It rarely matches the picture we create in our heads. It tends to show up sideways, quietly, and often when we’re not actively searching for it.

★ The Recovery Lens

In long-term recovery, joy is rarely something we get by chasing it. More often, it's something that rises up without warning:

- a moment of laughter
- a sense of presence
- a breath of relief
- a small beauty we almost overlooked
- a conversation that leaves us lighter than expected

Joy becomes a sign of **aliveness**, not an accomplishment.

Just look again at the AA Promises in the Big Book, p. 83:

- We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

Or in Bill's Story, also in the Big Book, p. 15:

- The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty.

And just like those childhood December moments, joy invites us to stay open rather than assume we know what's coming.

It asks us

- To notice rather than predict.
- To receive rather than control
- To welcome whatever arrives, instead of building a fantasy around what “should” happen.

Joy doesn't need to be earned.

It doesn't ask for perfection.

It just needs a little space — and a heart willing to be surprised.

✨ Reflection Prompt

Where did a quiet joy find me this week — even if it didn't look the way I expected?

Sit with whatever arises.

Chances are, it came in the middle of something ordinary.

✓ Taking a Step Beyond

Maybe you have to know the darkness before you can appreciate the light.

— Madeleine L'Engle



🕯 Closing Reflection

Sometimes the joy we expect never arrives, and the joy we receive looks nothing like what we imagined.

But if we're paying attention — even in the middle of the rush, even in the waiting — joy has a way of finding us anyway.

Often small.
Often quiet.
Often enough.

Thanks for walking this middle week with me.

— Barry

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Wherever you are in the journey-
come back to what grounds you.
You're not alone.

