

POEMS & PRAYERS

MATTHEW
McCONAUGHEY

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *GREENLIGHTS*

Also by Matthew McConaughey

Greenlights

POEMS
&
PRAYERS

**MATTHEW
McCONAUGHEY**



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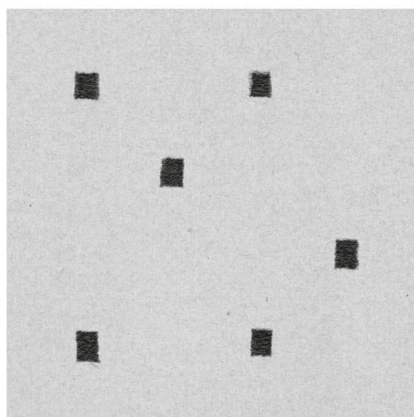
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Dedicated to the original dream, belief.

INTRODUCTION

To make song of the spoken word and music of the melody of life.

To put rhyme to the rhythm of the hands of time.

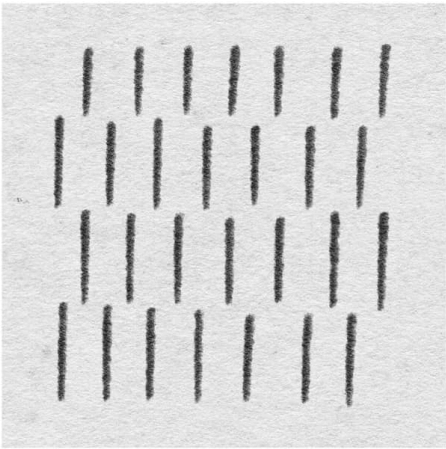
“It is [a poet’s] privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet’s voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.”

—William Faulkner

“To give voice to a language of the soul that encourages a like response from others.”

—Daily Word, July 13, 1996

it's all a poem,
if the letters in the alphabet are in a certain order.



I'VE ALWAYS RELIED ON LOGIC TO MAKE SENSE OF MYSELF
AND THE WORLD.

A prescriptionist at heart, I've always looked to reason to find the rhyme, the practical to get to the mystical, the choreography to find the dance, the proof to get to the truth, and reality to get to the dream. I've always believed that art emulates life, not the other way around.

I've been finding that tougher to do lately.

Seems to me the *facts* have become unreliably overrated.

So many of us today are out to prove that the truth is just an outdated nostalgic notion, that honesty, along with being correct and *right*, is now a deluded currency in our cultural economy. With an epidemic of half-cocked logic and illusions being sold as sound conclusions, it's more than hard to know what to believe in; it's hard to believe.

But I don't want to quit believing, and I don't want to stop believing *in...* humanity, you, myself, our potential.

I'm not ready to concede that entertainment and misinformation are now our garden of knowledge. That lies are just *what we tell each other*, especially ourselves. That trust is no longer the coin of the realm. That doubt's worth more than hope. That there's no difference between dreams and illusions.

I'm not ready for my conscience to retreat. I'm not ready to accept that reality's not enough.

In our age of politics, AI, plastic surgery, and high-frequency fix-it-in-post deepfake deceptions, I often find myself walking away from all the *knowledge* and *reality* more confused, more frustrated, and less well-advised than I was before I consumed it.

As a people, we don't seem to be perceiving properly, which means we are not desiring properly, which means we aren't understanding properly, and as long as we don't understand properly, we're not going to act properly.

Like most all of us, I'm trying to navigate and adapt as shrewdly as I can to our changing times. To understand where I fit in, where I don't, define what I stand for, and what I won't. But I find myself increasingly tempted to just *settle* for the false and profane as acceptable signs of our times.

Should I maintain a beginner's mind and continue to seek the magic in life when the facts deny reason to do so?

How do I stave off the cynics' disease and still remain a hopeful skeptic?

Are we hoping to survive or surviving to hope?

Maybe that's the point.

To admit that evil is necessary, and choose to rise above it—or not.

To admit the ugly facts and untruths all around and inside us, and *still* believe.

I think that is the point.

As an optimist and a believer, I'm a man of strong spirit and great faith, but if it's belief we seek, let's admit it: we're not going to find it looking to the evidence.

So, enough with the academic and mathematic equations that aren't adding up. I think it's time for us to flip the script on what's historically been our means of making sense, and instead open our aperture to enchantment and look to faith, belief, and dreams for our reality.

Let's sing more than we might make sense, believe in more than the world can conclude, get more impressed with the wow instead of the how, let inspiration interrupt our appointments, dream our way to reality, serve some soul food to our hungry heads, put proof on the shelf for a season, and rhyme our way to reason. Forget logic, certainty, owning, or making a start-up company of it; let's go beyond what we can merely imagine, and believe, in the poetry of life.

