

## The UNMEASURABLE TABLE inspired by Mark 2:18-28



The café on Maple Street never closed.

Not officially, anyway...

Raymond had discovered it on a restless Thursday night, when sleep wouldn't come and questions wouldn't leave. The sign flickered, "Pearl's Kitchen: Open When You Need It," like it understood something more than business hours.

Inside, the air smelled of coffee, cinnamon, and conversation.

That night, Raymond stepped in and found more than a place to sit.

### A Question About Fasting

April sat at the counter, tapping her fingers to the tune of "Silver and Gold," against a mug of tea. Flint leaned back beside her, playing his guitar, eyes sharp, always observing, trying to pick up the tune of "Silver and Gold." Bobby and Jimmy occupied a corner booth, whispering like they were discussing something serious-maybe they were contemplating their next fishing time.

Pearl, the owner, moved gracefully between them all, as if she were conducting an unseen orchestra.

Raymond slipped onto a stool.

"Late night?" Pearl asked, sliding a cup of coffee his way.

"Something like that," Raymond muttered.

Before he could settle in, April turned toward him.

"Maybe you can help settle something," she said. "We've been talking about discipline. About sacrifice. About doing things the *right* way."

Flint nodded. "Yeah. Some of us believe real faith means giving things up...fasting...structure...consistency."

Bobby chimed in, "Not sometimes because often it shows commitment."

Jimmy added, "It shows seriousness."

April leaned closer to Raymond. "But others," she gestured vaguely toward the room, "act like none of that matters."

Raymond paused because he had been wrestling with similar thoughts himself.

"What do you think?" she pressed.

Raymond rubbed his chin. "I think..." he hesitated, searching for words. "Maybe it depends on what you're focused on like the rules or the reason behind them."

Flint frowned. "Hey now, that sounds like a cop-out."

Before Raymond could respond, Pearl set down a plate between them. "Bread and butter, come to supper."

"There's a time for fasting," Pearl said calmly, "and a time for feasting."

April crossed her arms. "That's convenient..."

Pearl smiled, unfazed. "Imagine a wedding," she said. "Would the guests refuse to eat while the celebration is happening right in front of them?"

Jimmy shook his head slowly. "That wouldn't make sense."

"Exactly," Pearl said. "When something alive is happening-something joyful-you don't turn it into mourning."

Raymond felt something shift inside him.

Flint, however, wasn't satisfied. "So, you're saying discipline doesn't matter?"

"No," Pearl replied gently. "I'm saying it has its time. But forcing it into the wrong moment...it breaks something."

Raymond stared at the bread.

There it was again, that feeling of a conversation was about more than food.



### **Old Ways and New Life**

A silence fell over the group, heavy but not uncomfortable.

Then Bobby spoke. “But traditions exist for a reason. You can’t just throw them away.”

Raymond nodded slowly. “That’s true.”

“And you can’t mix everything together either,” Bobby continued. “New ideas and old systems just cause chaos.”

Pearl chuckled softly. “You’re right about one thing.”

Everyone looked at her.

“You can’t patch a new piece of fabric onto an old, worn-out garment,” she said. “It’ll just tear worse.”

Flint raised an eyebrow. “So, what’s the alternative because I don’t mind mixing garments?”

Pearl leaned against the counter. “You don’t force something new into something that can’t hold it. You make space for it.”

Raymond felt those words echo in his chest.

Make space for it.

April looked skeptical, “So, everything old is just... useless?”

“No,” Pearl said. “The old had its purpose because it carried people as far as it could. However, when something new comes-something living-you don’t trap it inside what can’t grow.”

Jimmy leaned forward, “What happens if you do?”

Pearl met his gaze, “You lose both.”

Raymond swallowed hard!

He suddenly realized how much of his life had been spent trying to fit new hope into old patterns that couldn't hold it. Forcing change into walls that refused to stretch like the things he had done that the younger don't do anymore.

He hesitantly shared, "Maybe that's why everything kept breaking because the way I lived my Christian life didn't compare to the way the new Christians."

### **Walking Through the Wrong Field**

A week later, Raymond and the group found themselves walking together through a narrow stretch of city green space—a community garden that locals casually referred to as “the front street field.”

It wasn't much just rows of crops bordered by worn pathways, but people respected it.

Mostly...

As they walked, Jimmy reached out absentmindedly, plucking a few grains from a stalk and rolling them between his fingers.

Flint immediately stiffened, “You shouldn't be doing that.”

Jimmy blinked, “Doing what?”

“Taking from the field,” Flint said. “There are rules.”

“It's just a few grains,” Jimmy argued.

“Rules are rules,” Flint insisted. “There are proper ways to behave.”

Raymond watched the tension rise again; the same kind as in the café.

April looked to Raymond this time, “What do *you* think?”

Raymond exhaled slowly.

“I think...” He hesitated. “I think sometimes we forget why the rules were made in the first place.”

Flint frowned. “That's dangerous thinking.”

“Is it?” Raymond asked softly. “Or is it honest?”

Bobby folded his arms. “So, rules don’t matter now?”

“No,” Raymond said quickly. “They matter, but maybe they’re meant to serve something bigger—not replace it.”

Jimmy stopped walking, “Like what?”

Raymond looked at the crops, then back at his friends.

“Like people,” he said. “Like life and real needs.”

Pearl, who had been walking quietly behind them, stepped forward.

“The front street field wasn’t created to trap people,” she said. “People were given it to live. This field has a history.”

Flint shook his head, “That’s not how structure works.”

Pearl’s voice was steady. “Structure without compassion becomes a cage.”

A long silence followed.

### **Raymond’s Realization**

Later that evening, Raymond sat alone outside Pearl’s Kitchen.

The city hummed around him, but his thoughts were louder.

He had spent years trying to earn something; approval, peace, and purpose by doing everything “right.”

But somehow, it had left him empty.

And now, here was a different perspective:

- That joy had its time
- That new life couldn’t be forced into old limitations
- That rules were meant to serve and not suffocate them

Raymond whispered to himself, “What if I’ve been measuring everything backward?”

The café door creaked open, and Pearl stepped out and sat beside him.

“You’re thinking too deeply,” she said.

Raymond chuckled softly. “More like unraveling.”

“That’s how it starts,” Pearl replied.

He turned to her, “How do you know when you’re doing it right?”

She shook her head gently, “It’s not about doing it perfectly, but it’s about understanding what matters most.”

“And what is that?”

Pearl smiled, her eyes reflecting something timeless.

“Life,” she said. “Not just following rules, but living in a way that restores, not restricts.”

Raymond nodded slowly...

For the first time in a long time, the weight he carried felt lighter.



### **A New Kind of Freedom**

The next time Raymond walked into Pearl’s Kitchen, something had changed.

Not the place.

Not the people.

Him.

April was laughing... Flint was still skeptical, but quieter. Bobby and Jimmy were debating something else entirely... Pearl moved as she always had with a steady and calm presence.

Raymond sat down, breathed in deeply, and smiled.

“Coffee?” Pearl asked.

“Yeah,” he said. “But... leave some room for the bread.”

Pearl grinned.

“Now you’re learning.”

## Moving A HEADD

And for Raymond, the rules were no longer chains...but tools!

The old no longer trapped him.

And the new could finally grow.