

"CIRCLE OF BEADS"

A man haunted by tragedy must sacrifice his heart  
in order to find healing and reconciliation.

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**EXT. STREET ON WAY TO CHURCH - MORNING**

A lone man walks down the street, his hair and beard not maintained, dressed in professional, but faded and dirty button-up blue shirt and pants. On his feet are faded, worn, and dirty dress shoes. His eyes, distant and shrouded.

His name? CAL RIVERS, age 40.

He retrieves a worn paper and a beat up hotel-branded pen from his left pants pocket and opens the paper.

On it is a list of churches and addresses of all types of denominations; the top half with check marks beside them. The next unchecked one is "Rekindled Life Church".

He looks to the upcoming church which is a small house with hand-painted sign in front. A couple late parishioners hurry to the front door.

He returns the paper and pen into his pocket.

**INT. REKINDLED LIFE CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER**

In the obviously "work-in-progress" remodeled church, the PASTOR speaks to the moderate congregation, sitting in rows of chairs with an aisle up the middle.

In the back, three ushers stand side by side ...

BARRY, 30's, "Head Usher" nametag, expensively and professionally dressed, superior air about him, holding two relatively large collection baskets.

TOM, 20's, "Usher" nametag, nice discount suit.

RANDALL, 30's, "Usher" nametag, slightly flashy suit.

Cal passes them and sits in the back aisle-side seat.

Upon seeing the man, Barry casts a raised eyebrow to Tom who shrugs his shoulders in response.

PASTOR

As we take up this morning's offering,  
I want to remind everyone about  
Matthew five, twenty-three and twenty-  
four.

Soft, endearing, "offering" music starts in the background as Barry makes his way up center aisle with the baskets.

Tom moves to the side of the church where Cal sits and heads to the front row of seats; Randall takes the other side.

As Pastor speaks, Barry hands the baskets to the parishioners on each side of him. The baskets are passed individual to individual, the ushers transferring them to each next row.

PASTOR

Our God is a God of reconciliation.  
God gave us His Word for  
reconciliation. Jesus died for  
reconciliation. The reason we live  
is for reconciliation.

The strange man reaches into his upper shirt pocket.

Barry glances back at him and sees him reaching. Alarm covers his face until he sees ...

The man pulls out a significant money clip of cash, a hundred dollar bill on the outside.

Barry's face immediately transforms into a happy amazed look.

Cal holds the clip in his lap, spinning it in his hands as he waits for the basket.

PASTOR

Reconciliation should be at the heart  
of everything we do in the Lord.

Cal watches Pastor, his glazed eyes showing a momentary spark.

PASTOR

When it comes to giving, we should  
always give joyously.

Barry continues glancing at the money clip as he hurries the basket to the next row of parishioners.

PASTOR

But, if we are neglecting  
reconciliation, then our gift means  
nothing to God. He is more interested  
in our principals than He is in our  
gifts.

Tom takes up the basket on his side and passes it off to the person in the back row of seats.

Barry stands anxiously at the last row, trying not to hover directly over the man with the cash.

PASTOR  
That means if you have any unresolved  
issues with someone else, anything  
at all ...

The basket comes toward Cal whose eyes begin tearing.

PASTOR  
Then you should first reconcile the  
issue before you give your gift to  
God.

The person next to Cal tries to pass him the basket, but he  
continues staring unmoving at the Pastor.

PASTOR  
No gift will ever make up for us  
neglecting our relationship with God  
or with others.

Cal still doesn't respond.

Barry leans down and whispers.

BARRY  
Sir, I need the basket.

Cal sighs, slips the money back into his pocket, and then  
passes the basket to Barry.

A flash of annoyance fills Barry's eyes as he smugly takes  
the basket from him.

Cal gets up and walks out.

Barry eyes him all the way. He takes the second basket and  
leads the other two ushers into a separate room in the back.

#### **INT. CHURCH BACK ROOM - LATER**

The ushers sort and count the money and checks.

BARRY  
The guy was ready to drop in a serious  
wad of cash. I think Pastor spooked  
him with all that reconciliation  
talk.

RANDALL  
Yeah, well, the Pastor's not as  
concerned about money as you are.

BARRY  
Maybe we could find the guy and invite  
him to come back.

TOM  
To help him, of course.

BARRY  
He drops in the money, I'll help him  
all he wants.

Tom shakes his head in disapproval.

