

## “Raymond’s Birthday Table”



Inspired by Acts 10:9–15, 30–35 and Galatians 3:28–29

Raymond’s birthday cookout was already in full swing by the time Flint, Jimmy, and Bobby arrived. The backyard smelled like charcoal, sweet glaze, and the unmistakable aroma of Bobby’s “experimental” hot wings.

Raymond stood at the grill, flipping burgers with the confidence of a man who believed his apron *‘King of the Grill’* was a divine calling.

“About time you three showed up,” Raymond said, grinning. “I was starting to think you bailed on my big day.”

Flint clapped him on the shoulder. “Miss your birthday? Not a chance.”

Jimmy held up a gift bag. “We brought presents, and Bobby brought... well, whatever that is.”

Bobby lifted a foil pan proudly. “Wings that will change your life!”

Raymond raised an eyebrow. “Last time they changed my digestive system.”

Everyone laughed.

## A Vision at the Grill

As the guys settled in, Raymond stepped aside for a moment, staring at the sizzling food. The heat shimmered in the air, and for a second, just a second he felt the world go quiet.

He blinked.

Before him appeared a strange vision: a massive picnic table descending from the sky, covered with every kind of food imaginable: barbecue ribs, sushi, fried chicken, vegan bowls, empanadas, curry, brisket, tofu skewers, and dishes he couldn’t even name.

A voice echoed in his mind:

“Raymond, get up. Eat!”

Raymond shook his head. “I...I can’t eat all that. Some of this stuff doesn’t even go together.”

The voice replied:

“Do not call anything unclean that I have made clean.”

Then the vision faded, leaving only the grill’s smoke curling upward.

Raymond exhaled. “Okay... that was new.”



### A Guest Arrives

A little later, as the group joked around the patio table, a car pulled up. Out stepped a man none of them recognized. He was mid-40s, neatly dressed, different race, holding a small wrapped box.

“Uh... Ray?” Jimmy whispered. “You expecting someone else?”

Raymond frowned. “Not that I know of.”

The man approached with a warm smile. “Are you Raymond?”

“Yeah,” Raymond said cautiously.

“My name’s Emmitt. I know this is strange, but... I felt like I needed to come. I met your aunt last week at the community center. She told me about how you bring people together. I’ve been praying for direction, and today I felt like God told me to show up here.”

The guys exchanged glances.

Emmitt continued, “I hope I’m not intruding. I brought a small gift.”

Raymond felt a deep chill of comfort and recognition. “No, you’re not intruding. Actually... I think you’re supposed to be here.”

### Breaking Barriers

They invited Emmitt to sit. At first, the group was a little awkward as Flint was quiet, Jimmy kept overexplaining jokes, and Bobby offered Emmitt a wing with the seriousness of a peace treaty.

But Emmet fit in quickly. He laughed easily, listened deeply, and shared stories of his own struggles and stories that mirrored theirs more than any of them expected. He shared a chilling story of how God protected his 40 acres of land during a time that others tried to trick him into giving it away. He said the challenge now is for his descendants to know how important it is for them to honor what God allowed him to leave for them.

At one point, Emmet said softly, “You know, I used to think God only worked with certain kinds of people. People who looked like me, talked like me, believed like me. But today... I’m realizing God doesn’t play favorites.”

Raymond nodded slowly. “Funny you say that. I think God’s been trying to tell me the same thing.”

Flint leaned back. “Man, look at us. Different backgrounds, different stories, different everything... but sitting at the same table.”

Jimmy raised his soda can. “Galatians says it best: there’s no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female. We’re all one.”

Bobby added, “And apparently no ‘clean’ or ‘unclean’ foods either, because Raymond’s vision just approved my wings.”

Everyone burst out laughing.



### Moving A HEADD

As the sun dipped low, Raymond stood and tapped his glass.

“Alright, listen up. I know birthdays are supposed to be about getting older, but today... I feel like I woke up. God showed me something. That table I saw that was full of all kinds of food...that was us. People from everywhere, all different, all welcome.”

He looked around at his friends and at Emmet, who now felt like he’d been part of the group for years.

“God doesn’t divide people. We do! But today, I’m choosing to see everyone the way God sees them.”

Flint raised his cup. “To Raymond’s revelation.”

Jimmy added, "To new friends."

Bobby grinned. "To wings that are officially holy."

Emmit smiled, eyes warm. "To a God who welcomes everyone."

They clinked their cups together.

And in that backyard, under string lights and a sky turning gold, Raymond felt something deeper than celebration.

He felt unity.

He felt purpose.

He felt the truth of the Scriptures come alive.