



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps



Practicing the Principles

With Barry Lehman

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Keep Steering

Step two last week left me standing and looking at the horizon. And, to no one's surprise, except maybe my own, I found I cannot see beyond the horizon.

Sounds a lot like being powerless.

Nearly two hundred years ago the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard wrote of a sailor, steering a boat, across an open sea.

Kierkegaard refers to him as “doughty.” I admit. I had to look up that word. It means something far from what I expected.

Doughty: brave, determined, and resolute.

He has experience, he has strength, he has hope. Because he knows what he is doing.

He has the skills.

Up comes a storm. Perhaps an unusual, but certainly unexpected storm. He is one man, “doughty” as he may be, against the elements over which he is powerless.

The sailor cannot control:

- the storm
- the wind
- the waves



- how long the storm lasts
- perhaps even whether the boat ultimately survives

That's Only the Beginning- Of Course!

The sailor's first task is **honesty**.

The storm is real. The wind is what it is.

The waves don't care what he wants them to do.

He has to see reality as it is before he can decide what to do next.

He has to see reality as it is: he has resources and can use them despite not controlling the conditions.

Step 1 has taught me something important over the years: powerlessness is not helplessness.

Nor is it giving up and lying down in the boat

True, I cannot see beyond the horizon and I don't control the sea between here and there. But:

*Admitting my powerlessness tells me where my power **isn't!***

That way I can stop wasting energy on what I cannot do.

I can't control the storm.

I can use my energy wisely where my power is; and where I can do something.

I can steer the boat.

As we pray regularly,

accepting what I cannot change doesn't eliminate the courage to change the things I can.

But it takes wisdom to know the difference.

Living Recovery

And there's the problem. I can pray that sentence quite easily. Knowing the difference sometime Tuesday afternoon can be considerably harder.

Or, more often than not, around midnight when I have been trying to figure out how I can control some small part of the world.

My mind is happy to notice the silence and often comes up with something out of the day or week.

“Now that I have your sole attention...”

Thus it begins.

- One night it might be how to finance a purchase;
- Ten days later, some news article will have me trying to make sense of some action;
- Then, as soon as the next night, I'll be wondering how I'm going to write that arrangement of a song for next year's trumpet camp. Nine months from now.

Usually, it ends up with an hour awake, and no new ideas.

Other than repeating the Serenity Prayer several times.

Which, of course, I had already tried.

I just wasn't ready to mean it yet.

I was still trying to control what was beyond me.

I must recognize that steering the boat and controlling the sea are two very different things.

That's where Step 1 truly begins.
And perhaps where all the Steps begin—and end.

Honesty is seeing reality as it is.

Tell myself the truth.
Not so I can give up.

So I can take the next step.

Practicing the Principles:

Practice of the week:

- **Where do I need to tell myself the truth today?**
- **What am I powerless over?**

- What is still mine to do?

No one escapes the wilderness on the way to the promised land.

— Annie Dillard



- Then do what is mine to do.

◆ A Closing Thought

How did the sailor know what to do with the rudder in his hands?
What did he have available?

Everything he has accumulated.

Skill. Experience. Knowledge. Strength. Perseverance. Perhaps other sailors.
Knowledge of the boat. Knowledge of the sea.

Those are **assets**.

See you next week.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben".



In Two Weeks- October 7 at noon CT

The monthly *Beyond Sobriety* Master Class.

It isn't a lecture or another recovery meeting.

It's a free, open, informal conversation about living and growing in long-term recovery. I bring a theme and a few prompts. We talk, ask questions, share experiences and ideas—and see where the conversation takes us.

Come to listen, participate, ask questions, or simply see what we're exploring together.

[Click here to be registered and receive the reminders.](#)

Upcoming Event: Next Wednesday

**Rev. Timothy McMahan King:
Why We're Always Working
Upstream:**

**A New Story of Drugs
for Faith Communities**

Wednesday, September 30th
Noon Central, 1:00 p.m. Eastern



Join Rev. Timothy McMahan King for a free webinar. Tim will make the case that faith communities have developed powerful resources for responding to addiction, but have been missing the foundation that makes that work sustainable: a theology of what drugs are actually for.

[I'm Interested](#)



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