#### **INT. HOTEL HALL - DAY**

The man trods to a door where a "Do Not Disturb" sign hangs.  
He uses the keycard to unlock the door.

#### **INT. HOTEL ROOM**

He enters, the door closing behind him. He moves to the  
unmade bed and falls flat upon his back.

He closes his eyes with a deep sigh.

PASTOR (V.O.)  
... first reconcile the issue before  
you give your gift to God ...

He shakes his head and opens his eyes.

He reaches into his right pants pocket and pulls out a  
handcrafted twine string of blue beads, looking at it  
tenderly.

#### **FLASHBACK**

#### **EXT. PARK - DAY**

CRYSTAL RIVERS, cute little 9 year old girl, fashionable  
jacket and hat, sits on a park bench next to ...

Cal, clean, hair cut, shaven, professionally dressed with  
the same blue button-up shirt, black pants, and dress shoes,  
all of which are fresh and new.

CRYSTAL  
I made you a present, Dad.

She reaches into her pocket and produces a handcrafted twine  
string of blue beads.

**BACK TO HOTEL ROOM**

He puts his head into his hands.

**EXT. STREET DOWNTOWN - LATER**

Cal moves down the street, the buzz of activity around him more like a faded dream than reality.

**FLASHBACK****INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY**

Cal carries Crystal, both dressed as before, in where ...

SONYA RIVERS, late thirties female, dressed expensively and professionally, waits by the bedside.

SONYA

That was a long time to be out.

Cal ignores her and tenderly lays Crystal on the bed. He takes off her jacket and then removes the hat which reveals her bald head.

Crystal closes her eyes in weariness.

SONYA

No more park trips for you I think.

CRYSTAL

I'm OK. Just a little tired.

NURSE enters.

NURSE

Hi, Crystal.

Crystal groans in annoyance.

**BACK TO STREET**

The man continues trudging along.

Just then, Tom, driving on the road, sees him, and pulls to the man's side of the street. He unrolls the window.

TOM

Hi.

The man stops at the window.

CAL  
Yeah?

TOM  
I saw you at church yesterday. You left early, so I just wanted to make sure everything was alright.

The man looks down.

CAL  
I'm good.

TOM  
Can I give you a ride?

CAL  
No.

TOM  
It's not a problem at all.

The man looks down the street where he had been heading and then at his clothing.

TOM  
C'mon, get in.

The man slowly moves to the passenger side and enters. Tom pulls the car back into traffic.

#### **INT. TOM'S CAR**

Tom glances at his guest.

TOM  
So, where we going?

CAL  
Crescent Street.

TOM  
That's a long walk.

CAL  
Were you following me?

TOM  
No, but I was looking for you.

CAL  
Why?

TOM  
Just want to help. If you need  
anything, let me know.

Cal says nothing.

**EXT. CAL'S HOUSE - DAY**

Tom pulls to a stop in front of the small mansion.

Cal exits.

CAL  
Thanks.

Cal moves to the front door as Tom drives away. Cal pulls a key from his pocket, unlocks the door, and enters.

**INT. CAL'S HOUSE CRYSTAL'S ROOM**

Cal enters and looks around in bittersweet memory.

The bed is neatly made with a colorful "girly" bedspread. A big poster of a singing star hangs above the headboard.

Photos of Cal, Crystal, and Sonya (both bald and not bald) populate the room.

On a long table on the side of the room, a number of colorful bead containers and rolls of twine are organized in a work station manner.

Cal pulls out his string of beads, holding them in tender memory.

**INT. CAL'S HOUSE KITCHEN**

Cal moves around the clean and well organized kitchen, still holding the beads. He notices a hand drawn picture on the refrigerator of "Daddy, Mommy, and Me".

**INT. CAL'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM**

He moves to the mantelpiece over the fireplace where a "happy" framed photo of him, Sonya, and Crystal resides. He tenderly picks it up, looking it over in deep reflection.

Suddenly, the sounds of the front door being unlocked and opened resound in the house.

Cal immediately places the picture back to its place and drops the beads into his pocket.

Just as he finishes, Sonya enters, carrying a cloth shopping bag. She sees him and jumps in startlement.

SONYA  
My goodness, Cal, you scared me!

CAL  
I'm sorry, Sonya. I'll leave.

SONYA  
No, no.

Sonya lays everything aside and rushes to hug him, but he backs away, causing her to stop short.

