

# Some signs of the times bring smiles—and tears of joy

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ABILENE—When a [Hardin-Simmons University](#) freshman saw a man on a street corner holding a vulgar sign, he decided to dispel the darkness by shining a little light through an encouraging sign of his own.

Zac Christian never anticipated how deeply his simple act would affect others.



Zac Christian As Christian drove to a discount store in Abilene, he wasn't surprised to see a man displaying a sign, noting "there's a lot of people who beg on street corners here in Abilene," holding hand-lettered cardboard signs asking for money or indicating they will work for food.

However, he was shocked to read the sign that said, "(Expletive) you, pay me."

"He was looking all smug and proud of himself," Christian said, recounting the incident in a posting on [Facebook](#). Of course, he noted, the man was not receiving any money, but he was reveling in his defiant act.

"It's a pretty busy time, so there's a lot of cars coming and going—a lot of families with little children in the vehicles, and this guy's just out here

exposing (them to) this really inappropriate message," he recalled.

"So, I decided to try and spread some kindness in the wake of that hate."

### **'Don't want money. Just want you to smile'**

The next day, Christian bought a poster board and wrote on it, "Don't want money. Just want you to smile." Then he stood at a busy intersection for about an hour and a half near the location where the other sign-holder had displayed his message.

"It brought lots of big grins from the people passing by," he recalled, saying he thought of it as "something really little, but it brightened up these people's day a bit."

About the time Christian was ready to leave his post, a truck pulled up and stopped.



"This lady I've never met before gets out and walks over to me, tears running down her face," he said. Sobbing uncontrollably, she held Christian in a tight embrace.

"After a few minutes, she got herself under control a bit, pulled back, took my face in her hands and said: "Thank you, thank you, thank you! I needed

to see that today. Thank you so much.”

After delivering her own message of appreciation and encouragement, the woman walked back to her truck without another word and drove away.

“It got to me, man. I had hoped to do something small, to just give some people a smile to help finish up their day, and then that happened,” Christian said. “All that to say: Don’t underestimate what an act of kindness can do, no matter how small.”

After Christian posted the story on Facebook, it received 93 likes and more than a dozen comments, including, “I’m so glad that God is working through you.”

His father, Van Christian, pastor of First Baptist Church in Comanche, subsequently shared his son’s post on his own [Facebook page](#) with the disclaimer: “I know he will be embarrassed that I shared this, but it won’t be the first or last time I embarrass him. I don’t care; I’m proud of him.” That post picked up another 60 “likes,” and other readers shared it on their own social media pages.

## **Cascading kindness**

Christian, who is majoring in English and religion at Hardin-Simmons, noted one person who read his story told him it prompted her to respond with her own random act of kindness and encouragement—approaching a woman who obviously was distraught, only to discover she had just visited a seriously ill family member at the hospital.

Christian expressed amazement at the impact his message continued to have.

“There’s just so much bad in the world—so much darkness and evil. I guess people just like a good message that if they show a little kindness, they

have no idea what a difference it can make," he said.