

more than caffeine. (Although, in fact, I also was never able to figure out a way to join with the others for hospitality.)

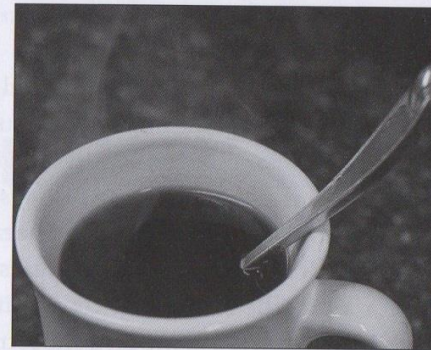
I loved that woman for bringing me coffee because that cup in my hand was about more than caffeine. It was an act of love. All through my life, from my parents to my pastoring, coffee has been an act of love. And when I consider or remember that coffee is an act of love, it gives me hope that somewhere in me I have some small ability to learn to care for my neighbors as Jesus—and Bart Campolo—advise me to do. Because maybe care doesn't have to be massive and passionate. Maybe it can be small and subtle. Like a cup of coffee.

Prompted by Bart Campolo, I began to think of coffee as an act of love during that time of working at a small college. And when I did, I began to see love all around me. Not just in coffee. In all the work: preparing lectures and grading papers, filling out forms, caring to talk in hallways, to serve on committees, to turn light switches on and off, to fix plumbing, to install software—all these small things done not for one individual's benefit, but for the benefit of others, for the benefit of that small community two blocks long and one block wide. It looked an awful lot like the kind of church Bart Campolo thought might be relevant—a church that lifts us up as we move through the world.

### III. Begetting thankfulness

By Megan L. Anderson

**H**is frame slowly eclipsed the serving window, casting a shadow over the coffee counter. Most visitors flit past on their way to doctors' appointments. Nurses roll in hot like NASCAR drivers in the pit, speeding away just as quickly once they've fueled up. We hospital baristas keep a furious pace



most days, but once in a while we're blessed with a few quiet minutes to restock supplies and catch our breaths. In one such pause he loomed large and demanding at my station. "Here we go," I thought.

He met my "hello" with a scowling countenance and awkward silence. Making use of those precious between-rush seconds while he scrutinized the menu, I wiped down the counter and scrubbed the espresso machine, praying that God would show me how to serve this tough customer with compassion and grace instead of impatience. After a long shift of being condescended to and barked at, pandering to this lingering mountain of misery was enough to push me over the edge.

After complaining about the prices of drinks he had no intention of trying, and grilling me over why we would even sell such things as scones and mochas, he finally ordered a fountain soda and launched into a treatise about why his family is the worst. Why should he have to come from out-of-town to look after his mother when his brother lives a mere tenth-of-a-mile away from the hospital? What good is having a nurse sister-in-law if she's too busy to nurse her own family? After a few more choice expletives on the subject, his eyes fell on the notebook we set out for customers to share what they're thankful for as we make their drinks.



“Humph. I lost my leg. I’m not thankful for *anything!*” he boomed.

As I scooped ice for his beverage, he launched into a new tragic litany. He’d been injured in the military and suffered from complications of diabetes. For months he’d lived in agony, with sores the size of fifty-cent pieces covering his legs. When the government failed to provide the treatment he’d been promised, he lost his leg to disease. It took another several years before they finally arranged for a prosthetic. And, of course, it doesn’t fit properly. Through it all he’d lived alone on a shoestring budget. So why should he be the one paying for the gas to come sit in a hospital all day with someone else?

“This one’s on the house today,” I said, placing the styrofoam cup in front of him. He froze.

“Why?” He was incredulous.

“It sounds like you could use a little something to make your day nicer.”

He took a sip. He sighed. His posture softened.

“That tastes good.” He said. “I thank you.”

It’s easy to judge people who wear their misfortunes like armor, but as I counted my money for his drink into the register after he’d gone, I contemplated our similarities. Perhaps I’ve not suffered physically as he has or faced comparable challenges, but I have struggled to accept love. I continue to struggle to be thankful despite the many blessings that surround me every day. I know my own negative attitude has cast a shadow over others more than a time or two. But I’ve also learned that thankfulness begets thankfulness, and sometimes it takes only something small to convey gratitude to another heart. Hopefully something like giving a man a drink.

