

Serving a Barista

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She was working the early shift at a small Starbucks counter in Dulles Airport. The young barista had probably been up since 4 or 5 a.m., and she already looked worn out.

After placing my order with the cashier I stood by the counter while the barista finished the coffee ordered just before me. Even though she was clearly tired, she didn't rush the process.

After filling the cup with a latte, she took a syrup dispenser and painted a beautiful pattern on top of the foam. When she was done, she reached for a plastic cover and was about to put it on the cup.

"Don't do that!" I whispered. She looked up with surprise in her eyes, wondering if she'd done something wrong. I smiled and said, "You've done such a beautiful job on his coffee; don't cover it until he sees your artwork."

A smile lit her face as she placed the cup on the counter with the lid beside it. Its waiting owner had overheard my comment, so when he took the cup, he added his praise to mine. Placing a generous tip in the jar, he too smiled warmly and thanked her for her special efforts.

When she looked back at me, the weary look was gone from her face. I asked her how long she'd been working for Starbucks, and she answered, "Six months."

"Well, with that kind of artistry and customer care," I replied, "you're going to be successful wherever you work."

Her eyes lit up even more as she thanked me and went to work on my order. When I walked away with my own wonderfully decorated latte a few minutes later, it was hard to tell which one of us was feeling more energized.

This brief encounter illustrates the **SERVE Principle**, an acrostic that summarizes five ways to improve your [other-awareness and other-engagement](#). If you want to relate to others in a way that honors God and builds others up, ask him to empower you to ...

"SERVE every person you meet"

- **Smile** (At home, in the office, at the store; even on the phone, a smile changes the sound of your voice and sends a message of warmth and friendliness; see [Seven Benefits of a Smile](#))










- **Explore and Empathize** (Observe others, ask questions, and show interest and compassion)
- **Reconcile** (Be a peacemaker, always ready to confess, forgive, and reconcile others to one another and to God through Christ)
- **Value** (Express appreciation and admiration for what others do)
- **Encourage** (Give courage and inspire, always leaving others with more “wind under their wings”)

As you reflect on how God has loved and served you, and pray for his redeeming grace to fill your heart, you can do one or more of these things to every person you meet throughout your day.

Just think how that could impact your family, neighbors, co-workers, or church ... or the barista at your local coffee shop.

– Ken Sande

Reflection Questions:

- As you read the Bible in the coming week, look for passages that teach the SERVE principle. Here are a few to get you started: Smile ([Prov. 15:13](#) ), Explore and Empathize ([Prov. 20:5](#) , [1Pet. 3:8](#) ), Reconcile ([Matt. 5:9](#) , [James 3:17-18](#) ), Value ([Rom. 16:1-2](#) ), Encourage ([1 Thess. 5:11-14](#) ). Please email some of your favorite passages to me at mail@rw360.org.
- Write the SERVE principle on a card or Smartphone reminder, and pray that God will inspire and empower you to practice it in every encounter of your day.

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