

Scene I - Beautiful Things

(MIKE, an older teenager, speaking to the audience)

MIKE: It's not easy being a kid these days. There's pressure to be popular, to be smart, to be funny. There's pressure from parents, and pressure from teachers. We try to make the right choices, but we're surrounded by people who are making the wrong ones. We're all just searching for who we really are and who we want to be. At the end of the day, we just want to feel loved and feel like we're part of something important. But sometimes we get so wrapped up in the things of this world that we forget what's important. Sometimes it's easy to let ourselves become hardened to this world. But God tells us "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." And that is our prayer. That God will fill us with a new spirit and use us for great and mighty things.

Scene II - Believe

(JESS and CAMILLE are carrying shopping bags and smoothies, laughing and talking. MIKE runs up behind them, carrying a purse.)

MIKE: Girls! I think one of you forgot your purse back at the smoothie shop!

JESS: Oh! My purse! *(takes purse from Mike)* Thank you so much. My mom would have *killed* me if I lost this purse. It cost a lot of money.

MIKE: Well, I don't know anything about purses, but I'm just glad I was able to catch up with you.

CAMILLE: *(matter-of-factly)* I don't know you. Do we go to school with you?

MIKE: No, I don't recognize either of you.

JESS: Then you don't go to school with us. Everyone at school knows us.

CAMILLE: It's true. We're kind of the queen bees. But...

JESS: Yeah, but...

MIKE: But...what?

CAMILLE: Well, it's starting to get totally exhausting trying to maintain all of this. The hair, the clothes, the matching purses for every outfit.

JESS: I love the matching purses!

CAMILLE: Okay, I do too.

JESS: But yeah. It's like...*(more serious)* sometimes I feel like people just like me for what I have, not who I am. Because none of this is the real me.

CAMILLE: It's just hard! I don't know if I believe that people would like the real me.

JESS: I like the real you, Camille.

CAMILLE: And I like the real you, Jess! But...we've got a reputation to maintain.

MIKE: Maybe it's time for you two to make some new friends. Here, let me give you a flyer for this youth group party at my church tonight. Pizza, games, and a bunch of other kids who value being real. Sounds like the perfect place for you, the *real* you, both of you, to fit in.

Scene III - City on Our Knees

(RYAN, a typical skater, walks in carrying a skateboard and putting headphones on, and shouts over his shoulder)

RYAN: Mom, okay! I hear you! I'm not going far! Leave me alone!

(Not looking where he's going, bumps into MIKE and starts to lose his balance.)

MIKE: *(Reaches hand out to steady RYAN)* Whoa! You okay?

RYAN: Hey man, sorry. Didn't mean to crash into you. Just trying to get as far as possible away from my nagging mom, you know?

MIKE: Oh sure, I hear you.

RYAN: *(Notices that MIKE is also carrying a skateboard)* You skate?

MIKE: Yeah. Well, a bit. It's a lot cheaper than gassing up my car, that's for sure. Plus, I just like that feeling of freedom you have when you're on a board, you know?

RYAN: Yeah, I get that. I've been skating since I was a little kid. It's something I can do by myself, so that's cool.

MIKE: You like being by yourself?

RYAN: *(nonchalantly)* Well...not really. But I've gotten used to it. My dad's in the Army, so we move around a lot. We just moved here a week ago. Mom's at home unpacking, trying to make it seem like home, but I know we'll just end up packing it all up again next time his orders change.

MIKE: Must be tough.

RYAN: *(shrugs)* Whatever. It's fine.

MIKE: Must be hard to make friends when you move around so much.

RYAN: *(hesitantly)* Honestly? That's the worst part. Every city is so different, and the kids at every school are different too. I'm so tired of being the new kid. I just wish I could show up at school and fit in right away. But, it doesn't happen. So I gave up.

MIKE: Well, I can't say that I blame you. It's never comfortable to be the new person in any situation. It's just human nature to want to be in familiar surroundings and not be thrown out of our comfort zone. But you know what I think?

RYAN: What?

MIKE: I think you're short-changing yourself. You seem like a good guy. And I'm sure other people will see that if you give them the chance. We all need friends. I know this city pretty well, and there are plenty of kids here who you could make friends with, no problem.

RYAN: Yeah? You really think so?

MIKE: I do. Listen, *(hands him a flyer)* stop by tonight and hang out with some kids your age. I think it will be easier to make friends than you think.

RYAN: Uhh...*(looks hesitantly at the flyer)*

MIKE: You gotta start sometime. Why not now?

Scene IV - Glorious Day

AARON: *(teenage grocery store employee)* Let me help you with those bags!