MUSICAL BRIDGES FROM THE MUNDANE,
POEMS ARE A SATURDAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
WEEK.
THEY ILLUMINATE BELIEF,

INVITING NEW WAYS TO SEEK.
POEMS ARE SONGS OF ROMANCE,
WITH OURSELVES, OTHERS, SPACE, PLACE, AND
TIME.
HYMNS OF HOLY LANGUAGE,
ANGELIC DITTIES OF THE DIVINE,
POEMS ARE ALSO PRAYERS,
THAT RHYME.

For me, **prayer** is a time to reset, to catch my breath, and get a spiritual yawn of acceptance and surrender before my call to action. I pray as a means of staying involved in my life and the life of those I love and care for. Prayer anchors me but doesn't hold me down, giving me a more stable floor from which to fly from. As a proclivity to imitate the divine, the high-mindedness of prayer guides us to a place of intentional surrender that promises more than permission, but freedom. Prayer can also be a scream, a plea, a question, an expression of pain and longing, or a therapeutic means of facing a monster within us.

The origin of prayer is based on **worship**, where and when we have the humility to bend low and bow, to raise our heart above our head, so we can listen to the wisdom of the sacred within us. But prayer isn't solely sequestered to ceremony in the synagogues, churches, and meccas of the world. Prayer may also come in the form of meditation, taking a walk to clear your mind, stargazing to feel the humility of awe, creating art, making love, writing, even laughter. All of these practices can be a form of prayer because they're each a means of revival—of the heart, mind, and the human spirit.

Prayer is **paying attention**. In a world that constantly consumes our thoughts but distracts us from tending to our spirit, prayer gives our soul a chance to catch up with our pathologically busy minds, providing us with the contentment of self-awareness that gives us enough hope to admit that we actually do have the ability to live our life. In times of chaos, prayer **restores order**, and regardless of the higher power you're praying to, a

committed belief in our continued improvement is how we first restore order in ourselves.

In a society that suffers from the illusion that privation and possessions equal *progress*, prayer promotes what I believe is a more genuine definition of the word: the development of human potential to become a broadcaster and receiver of values. Because prayer intentionally aligns us with what we value most, the practice of prayer is **progress**.

The ultimate goal of prayer is to align our earthly ambitions to be in accordance with Divinity's Law. This means believing in more than who we are, but rather in who we can be. Through the inherent tests and approvals of our highest order, prayer helps us discover what we are here to do in this life. And when we can live more in sync with our higher power's will? We've found what is theological code for our **purpose**.

More love affair than mandate, prayer is devotion more than responsibility. Devoid of the false idols of our superstitions, prayer is a moral yearning to our own elevated conscience. The pattern and practice of prayer starts as a secret, then becomes a conscious light on the path that shows us the way to becoming our more competent and true selves.

Personally, I begin my prayers with gratitude.

I smile upon my blessings.

I try to humble my selfish desires.

I remember that in God's economy, service serves me.

I pray for the guidance to do all that I can as a husband and father for the mental, physical, and spiritual health of my family.

Then I take a scroll down the Rolodex of my memory's lane and take inventory of all those I love and care for in my life, until I see them with my mind's eye at a time when they were most themselves.

Not happiest or most proud, not saddest or most reflective.

But when they were no one else but themselves and their light shone brightest.

When they were in their own state of Grace, satisfied and content.

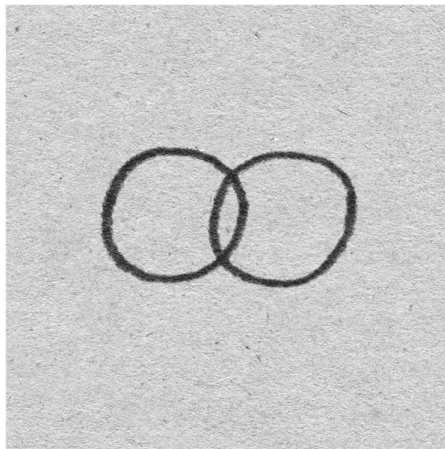
That's when I lock in on this image of them in my mind, and pray for *that* in them, in perpetuity.

Next comes what is often the hardest part, trying to see myself the same way. But I pray until I do, rolling through the frames of my own past until a true image of myself becomes clear.

Then I concentrate on that likeness, embrace it, thank it, and open up to letting it fill me.

Then I say, amen.

LIKE TWO HANDS IN WORSHIP
POEMS AND PRAYERS INTERLACE,
DANCING WITH OUR SOUL IN SONG,
TO THE MUSIC WE MUST FACE.
I WRITE POETRY BECAUSE I BELIEVE LIFE RHYMES.
FOR MORE MEANING IS WHY I PRAY,
AND WHEN THE RHYME MATTERS AND THE MEANING'S IN
VERSE,
IT'S A HEAVEN-SENT PARLAY.



My prayers are my poems
are my prayers.

And the following is four decades of poems
and prayers I've written since I was
eighteen, back when I started reading
Byron in the bathtub in Australia.