

Raymond's Call and Growth Inspired by Matthew 4:18–20, Matthew 16:16–18, John 21:15–18, and 2 Peter 3:14–15, 18

A warm breeze drifted across the waterfront as Raymond locked up his small bait shop for the evening. The docks were quiet now, just the soft slap of waves and the distant hum of a passing boat. Fishing had always been his life. Predictable...Familiar...Safe. But lately, he felt a tug in his spirit he couldn't explain.

Flint, his longtime friend, leaned against the railing nearby, playing music on his guitar. April sat on a bench a few feet away, sketching the sunset in her notebook. The three of them had grown up together, but adulthood had scattered their paths until recently, when circumstances kept pulling them back to this same stretch of shoreline.



The Call — Inspired by Matthew 4:18–20

Raymond stared out at the water. "I don't know what's going on," he said quietly. "I feel like I'm supposed to be doing something more than this. Something...bigger."

Flint looked up. "Bigger than running the best bait shop on the coast?"

April closed her notebook. "What kind of 'more' are you talking about?"

Raymond hesitated. "I think I'm supposed to help people. Not just with fishing or gear. I mean really help them and guide them, encourage them, teach them. It sounds crazy."

April smiled gently. "It doesn't sound crazy. It sounds like purpose."

Flint shrugged. "If you're serious, then go for it. You've always had a way of drawing people in. Maybe it's time to cast a different kind of net."

Raymond laughed softly. "Yeah. Maybe it is."

And in that moment, he knew. He was being called to leave behind the life he'd always known and step into something unknown and more meaningful.



The Confession — Inspired by Matthew 16:16–18

Weeks later, the three friends sat around a firepit behind the shop. Raymond had been meeting with people in town, listening to their struggles, offering encouragement, and sharing the hope he'd found in his faith. Word was spreading.

Flint poked at the fire. "Ray, people are starting to look to you for answers. Doesn't that freak you out?"

Raymond nodded. "Every day."

April leaned forward. "Then why keep going at this pace?"

Raymond took a breath. "Because I believe Jesus is who He says He is. And if that's true, then everything changes. He's the foundation I'm building my life on, not the shop, not the docks, but Him."

Flint stared at him for a long moment. "You really mean that, don't you?"

"I do."

April smiled. "Then nothing can or will shake what you're building."

The Restoration — Inspired by John 21:15–18

Not long after, Raymond hit a wall. A misunderstanding with a few townspeople spiraled into harsh criticism online. He felt crushed, embarrassed, and ready to quit. One night, he returned to the docks alone, staring at the dark water.

April found him first. Flint arrived minutes later.

"You disappeared," April said softly.

Raymond shook his head. "I messed everything up. Maybe I wasn't meant to do any of this."

Flint stepped beside him. "Ray, look at us. Do you love what you're doing? Do you love the people you're helping?"

Raymond swallowed hard. "Yeah. I do."

"Then keep going," Flint said. "If you love them, you don't walk away. You keep showing up."

April nodded. "Failure doesn't disqualify you. It shapes you."

Raymond felt something settle in his chest like peace, steady and quiet. He wasn't done...not even close.



Moving A HEADD — Inspired by 2 Peter 3:14–15, 18

Months passed, and Raymond's small gatherings grew into a community. People came not because he was perfect, but because he was genuine. Flint helped organize events while April led small groups and creative workshops. Together, they built something grounded in grace, patience, and growth.

One evening, as they cleaned up after a community dinner, April said, "Ray, look around, isn't this beautiful?"

Flint grinned. "And it's only the beginning."

Raymond watched families laughing, friends praying together, strangers becoming neighbors. "I just want us to stay steady," he said. "To live with peace, to grow in grace, to keep learning."

April nudged him. "Then we will."

Flint added, "And when things get tough, we'll remind each other why we started."

Raymond smiled. "Yeah. All of us will keep growing."

The sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm glow over the gathering. It wasn't the life Raymond had planned, but it was the life he was called into. And with his friends beside him, he stepped forward with courage, purpose, and a heart anchored in grace.