

Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman



🌱 My October Manifesto

#5.17 – We Arrive at Grace

October 22, 2025



What I'm Thinking

Grace: The Power That Finds Us

Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness.

It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life.

It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction have become intolerable to us. Sometimes at that moment, a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying:

You are accepted.

Grace doesn't wait for us to be ready.
It finds us.

🌱 From Humility through Forgiveness to Grace

Grace defines me. It's the thread connecting every milestone of my recovery journey.

Grace. Having received this gift, how could I deny it to others?

Two moments stand out:

- A clergy workshop where I scored 11/26 on an alcoholism assessment, thinking I'd passed—until learning that even 1-2 "yes" answers indicated a problem. [Stunned silence.]
- A Catholic sister at a retreat who told me, three years sober: "When you reach the last stage of grief—acceptance—you've found the first step of AA." [Wonder.]

Grace upholds all 12 Steps. It begins in powerlessness, extends through surrender to something greater, deepens in honest inventory, and culminates in humility and forgiveness. We don't earn grace. We receive it.

Surrounded by Grace

After weeks—or years—of striving, grace is what reminds us that recovery was never something we earned.

It's what holds us when the old tools fail and the self-criticism gets loud.

Grace is not a single moment of relief.

It's the atmosphere of long-term recovery:

- The quiet sense that we belong even when we falter.
- The strength that appears the moment we stop demanding it.
- The light that seeps through the cracks forgiveness left behind.



When we stop fighting the need to be “good enough,”
we begin to see grace everywhere—

*In the laughter of friends,
in the morning sun,
in the deep breath that says, I'm still here.*

Of all the foundational milestones of my life and recovery the most life-changing, and lasting, was from the last summer of my seminary training fifteen years earlier.

I was finishing my quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at the State Mental Hospital in Allentown.

After 400 hours of ministry, group sessions, and supervision, I found myself in the hot seat during one of our final meetings. The group circled around an emotional issue I couldn't even identify within myself.

Mike, our supervisor, finally raised his hand to stop the probing. "He's not in denial," he told the group. "He genuinely doesn't know."

Then he turned to me with a calm voice.

"It's okay. Everything is as it should be right now." He quoted the affirming words from the beginning of this newsletter.

Wow.

He paused and added another paragraph



***You are accepted,
accepted by that which is greater than you,
and the name of which you do not know.

Simply accept the fact-

you are accepted.***

✨ The Practice of Receiving and Giving

Grace is not a reward for getting the right answers to life's questions.
Grace is not a reward for being better than anyone else.
Grace is not a reward for many years of getting recovery right.

It's the power that keeps us becoming and growing.
And the more we receive it, the more freely it moves through us.

That's how humility and forgiveness open into service:
we extend to others what has been given to us.

Grace is why I do what I do. Not as well as I would like to, but it is always there.

Because I need it. I can do nothing without it- but neither can I do anything to get it.

Just accept it.

🕒 Reflection Prompts

- **Where** have you recently been surprised by grace?
- **What** if you stopped trying to deserve it and simply let yourself be surrounded by it?

✅ Taking a Step Beyond

Sometimes at that moment, a wave
of light breaks into our darkness,
and it is as though a voice were
saying:
You are accepted.

-- Paul Tillich



Grace begins where the light finds a way in.



Free Virtual Group

**Shared Wisdom.
Safe Spaces
Connection.**

In November:
Wednesday November 5 @ Noon CT
Wednesday November 19 @ 7:00 pm CT
(Come to either or both.)



**Click Button Below
to
Register**



[Register](#)

What are the Circles of Hope?

- Small, guided groups for long-term recovery.
- Blend reflection, shared wisdom, and focused learning — a mastermind-style approach to support and growth.
- Stay renewed and connected in your recovery and strengthen how you work with others.

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

The theme for November will be:

Staying grounded when life gets busy.



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

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