

Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman



My October Manifesto

#5.15 – Humility:

#5.16 – Forgiveness: The Hidden Work of Hope

October 15, 2025

What I'm Thinking



Last week we talked about humility as the moment when we stop trying to fix and begin simply walking each other home.

That's where real recovery always begins: in powerlessness, presence, and acceptance.

When the noise quiets, we start to hear the inner accusations:

- the shame that won't let go,
- the resentments we've rehearsed a thousand times,
- the silent distance between us and the people we once hurt or who hurt us.

That's when the work of forgiveness begins.

From Humility to Forgiveness

In early recovery, forgiveness begins with ourselves.

When we name resentments and let them go, we start to make room for grace.

- Steps 4 and 5 help us tell the truth.
- Steps 6 and 7 teach us to hand the outcome to a Power greater than ourselves.
- Steps 8 and 9 move us toward reconnection — to live forgiveness in relationship, not theory.

Each movement circles back to humility:

- humility that admits the harm,
- humility that asks for help,
- humility that accepts we all stand in need of forgiveness.

Now forgiveness and humility start to weave together.
One leads to the other, and both lead toward grace.

Clearing the Ground

By the time we reach a few years sober, this process has already tilled the soil of our lives.

We've pulled some (many) weeds, turned the soil, and learned that new growth takes constant tending — pruning, planting, nurturing. That's the work of early recovery, the practices of the principles in more and more of our affairs.

Forgiveness is the ongoing gardening of recovery.
It keeps the soil open for humility to take root again.
It keeps the ground soft enough for grace to grow.

Without forgiveness, the ground hardens —
resentment becomes clay, shame becomes stone.

With forgiveness, we begin to live a new way:
aware, honest, teachable, merciful.

Toward Radical Hope

This is where radical hope begins to show itself.
Not the shallow hope that everything will work out the way we want,
but the deeper trust that new life can still emerge from cleared soil.

Humility opens the ground.
Forgiveness keeps it fertile.
Grace makes it bloom.

And radical hope is the quiet green shoot that rises through the cracks,
reminding us that what once looked barren can live again.

Radical hope is actually when powerlessness leads us to **forgiveness** that **humility's** work expands.

Forgiveness is not an optional moral act; it's the necessary work that makes space for grace. Here we face what blocks connection: unfinished grief, guilt, shame, and resentment.

Without forgiveness, humility curdles into self-condemnation, and powerlessness becomes despair.

So forgiveness is actually the **pivot from humility to hope**.

It's how humility moves from *"I can't"* toward *"But maybe there's still a way."*

Reflection Prompts

- **What** part of your inner garden feels hardened or overgrown right now?
- **What** burden of judgment, shame, or resentment has been pressing on you lately — your own or someone else's?
- **Where** might forgiveness — of self, of others — loosen the soil enough for hope to take root again?

Taking a Step Beyond

Forgiveness is nothing less than the way we heal the world. We heal the world by healing each heart, each relationship.

- Desmond Tutu



Where power once ruled, humility waits for something new to grow.



Depth at the Heart of Recovery

Deeper into Living the Steps

Last week I mentioned the upcoming "Guided Gatherings". For a number of reasons, including that my tongue trips over the name, they will have a new title starting next month. I am calling them

Circles of Hope:
Shared Wisdom. Safe Spaces. Connection.

They will be a monthly place to stay connected in your own recovery while serving others.

Thanks to your responses to the poll last week, the theme for the first two of these will be:

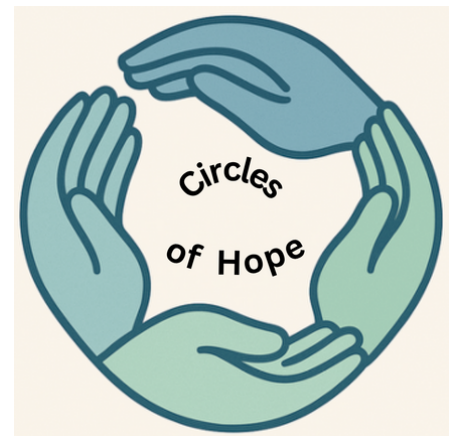
Staying grounded when life gets busy.

Two **Circles** in November. Attend either or both.

Wednesday November 5 at noon (CT)

Wednesday November 19 at 7:00 pm (CT)

More information in next week's newsletter.





I will be at the annual MARRCH Conference
with a table and be speaking on Wednesday morning.
It will be a time for me to talk with you,
get your ideas, or to explain
more about what I am working on.
Stop by and say "Hi!"

[Register today.](#)

Awakening The Church to Address Addiction

A Virtual Conference

Thursday, October 23
10 am - 6 pm CT

[LINK for more information.](#)



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

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