



## THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

by Keith Phillips

I wish you could meet three people who each made a big impression on me this past year. The first was a waiter's assistant who cleared my table from his wheelchair with such outgoing charm that I wasn't a bit surprised when the manager told me on my way out that he considered this young man to be his most

valuable employee. "I think more people come back for him than for the food," the manager joked.

The second was a blind beggar whose smile and heartfelt blessing has me looking for him whenever I'm in the area. Jesus said that it's more blessed to give than to receive; my blind friend makes believers.

The third was a middle-aged cashier whose "Have a nice day"—after who knows how many hours on her feet—was so genuine that she completely turned my day around. Never mind that I know she said the same thing to every customer before and after me; I was the one drowning that day and she was my lifesaver.

What is it about people like these three that leaves us envious—not of their circumstances but of their cheerful dispositions? Like angels in disguise, these unlikely champions of goodwill seem to say to us, "Join the team!"

In search of their secret, I looked for a common denominator—how they manage to not only rise above adversity, but to take so many others with them—and I think I found it. They're all so genuinely thankful for what they have that they don't waste time wishing things were different. That kind of victory comes only from knowing and feeling secure in God's love.

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"Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely. ... He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken."—Dieter F. Uchtdorf (b. 1940)

"There are two different kinds of people in the world. There are people who instinctively look for every chance to be a 'victim' and those who look for every chance to rise above—regardless of where they are in life and what's happening around them. ... We are all powerful individuals. Let's use that power to create something beautiful!"—Christopher Hawke

*Keith Phillips was Activated's editor-in-chief for 14 years from 1999 to 2013. He and his wife Caryn now work with the homeless in the U.S.*