MIKE: *(struggling with an armful of grocery bags)* Thanks! I really thought I could carry all of those by myself. Apparently I overestimated my abilities! *(hands Aaron some bags)*

AARON: Oh, these are my favorite chips. Good choice.

MIKE: I know, I love them. They're like manna from heaven!

AARON: Barbeque flavored manna?

MIKE: *(chuckling)* Yeah, something like that.

(Aaron is hit with a sudden dizzy spell and stops to sit down.)

Hey...hey man, you okay?

AARON: Yes...I just need a minute. I'll be okay. *(takes deep breaths and pulls a pill bottle out of his apron)*

MIKE: Here, I bought some bottled water. Take this. *(hands Aaron a bottle)*

AARON: *(takes the pill)* Thanks. Appreciate it. *(starts to get up)*

MIKE: Why don't you just sit here for a few minutes? I'm not in a hurry.

AARON: Yeah? Okay, I think I will. Sorry about that. I'm usually fine, but sometimes it just hits me out of the blue.

MIKE: Can I ask what the pills are for?

AARON: Yeah, absolutely. I have a heart condition. I've had it for years. It's called cardiomyopathy.

MIKE: That's quite a mouthful.

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AARON: Yeah, tell me about it. It means that my heart muscles are weak. I take medicine to help, but sometimes I get really tired or dizzy when my heart isn't pumping enough blood.

MIKE: Do you mind if I ask you a question?

AARON: Shoot.

MIKE: Well...forgive me, but isn't this job a bit strenuous for someone with your...your condition?

AARON: No, it's okay. I work short shifts, and my doctor said it was fine as long as I don't push it too much. My managers know about my condition, so they understand when I need to take a break. I love my job, though. It feels good to help people, even if it's a small thing like carrying some groceries. I'm not about to sit at home and feel sorry for myself.

MIKE: I've gotta say, it seems like you have a really awesome attitude. It doesn't seem fair that someone so young has to deal with this sort of thing.

AARON: What's fair? Some kids have to deal with divorced parents. Some kids have to deal with being bullied. This is what I deal with. None of it is fair; it's just the hand we're dealt. And I choose to be thankful for all of the good in my life, and look forward to heaven where I'll have a new body and be able to do everything I always wanted to do. Did you know that the Bible says that if I trust in God, I can run and not grow tired, and I can walk and not faint? It'll happen one day. *(stands up and picks up the grocery bags)* I'm okay now. Thanks for the water.

MIKE: Of course. Thank *you*.

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AARON: For what?

MIKE: For the reminder. For your positive outlook. *(hands him a flyer)* If you don't have plans tonight, my church is throwing a party for youth. It would be great if you would come.

AARON: Thanks. If I'm feeling okay, I'll definitely try to come.

MIKE: *(smiling)* I think you'll have the strength.

Scene V - Enter This Temple

(GABBY sits by herself in a hospital waiting room, lost in thought, MIKE walks in with two cans of soda.)

MIKE: Want one?

GABBY: *(Lost in thought)* What?

MIKE: The vending machine gave me two sodas, so I've got an extra. It's yours if you want it.

GABBY: Yeah, okay. Sure. Thanks.

MIKE: It's Mike.

GABBY: Thanks Mike.

MIKE: Do you mind if I sit?

GABBY: *(motioning to the empty chairs)* Help yourself.

MIKE: Don't take this the wrong way, but you looked like you could use a little caffeine. Long day?

GABBY: Most of my days are long. I'm here all the time.

MIKE: Do you mind if I ask why?

GABBY: *(Big sigh)* My mom has cancer.

MIKE: Oh, wow. I'm really sorry. That must be incredibly hard.

GABBY: It is. I do my best to help her by spending time with her, but...

MIKE: But what?

GABBY: I don't know. I guess I just feel helpless. Like I wish I could do more for her.

MIKE: I'm sure that you being here means more to her than you imagine. It's got to help her feel less alone.

GABBY: But I want more than that. I want her to get better.

MIKE: Do you ever pray for that?

GABBY: Pray? No. That's not really something we do in our family. I don't even really know how.

MIKE: That's okay. Prayer is just a conversation with God. And the Bible tells us that if we pray, He will hear us. So even though you can't see God, you can believe that He sees you, hears you, and cares about your life. And your mother's life.

GABBY: So I can just...*talk* to God?

MIKE: Absolutely. I bet He can't wait to hear from you.

GABBY: Well, I guess I can try it. What can it hurt, right?

MIKE: I'll be praying that God brings a healing touch to your mom.

(Gabby bows her head to pray and Mike gets up to leave and leaves a flyer on the chair next to Gabby.)

