



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman

#5.28- Oriented to Life

January 7, 2026



The Vastness of Life



To know that- to believe that- is quite a way to start a new year.

I also remain amazed by this simple truth: everything I continue to learn about living life in healthy ways is already present in the wisdom of the Twelve Steps. Not as rigid instruction, but as a living path—one that grows deeper and more humane over time.

There is a kind of vastness that opens us up- Look at all the possibilities. And there is a kind that overwhelms- How am I ever going to keep up with all of it?

Modern life often then nudges us toward fragmentation—into all those silos where we feel we must be competent, responsible, and masterful in every domain at once. It shows up as competence without cohesion. As mastery without joy. As responsibility carried faithfully, but without inhabitation.

That kind of vastness exhausts us.

But when mastery is reframed as relationship rather than control, something shifts. The Steps begin to integrate rather than divide. Grace loosens the grip of performance. Recovery becomes less about vigilance—and more about wholeness.

At this stage of life, mastery is not about becoming capable in more areas, but about becoming fully present in the ones that matter.

As we begin a new year, I find myself less interested in momentum—and more attentive to orientation. Direction.

The ones that matter!

That truth came into sharper focus for me recently sitting in the local emergency room then in my wife's hospital room for three days.

Christmas Week.

I found myself asking a quiet, unsettling question:

What am I supposed to be doing now?

Not next month. Not next quarter.

Now.

It became clear—almost uncomfortably so—that much of what I had been building and planning these last months left very little room for a 77-year-old retired person in recovery to have boundless energy, ideas, directions and actually live. To be present. To enjoy what was still unfolding, even there.

That's what John Lennon was naming when he wrote:

“Before you cross the street, take my hand.
Life is what happens to you
while you're busy making other plans.”
— “Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)”

The Heart of the Week:

I am choosing a life that leaves room to be lived.

Most January messages—especially in recovery and growth spaces—default to more goals, more structure, more improvement, more areas to get right. What I'm offering here is a counter-witness.

Mastery is not expansion into everything. It is refinement toward what gives life.

This isn't about doing less because we're tired. It's about doing truer things because we're wise.

Life is not about our doing, it's about the essence of our being.

★ The Recovery Lens

Long before life interrupts our plans, the foundations of recovery—acceptance, forgiveness, hope, and grace—are already holding us.

That ensures:

- the Steps are not read as a response to crisis
- foundation is felt as ongoing, not reactive

Mastery—when it’s healthy— is like recovery itself. It has less to do with control, and much more to do with relationship.

Remember that vastness needs grounding,
openness needs rhythm, and freedom needs companionship,

In this season that holds both promise and uncertainty, I’m convinced that recovery needs spaces that are relational, unhurried, and human-sized. In the weeks ahead, we’ll keep exploring what helps us stay oriented in the middle of life’s crossings—how connection, foundation, and grace quietly carry us forward.

There is room here.

Room to breathe, room to live.

Room to hold what matters—without rushing past it.

✨ Reflection Prompts

You might take a few quiet moments with one or two of these questions this week. There’s no need to answer them all—or to answer them quickly.

- Where do you notice vastness in your life right now—possibility, openness, or change?
- In what areas have you felt pressure to be competent, responsible, or “on top of things” all at once?
- When life has interrupted your plans in the past, what helped you stay oriented—even briefly?
- What practices, relationships, or truths have already been helping you—long before this moment?

Let these questions accompany you rather than demand answers.

✓ Taking a Step Beyond

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hand.**

**Life is what happens to you while you're
busy making other plans.**

— John Lennon
"Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)"



✎ Closing Invitation

As this new year begins, there's no rush to cross the street.

Orientation comes before movement.

Connection comes before clarity.

Foundation comes before freedom.

If life is wide right now, you don't have to master it.

You only have to stay present within it—held by what has always held you.

There is room here.

And you don't have to walk alone.

Email me. I always look forward to hearing from you.

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

