Collection of Poems and Song Lyrics

Stop Traveler

By Tommie Gipson

Copyright © 2021 Tommie Gipson

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 9798524655417

CONTENTS

Introduction
Chapters:

1. Stop Traveler
2. My Heart
3. Tinaya Marie
4. Sad Song
5. Happiness of Knowledge
6. IT
7. Society's Fall
8. Matched Imperfections
9. Gentle Magic
10. Your Laugh
11. Life Goes On
12. The Seed
13. New Life
14. Song Lyrics

Appendix
Afterward

Introduction

The following is a collection of poems written in the late nineteen seventies, near the age of twenty. Following each poem, I share the inspiration for the poem (if available) as well as a few comments after reading them forty years later.

The last chapter includes lyrics from mostly gospel songs written from 2001 - 2006.

Tommie Gipson 2021

Dedicated to Mary Kathleen,
the love of my life.

Chapter 1

Siste Viator
(Stop Traveler)

As a child I was told erie stories with a fear of hell

But now that I've grown up, I've a spooky story of my own to tell.

Tis a tale of a young lass in search of her mind.

She wanders aimlessly with great hopes to find

That long ago forgotten innocent thing she called herself,

And she'll look, seek, and die without any help.

She heeds the advice of her friends, they know what's best.

She tells herself she understands just like the rest.

She listens intently to what she should do.

And listens to lies she pretends to be true.

But lying in bed at night she asks why.

The absence of death brings tears to her eyes.

Her mind spins around in her head,

She’s so confused from what they have said.

There is something missing, she thinks in the night.

But when the sun comes up, she feels they are right.

It's a silly game she’s played with no end,

In truth she’s alone without a friend.

NO! NO! No more, she screams.

There's no more hope, no hope in dreams.

She’ll go away, there’s nothing else to do.

She runs and runs - away not to.

Leaving, running, it's all behind,

But was it worse than what she will find?

The sky has grown dark and she is cold

From the brisk wind but she must be bold.

She runs aimlessly without stopping for rest,

Into the woods with a numbness in her chest.

It is so hard to continue and not die.

She stumbles over a log because tears blurr her eyes.

Her eyes wander up a tree to its top.

And the hurt, the pain, the cold suddenly stop.

She and the tree are one and the same.

The tree has lost its need for rain.

It is dead, dead yet it towers majestically so,

And the magic of the tree through her body flows.

She looks beyond the tree and the sky that has cleared,

Into the universe, herself, the things she has feared.

She is no longer afraid, her soul is at rest.

She's not sure what's happening, it may be death.

Notes and comments about this poem:

This is the last poem written in the nineteen seventies. It originated between the time of first meeting Kathy, my wife of 37 years (we met in January 1979 - see chapter 2) and finishing Northwest FL State College (in December 1979). I stopped writing poems after this until one final poem was written in 1983, the year our daughter, Justinn was born.

My best friend Devona was the main inspiration for many of the poems I wrote, including this one. We were the same age (only one day apart). We sat next to each other at our high school graduation. We worked for the same company, sharing a 30 mile commute each day for years.

We were at an age of testing our adult wings while simultaneously trying to understand this new world of freedom and responsibilities we were thrust into, far away from our high school cliques and routines.

Devona often fought inner demons during a time when I was finding a sense of inner peace from going to the beach or just being in nature. I learned that by turning my back on traditional cultural expectations, I could release much of my anxiety and stress. And when surrounding myself with the beauty and variety in nature, I often saw things from a much different perspective than the one seen from within the four walls of the concrete jungle.

I remember wanting to wave a magic wand over Devona and her life to fix everything and make all of her problems disappear.

I wanted Devona to know, she did not need to look for happiness in different places. I was afraid she would search for the rest of her life for “something” that was missing to make her happy. I asked, would she search her entire life, only to reach the end before finding rest? I thought that “something” was near her the entire time and wanted her to understand that.

Nature helped me to see past the demands from the people around me. Spending time at the beach or taking a walk in the woods allowed me to see the true beauty of life by letting go of the idea that I had to conform to other people’s expectations.

I tried to share my renewed love for life with Devona with little success. Many times she was in such a dark place that everything tasted bitter to her, including nature.

Our friendship grew and I found poetry an excellent way to release some of the passions within, as well as a way to express my desire for Devona to find peace and rest by letting the outward self die allowing the true inward self a chance to fly. This desire gave birth to the above poem.

