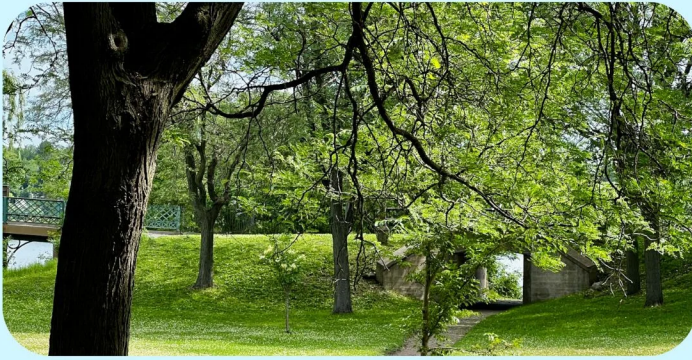




Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps



Practicing the Principles

With Barry Lehman

Issue 6.09 - August 26, 2026

Courage: Exploring What's Possible

We've all spent a lot of time over the years with:

... The serenity to accept the things I cannot change...

But what about:

courage to change the things I can?



As I look back, that's what August has actually been about.

Willingness to change.

Humility to recognize where change is needed.

Love/care to recognize how my way of living affects others- and discovering what I need to change.

But recognizing change and **actually changing** aren't the same thing.

Change takes courage.

 **That's Only the Beginning- Of course!**

Courage is where our treatment stories start.

After I entered treatment, and was quite open about it, people told me that entering treatment took courage.

I sure didn't experience it that way.

It looked like failure. I wasn't able to do it alone. I was sure I had no other way out.

Having no choice, didn't feel like courage. It felt like giving up.

Then eight months later I ended up making a pastoral call on a younger member of the church. They were drunk and wanted help. I talked about my experience. I had told the congregation when I went to treatment. So there were no secrets.

Several hours later, after a number of phone calls, I ended up taking them to a local treatment center.

As I drove home after midnight I knew I had just seen courage happening in front of of me.

I recognized what others had seen in me.

Early-recovery courage.

It was courage in the face of something frightening and life-threatening.

Many of us have first learned about courage at that type of moment.

Courage is where our treatment stories start.

But what does courage look like when I'm no longer primarily afraid of drinking?

Hopefully, after ten or twenty or thirty years, we're no longer spending every day looking over our shoulder, listening for those disturbing footsteps of the disease behind us.

The obsession has been lifted.

Celebrate that. Be grateful for it.

But is that all we're here for?

Living Recovery:

Recovery cannot remain forever defined by what I no longer do.

Sobriety gives enormous freedom from:

From alcohol.

From obsession.

From chaos.

From consequences.

From the life we were living.

But long-term recovery asks another question:

What am I **free for?**

My answer:

I am **free to become.**

For that move to happen, courage remains essential.

- Early-recovery courage moved me **away from a life I could no longer live.**
- Long-term-recovery courage moves me **toward a life I haven't lived yet.**

Last week I talked to about my experience at music camp.

I was playing well. My understanding wasn't wrong.

But it wasn't what I could do or what was needed at that moment.

That's long-term recovery.

I'm sober. Life is good. What I've been doing has worked.

Nothing is terribly wrong—and I'm still being invited to grow.

What do I have to look forward to, even at 30+ years? New ways of loving.

- New understanding.
- New ways of serving.
- New ways of becoming.

There is still a story ahead of me that hasn't happened yet.

Long-term recovery cannot be sustained only by remembering what I'm running from. Courage keeps me moving toward who I am still free to become.

This is where what I have referred to as *Radical Hope* returns:

I know that change and hope are real because I experienced it myself when I first got sober and have experienced it many times since.

I know that change and hope are real because I have also seen it in others who have found life in a whole new way.

I know that change and hope are real.

That's why courage matters.

Early recovery can be powered for quite a while by remembering what we're

running **from**.

Long-term recovery needs something worth moving **toward**.

With courage.

For me today at 78, that distinction has a different meaning than it did at 40.

Courage doesn't mean pretending limitations don't exist.

Serenity accepts the limits.

Courage explores the possibilities that remain within them.

Familiar words have changed:

Serenity — I accept what I cannot change.

Courage — I explore what can still change.

Wisdom — I keep learning the difference.

🌿 Practicing the Principles:

What am I free to become now?

Notice one place this week where nothing is particularly wrong—
but something new may be possible.

What would one courageous step toward it look like?



◆ A Closing Thought

We've talked for two months about practicing principles?

Practice alone.

Rehearse with others.

Then sometime tomorrow afternoon, **live them.**

Eventually willingness, humility, love, courage, awareness, discipline aren't simply things I practice.

They become increasingly integrated into **who I am.**

Recovery isn't simply something I do to keep from returning to the person I once was.

It gives me the freedom to keep becoming.

That brings us to another principle for next month:

Integrity.



Upcoming Conversations and Events

Pastor Ed Treat, Executive Director of CAF, will be joining **Karen Rubinstein** for a virtual conversation about his book, **The Lie That Kills Us**. Karen is the founder of Women in the Rooms, an online community for women in recovery who are looking for more than sobriety

**Saturday, August 29 at 10:00 am
CDT.**



Save your spot.

Practicing the Principles and growing forward. Continue the conversation in the MasterClass:

**Wednesday, September 2 at
12:00 pm CDT.**

Master Class

With Barry A. Lehman

I'm interested.



Back issues of the newsletter can be found at: **Newsletter Hub.**

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