GABBY: Dear God, hello, it's Gabby. I haven't really talked to you much before, but I'll try anything to get my mom to feel better. A healing touch...is that something you can give my mom? It's been really hard on her to be so sick. Can I please ask you for a miracle? Please make the cancer go away. Thanks for listening, God. Amen.

(Opens her eyes to find Mike gone, and notices the flyer on the chair and picks it up to read it.)

Scene VI - The Earth Is Yours

(CINDY is waiting at a beauty salon with messy hair and some magazines on her lap. A wig can be used for an actual haircut, or the haircut can be simulated.)

MIKE: Cindy? I'm ready for you. Come on back.

(CINDY sits in the chair at MIKE'S station.)

CINDY: *(Talking quickly)* Okay, I brought some pictures of what I think I want. I'm trying to decide between either getting long extensions and going really dark, or chopping it all off and getting a purple streak on the top. What do you think?

MIKE: *(Starts to brush out Cindy's hair)* I think...I think both of those options sound really extreme.

CINDY: Good. That's what I want. I need something extreme.

MIKE: Alrighty then. Well, since you can't decide, why don't you let me surprise you with that I think will look best?

CINDY: Um...

MIKE: Trust me. I'm a professional.

CINDY: Okay, let's do it! *(Mike spins her chair around away from the mirror and starts working with his comb and scissors.)*

MIKE: You're the third female client I've had today that wanted to totally change her look. There must be something in the water!

CINDY: You could say that.

MIKE: Oh?

CINDY: *(shyly)* Well...there's this boy at school.

MIKE: Now it's all becoming clear...

CINDY: See, he's popular and into sports and only goes out with the pretty girls. I think he's a really nice guy, but he's never going to notice me unless I do something drastic. So I thought maybe a new 'do would catch his attention!

MIKE: There's nothing wrong with wanting to change your hair, but do you think you're not pretty enough as you are?

CINDY: *(disbelieving)* Of course I'm not! I have a weird nose, and my feet are too big, and I'm so pasty white. There are so many things I would change about myself if I could.

MIKE: I think everyone feels that way...but is there anything about yourself that you like? That you think makes you stand out from the crowd?

CINDY: Well...my smile, I guess. My mom always told me my smile could light up a room.

MIKE: Let's see it.

(CINDY flashes a fake smile)

That wasn't convincing at all!

CINDY: It doesn't matter. He's not going to like me just because of my smile.

MIKE: I think he should like you for everything you are, not for things you want to change about yourself. God made you perfect just as you are.

CINDY: *(Rolls her eyes)*. Yeah, my mom tells me that too.

MIKE: That's because it's true. God created every living thing with great care. Look at the flowers, the rivers, the trees. He put so much detail into

everything in nature. Don't you think that he put even more care into making his most precious creation - his children?

CINDY: Yeah, I guess so.

MIKE: *(gently)* God doesn't make mistakes. So maybe you wish your skin was a little darker or your feet were a little smaller, but God put you together carefully to make a beautiful daughter of creation. He loves you as you are.

CINDY: He does?

MIKE: Yes. He truly does. Now, are you ready to see your hair?

CINDY: *(Suddenly nervous)* Um...yeah. I think so.

(MIKE spins around the chair so CINDY can look in the mirror, and reveals that he did nothing drastic to her hair. He simply improved on what was already there without making her look like a different person.)

It's...it's still me!

MIKE: It's still you. I just helped your natural beauty come through.

CINDY: *(Gets up and hugs MIKE.)* Thank you. Thank you so much. For the haircut, and for helping me feel okay about being me. Now I need to find something to do tonight so I can show off my new 'do.

MIKE: I've got just the thing. *(Hands CINDY a flyer)*

Scene VII

BRETT: *(plops down with a loud sigh and tosses Bible to the side, frustrated.)* I'm so tired of being made fun of for bringing my Bible to school! Why can't people just leave me alone?

MIKE: Here, I think this is yours. *(hands BRETT the Bible)*

BRETT: Oh...I...I didn't know anyone was around. But...thanks.

MIKE: I heard you talking. For what it's worth, I don't think it's weird that you bring your Bible to school.

BRETT: *(hesitantly)* Yeah? Well...some kids do. Like today. I was minding my own business, reading my Bible while I ate my lunch. It's not like I was standing in the middle of the quad shouting Bible verses or anything. But then this group of kids who always give me a hard time walked up and snatched my Bible away. They were tossing it around and calling me names. I just get so sick of it!

MIKE: Kids can be really cruel sometimes, man. I'm sorry they did that to you.

BRETT: Yeah. It's okay. I'll get over it; I always do.