SONYA  
I'm just glad to see you.

CAL  
I just came, uh, well, I went to a church this morning and ...

SONYA  
And?

CAL  
I thought maybe ...  
(sighs in frustration)  
I don't know what I'm doing here.

He moves around her to head out.

SONYA  
Are you punishing me for something?

He stops.

CAL  
No.

SONYA  
Then come home.

CAL  
I, I can't.

SONYA  
Cal, I know you're hurting, but it's been over a year now. Let's at least talk about it.

He shakes his head and slowly exits.

The sound of the front door opening resounds.

SONYA  
(calling out)  
She was my daughter too, you know.

The door closes.

**EXT. CEMETERY - LATER**

Cal slowly makes his way to a grave.

The stone is marked "Crystal Rivers" and "The most beautiful nine year old in the world". Fresh vibrant flowers populate one side of the stone while faded and dried up flowers populate the other side.

He kneels at the grave on the dried up flowers' side.

**FLASHBACK**

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT**

Crystal, appearing extremely weak, lies in bed with tubes and wires attached all over. A single light shines upon her, darkness shrouding the area around her.

Next to her, Cal anxiously sits.

CRYSTAL  
Dad, do you believe in God?

Cal swallows hard, trying to stay strong for her.

CAL  
I pray for you every day. What do you think?

CRYSTAL  
Mom says you're mad at God.

CAL  
I'm not mad. I just think He needs to do more to help you.

Crystal sighs and takes his hand.

CRYSTAL  
Still got my beads?

Cal removes them from his right pants pocket, holding them aloft.

She looks steadily into his eyes.

CRYSTAL

Please don't forget me, Dad.

Cal tightens his grip on the beads, breaks out with a sob, and places his head upon her.

**BACK TO CEMETERY**

He leans over with his head upon the grave, beads in hand, sobbing.

**INT. REKINDLED LIFE CHURCH - MORNING**

Service again in session as Barry, Tom, and Randall wait at the back; Barry holding the collection baskets.

Cal walks in again and takes a seat in the same spot.

Barry turns to Tom, raising both eyebrows in celebration.

PASTOR

As we take up this morning's offering, we will continue to focus on Matthew five, twenty-three and twenty-four.

Barry rolls his eyes.

Soft, endearing, "offering" music starts in the background as the ushers move into position. The baskets are passed around.

PASTOR

Sometimes we think that reconciliation is the other person's responsibility. That maybe we feel like they owe us something. Even an apology. But Jesus didn't say to wait for the other person. He said go to them and get it right.

Cal reaches into his right pocket and pulls out the money clip of cash. He spins it in his hands.

PASTOR

Fact is, it's easier to throw money in the basket, or "do" something nice for someone, or pray for someone, than it is to make something right again.

Cal stares steadily at Pastor as the words seem to penetrate his soul, the surrounding images and sounds fading in comparison.

PASTOR

Do you really think you can "pay"  
God off to keep from doing what you  
need to do?

Tom passes the basket to the last row of seats.

PASTOR

Do you think God needs your money or  
even your time? Everything is already  
his, whether it's money, possessions,  
or people.

The basket comes toward Cal.

PASTOR

What God really wants is our love,  
faith, and trust. And maybe you  
don't have that or have lost it along  
the way. Just give it to Him right  
now ...

The person next to Cal gives him the basket, which he takes, trancelike, and holds in his lap.

PASTOR

... and let God heal your faith,  
heart, and life.

Cal trembles from the inner battle, tears forming.

After a struggling moment, he slowly reaches into his right pants pocket and pulls out the string of beads. He looks them over, gently and tenderly caressing them with his thumb.

He looks heavenward and begins to cry. He places the beads into the basket, giving the basket to Barry, who takes it with a huff of annoyance.

Tom watches Cal with a tender compassionate smile.

He slips the money back into his shirt pocket and puts his head in his hands, crying.

**EXT. CAL'S HOUSE - LATER**

Tom drops Cal off in front. Cal stands staring at the house for a moment before going to the door and ringing the bell.

Sonya opens it.

SONYA

Cal? Why didn't you just come in?

CAL

I, I know you've been hurting and  
I'm sorry I haven't been there for  
you. Will you forgive me?

Sonya hugs him and weeps with joy.

They hold each other for a moment.

Sonya leads him by the hand into the house, closing the door.