



# Mastering Recovery

*Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection*

With Barry Lehman

**#5.33- Disoriented**

**February 11, 2026**

## What I'm Thinking



### Where Joe Left Us Last Week

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

*(W. B. Yeats)*



This is not a verdict on the world at large — but a description of what can happen **inside us** when what once held no longer does.

That's the moment Joe brought into the 12-Step meeting room.

Not chaos, exactly. But strain. Uncertainty. The uneasy gap where old assurances no longer work, and something new hasn't yet taken shape.

When the center doesn't hold, we don't all respond the same way. Some of us grow quiet, unsure which ground is still trustworthy. Others move quickly toward certainty, gripping it tightly because not knowing feels unbearable.

It's a deeply human response — and a familiar one.  
Our cry is summed up simply as:

*It's not fair!*

Often, when the center no longer holds, we assume something has gone wrong. That the problem is personal. Or spiritual. Or moral.  
But moments like this are not unusual in a life of recovery — or in a life of faith.

They often arise when the way we've understood spirituality has been doing its job for a long time... and then suddenly can't. Not because it was false, but because it was finished. Or at least finished in the form we knew.

Spirituality is deeply relational. It lives through connection — with ourselves, with others, with meaning, and with what we understand as a higher power. And because it is relational, it is also vulnerable.

Connections can be strained. They can be broken. They can be outgrown. And sometimes, they are shaken by events we didn't choose — loss, trauma, disappointment, or simply the slow work of change.

One of the ways we try to protect ourselves in those moments is by **locking in a definition**. A belief. A practice. A way of understanding God or recovery that once helped us stay upright.

This is the way it works.  
This is the truth.  
This is what I can count on.

For a while, that can be stabilizing. But when life shifts — and it always does — what once held us can begin to strain under the weight we place on it.

That's often when protest shows up.

It's not fair.  
This isn't what I signed up for.

You promised.

Not as rebellion, necessarily — but as grief. As fear. As the honest response of someone whose connections no longer feel trustworthy in the same way.

When that happens, we may cling even tighter, expecting spirituality to remain unchanged while the world — and we ourselves — are clearly not.

And that tension can leave us feeling unmoored. Lonely. Spiritually disoriented. Unsure where, or how, to stand.

### **Disoriented.**

A bad place to have a mental breakdown is in the midst of the wilderness. Feeling directionless. Feeling all but lost. Yet, I was only a few hundred yards from the trail head around the Mississippi headwaters. I had gone around a small lake, got turned, and was now completely uncertain.

The sun was sort-of out. But it was closer to noon than to sunrise or sunset. That would have given me some direction. But it didn't. My phone didn't have any signal. (This was more than 10 years ago!) GPS was useless.

I was also too far from the trailhead to yell and hope my wife heard me.

It was already over 20 minutes since I left her and I was already moving beyond worry into panic.

I realized I needed to know where I was. I needed to find the way. Which wasn't as easy as simply just going back around the lake. There were too many branches off the trail. That's how I had become disorganized.

I stopped, went through what I knew and came up with a plan. It took at least another 20 minutes, but I found direction.

### **The Heart of the Week:**

At moments like this, what we're really needing is not an answer, but a re-orientation.

Not a fix.

Not a new set of rules.

But a way of turning ourselves again toward what matters — adjusting to the reality in front of us, and familiarizing ourselves with what has changed.

Orientation begins by noticing where we actually are, and what still feels trustworthy enough to attend to. It doesn't rush ahead. It doesn't demand certainty. It simply asks us to pause long enough to listen.

And often that pause is the most faithful thing we can offer.

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### ✓ Taking a Step Beyond

*Sometimes the most important work in recovery is learning to stop, breathe, and ask:*

***What is actually sustainable right now?***

-From Circle of Hope, 2/4/26

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### 🌱 A Closing Invitation

**Pause long enough this week to listen.**

[Email me.](#) I always look forward to hearing from you.



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Relevant Recovery



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