MIKE: Yeah? How do you get over it?

BRETT: I pray for them.

MIKE: *(Surprised)* You pray for them? I thought you were going to say that you put their yearbook pictures on punching bags and give 'em a mean right hook.

BRETT: *(laughing)* Don't think I haven't been tempted. No, but I always try to remember a verse from Matthew. It says, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." So I pray for them. Sometimes it isn't easy, but I know that God doesn't always call me to things that are easy. I have to rise above it and remember that God loves each one of them.

MIKE: That's a great attitude. You know, my church is having a party for the youth tonight. You should really come. I think you'd fit right in. *(hands him a flyer)*

Scene VIII - The Motions

(ANDY, a jock, stands alone in a park playing basketball.)

ANDY: *(talking to himself)* Okay Andy, focus. Think about what Coach said. Fake right, fake left, remember your footwork, fast hands, keep it close to the body, extend, and SHOOT! *(suddenly defeated)* Three points...the crowd goes wild. *(halfhearted)* An-dy! An-dy! *(Looks down at the ball and suddenly throws it to the side, frustrated, and falls to the ground and puts his head in his hands.)*

(MIKE enters)

What does it matter, anyway? What's the point?

MIKE: *(Walks up carrying the ball)* What's the point of what?

ANDY: Oh...hey, sorry man. Didn't mean to throw my ball at you.

MIKE: No problem, you didn't see me. It was a nice toss, though. You play?

ANDY: I do. Varsity. Been playing since I was a little kid.

MIKE: You must really love it then.

ANDY: I used to...

MIKE: Used to?

ANDY: I do love it. But I don't know...sometimes it just seems like all people know about me is that I'm a good basketball player. Like my whole identity is wrapped up in it.

MIKE: *(prodding)* So...is that what you meant before? "What's the point?"

ANDY: I guess so. I mean, I'm graduating soon, and I just don't feel ready.

MIKE: I think that's a pretty common feeling.

ANDY: Yeah. But...I feel like I've wasted so much time. Like I've just been going through the motions, doing whatever came easiest to me. But what does it *really* matter? I just get this feeling that there has to be more to life than this, you know?

MIKE: I do know. (*MIKE dribbles the basketball, clearly deep in thought.*) You sound like you're ready for your life to be radically changed. And I know a way you can do that.

ANDY: Look man, I think I said too much. I don't even know you. I'm sorry I said anything, okay?

MIKE: Friend, I just want to tell you how Jesus can change your life.

ANDY: Ah, I see. You're one of those Bible thumpers.

MIKE: Sure, I guess you can call me that. But I like to think of myself as someone whose life was transformed by the incredible mercy and love of God.

ANDY: (*still skeptical*) Transformed, huh?

MIKE: Transformed. And He can do the same for you. You talk about going through the motions; about just walking through life without a real purpose. You can find that purpose in Jesus. And the purpose is simple. You love Him, and you share His love with others.

ANDY: I mean, I know I need a purpose. But...Jesus? I just don't know if that's for me. No offense.

MIKE: None taken. But Jesus is for everyone. He loves you, Andy. Here, I want to invite you to a youth party at my church tonight. No pressure, just some kids hanging out. I think it would be a good first step.

ANDY: *(Face in the flyer, doesn't notice that MIKE is walking away.)* Youth party, huh? I don't have any plans tonight...I guess I could check it out. What have I got to lose, anyway? Hey...I never said my name was Andy. How did you - *(looks up to find MIKE gone.)*

Scene IX - Here For You

(HOLLY, the youth leader, is putting the final touches on the party at church while all of the kids that MIKE talked to start to arrive. They are nervous at first, but start talking to each other and loosening up.)

HOLLY: Welcome! Hi everyone! Come on in. Grab something to drink, make yourself at home. I'm glad you're all here!

BRETT: *(to Ryan)* Hey, nice board.

RYAN: Thanks! You skate?

BRETT: I used to. Haven't in a few years though.

RYAN: You could pick it up again, no problem. We should go riding sometime.

BRETT: Yeah! Let's do it.

ANDY: *(to Cindy)* Hey...I think you're in my Spanish class. What's your name again?

CINDY: *(excitedly)* Hola Andy! Um...I mean...my name is Cindy.

ANDY: Cindy. Usted tiene una bonita sonrisa, Cindy.

CINDY: What does that mean?

ANDY: That you have a beautiful smile.

AARON: *(to Gabby)* I've seen you before. Where have I seen you?

GABBY: *(jokingly)* You don't happen to hang out at the Community Hospital, do you?

AARON: Yeah, I'm there all the time. Wait a minute...3rd floor waiting room?

