



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps



Practicing the Principles

With Barry Lehman

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*Before all else, an amend. No, you didn't get this yesterday.
I goofed and thought I had set up the send for Wednesday.
I didn't.
I am sorry. I guess I wasn't paying attention like I needed to.*

It's a Way of Life

Last week we ended with a simple idea:

Recovery is not something we maintain.

Recovery is something we practice.

Recovery is a way of life.

Several of you wrote to me after reading that newsletter. Others reflected on it during our MasterClass. One question kept surfacing.

How?

What does practicing the principles actually look like on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon?

I don't think it begins with trying harder.
I think it begins with paying attention.

One of the insights that has been growing in me over the past year is this:

Life isn't the reward after recovery.

Life is where recovery is practiced.



Life is where recovery grows.

The meetings matter.

The literature matters.

The fellowship matters.

But they are not the destination.

They prepare us for the real practice field—everyday life.

That realization has changed the way I hear the closing words of the Twelfth Step:

"...to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Notice where the practice happens.

Not just in meetings.

Not just during prayer.

Not just when life is going well.

In all our affairs.

Beyond Maintenance: A MasterClass Reflection

In our MasterClass last Wednesday, one participant described how recovery has gradually become part of everyday living. Meetings, reading, gratitude, and helping others are no longer tasks to remember—they have become woven into daily life.

Another participant reflected on navigating major life transitions, including significant personal losses and the unexpected gift of having more free time. Rather than rushing to fill every empty space with activity, the challenge has become learning to simply be present.

That suggests something important.

Practice has two movements.

The first is **attention**.

The second is **intention**.

Attention asks:

What am I noticing?

Intention asks:

How do I want to respond?

Without attention, we often don't even recognize the opportunity to practice.
Without intention, we simply react the way we always have.

Most of us don't respond to life exactly as it is.
We respond to what life reminds us of.

A comment from another person.
A disappointed expectation.
A holiday gathering.
A difficult conversation.

Before we realize it, we're reacting to yesterday instead of today.
Recovery gently invites another question:

What is actually happening right now?

Living Recovery:

That is the beginning of attention.

Attention isn't complicated.
It's simply learning to notice.

Sometimes we begin by looking inward.

- ♦ What am I feeling?
- ♦ What story am I beginning to tell myself?
- ♦ Where do I feel resistance?
- ♦ Where do I notice gratitude?

Sometimes we begin by looking outward.

- What is happening around me?
- What might this other person be experiencing?
- What am I overlooking?
- Where is life asking something of me?

Sometimes attention begins inside.
Sometimes it begins outside.

Either way, it slows us down long enough to choose our response instead of simply repeating old habits.

Imagine sitting in traffic.
The situation hasn't changed.

But attention notices:
"I'm becoming impatient."

Now intention asks:

- *"What principle is this moment inviting me to practice?"*
 - Perhaps acceptance.
 - Perhaps patience.
 - Perhaps kindness.

The traffic hasn't changed.

My practice has.

I am convinced that people don't grow primarily through knowledge.

Knowledge matters.

Insight matters.

Learning matters.

But people are changed by practice.

Recovery has always known this.

We've often heard the old saying:

"We don't think our way into a new way of living. We live our way into a new way of thinking."

Or perhaps we could say:

We practice our way into a new way of living.



**Instructions for living a life.
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.**

— Mary Oliver

Here's a simple invitation for this week.

Several times each day, pause for just a moment and ask yourself two questions:

- **What am I noticing?**
- **What principle is this moment inviting me to practice?**

◆ A Closing Thought

This is part of what growth in long-term recovery really looks like.

We practice our way into a new way of living.

Week after week.

Conversation after conversation.

Ordinary Tuesday afternoon after ordinary Tuesday afternoon.

That is how the principles slowly become part of us.

Over time, something begins to happen.

The practices become capacities.

The capacities become character.

And character becomes freedom.

That is the journey I hope we'll continue exploring together over the coming weeks.

Don't worry about getting it right.

Don't aim for perfection.

Simply practice.

One day at a time.



***A Shout-Out to the
Center of Addiction and Faith***

Johns Hopkins has recognized the work of the *Center of Addiction and Faith* for their grant from Washington



Co., Minnesota. They are working with churches in that county to develop opioid responses and deeper awareness of the ways churches can support people who are impacted by substance use disorder.

[Link to Johns Hopkins Article.](#)



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Upcoming Conversations and Events

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