Yeah, I've seen you! I'm Aaron.

GABBY: I'm Gabby. Are you always there visiting someone too?

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AARON: No, I've got a heart condition. I have to go all the time for checkups. Who do you visit there?

GABBY: My mom. She has cancer. *(suddenly brightening)* She's usually pretty out of it, but this afternoon she said her pain was gone! It's like a miracle or something.

AARON: That's awesome. Well, maybe I'll see you in the cafeteria sometime. They have pretty good grilled cheese.

GABBY: I know, that's my favorite!

HOLLY: Okay everyone, can we gather over here for just a minute? This is such a great turnout! I just want to welcome you all. My name is Holly, and I'm the youth leader here. I wanted to throw a party for all of you and just give you some time to hang out and encourage one another and have some fun. There's no agenda, we're not going to have an intense Bible study with a quiz afterwards, we're just going to enjoy each other's company. God wants us all to live in community. We weren't meant to go through life alone, but I know that it's easy to feel alone at your age. But you are not alone. God loves you and cares for you, and he's put people on this earth to love and care for you as well. Let me pray for you.

Father, I thank you for this group of young people. I thank you that they all made the choice to be here tonight, and help them to understand that you have them here for a reason. Bind them together, God, and help them to be light in one another's lives. Pour Your love upon them and stir in

their hearts. We are here for You, Lord. May we never forget Your love for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

ALL: Amen.

HOLLY: Okay, party time! I've got board games, I've got basketballs, pizza and ice cream...hey, can I ask you guys a question?

ALL: *(various mumbles)* Yeah...sure...mmmhmm.

HOLLY: How did you hear about this party tonight? Seems like we have a lot of new people here.

ALL: Mike.

HOLLY: Who's Mike?

CAMILLE: This guy who goes to church here.

AARON: Yeah, I helped him with his groceries today.

CINDY: He's a really good hairstylist.

GABBY: I met him in the hospital.

ANDY: I met him on the basketball court.

HOLLY: Guys...I don't know anyone named Mike.

(Everyone looks around, confused. MIKE is revealed to the audience watching from afar, an angel. The kids shrug and move on and start the party.)

MIKE: *(from afar)* Thank you, Father. Thank you for the privilege of getting to know these great kids. Thank you for bringing all of them here tonight. It was fun spending a day here on Earth, but I'm ready to come home.

(Looks down at the kids) Be good to each other. See you all again someday...

Scene X - This is the Stuff

(LILY runs into the party out of breath, carrying piano books, homework, pom poms, and car keys.)

LILY: Holly! Hi! I'm here, sorry I'm late! *(As she runs in, she trips and falls and drops everything she was carrying.)*

(pacing, talking to no one in particular) Perfect. Just perfect! What a great way to end my day! I couldn't find my keys this morning, so I was late leaving the house, I practiced the wrong lesson all week so I was totally lost at piano, I thought my Chemistry study group was meeting at the Starbucks on Cedar, but they were across town at the Starbucks on Maple, and I got crushed at the bottom of the pyramid at cheer practice! This stuff just drives me CRAZY!

(LILY suddenly realizes that everyone has stopped what they were doing and are staring at her in silence.)

Oh. Uh...hi, everyone. I'm Lily. And I've had one of those days.

ALL: Hi Lily!

(JESS, CAMILLE, and HOLLY come over to help LILY pick up her mess.)

LILY: Thanks, guys. I'm such a mess!

HOLLY: It happens to the best of us!

JESS: Yeah, for sure. Like this morning, I couldn't find the earrings I wanted to wear!

CAMILLE: And my favorite shirt was dirty. I mean, hello! Tragedy.

HOLLY: You kids have a funny definition of tragedy!

LILY: I just hate feeling so out of control! I love to have everything planned out and know exactly what's coming next. So on days like this, I just feel totally off!

HOLLY: Sometimes God uses all of this *stuff* to teach us a lesson, you know. Maybe He wants you to know that as much as you plan and try to control things, sometimes He has other plans for your day.

LILY: You know, there was a homeless man at the Starbucks on Cedar. I asked him if he was hungry, and he said yes, so I bought him a sandwich and a cup of coffee. I guess that wouldn't have happened if I went to the right Starbucks, huh?

HOLLY: Exactly! God's plans are always better than our plans. Even if it seems inconvenient at times, He knows what He's doing.

LILY: I like that. I guess nothing that happened to me today was the end of the world, right? And I made it here tonight, and I've been looking forward to this all day.

HOLLY: And I'm so happy you're here. Now forget about all this stuff (*motioning to LILY'S pile of belongings*) and let's party!