Chapter 2

My Heart

My heart buried deep in its lonely grave
Laid waiting for you within its cave.
The fools of love before and around me spoke
In poems of love, twas but a joke.

My passion of love were but cravings for
Mere mortal women and my heart didn't soar
Until that moment of truth when you captured me.
My very soul was yours, and now I am thee.

Twas not the sweet surrender for my heart,
For there was no fight, I was yours from the start.
With your presence my eyes creed deceit
At this goddess in the form of a human being.

My heart lost ten years and sang like a child's,
And time and people became gentle and mild.
This is why I have lived, awaiting you.
Now it is your desire that says what I'll do.

Tis ravishing beauty, limitless in power like yours
That mesmerized ancient man and caused him to war.
It is not just beauty to look upon and see.
But beauty I feel and becomes the essence of me.

For once was I free, with a soul of mine own,
I had control, but let it be known,
That you the goddess, innocently crept in the night
And took my very life, transfixed by your sight.

Notes and comments about this poem:

This poem was written in January of 1979 on a Monday morning in the parking lot of Northwest FL State College. I had been to the First Baptist Church of Woodlawn the night before and met the most amazing, beautiful redhead I had ever seen in my life. She was married and had an almost two year old son. She was visiting her aunt in Freeport, FL.

Being married she was completely off limits to me. Plus she lived in Orlando (400 miles away). Even though I knew I had seen my dream girl, I also knew she was not to be mine. I was determined to join the Peace Corps and live my life alone.

I wrote this poem sitting in the college parking lot hoping to capture how strongly seeing Kathy that first time impacted me. Since she was married, I was resigned to the idea of never getting married and trying to be content with that thought, knowing I had seen the girl of my dreams.

Years later, Kathy came back into my life and was no longer married. When talking to my grandfather about my upcoming marriage to Kathy (he was a pastor and performed our wedding ceremony), I told him about this poem and how strongly I felt about Kathy from the very first day I saw her.

Over ten years later, my Grandfather pulled me to the side one day and said, “You know Redhead (his

nickname for me), when you first told me about Kathy and that she already had two boys, I thought this was going to be a mistake. But you insisted she was the right one for you. Well, after getting to know her, I have to agree with you. You could not have picked a better wife".

I have reread this poem often over the years and of course, I shared it with Kathy once we were married. For me it was truly - love at first sight.

Chapter 3

Tinaya Marie

My life was like a sun scorched crop,
On the edge of a pit, about to drop,
But a saving rain came on the last day,
It stayed long enough to give life and then went away.

Many times we listen without hearing.
Many times we look without seeing.
But a peaceful new life has been given me.
She taught me to love life, my Tinaya Marie.

My life is simple and happy you see,
Because I learned about life from Tinaya Marie.
After she taught me to be satisfied,
Her job was done, and then she died.

If life has a purpose or meaning,
If we should be living rather than dreaming,
Then there is one whose job is well done,
By Tinaya Marie, gone like a setting sun.

Notes and comments about this poem:

This poem was written shortly after the death of my three month old niece in February 1978. She was my first niece and my older sister, Terri's, first child, as well as my parent's first grandchild. Tia (Tinaya Marie) captured the hearts of our entire family.

Tia came into my life during a time of depression and melancholy. I remember the first time I held her and how I felt a flood of hope and promise not just for her and for me, but also for all of humanity.

I thought, as long as new life was able to come into the world, there would always be hope for better days.

Over the years I have been reminded of the hope found in Tia's birth. Tia's short life was not lived in vain, if for no other reason than to constantly remind us there is always hope.

Chapter 4

Sad Song

A sad song is sung by pounding waves

meeting an unconscious and helpless shore.

Many a troubled heart by this song has been saved.

As further we go, we need it more.

I listen silently to the meaningful song.

Its sound touches my contented soul.

It tells of tales from years that are gone,

And sings the more when we are cold.

Civilizations begin, and they will end.

All can hear the message on the way.

The song to many will be a friend.

It will endure forever and a day.

Notes and comments about this poem:

This is a favorite poem written sometime between 1977 and 1979. I was always drawn to the beach and listening to the sounds of ocean waves. It seemed to soothe something deep inside every time I sat and listened.

I recall going to the beach one night. I was alone and stood at the edge of the water looking out over the vastness of the Gulf of Mexico.

Above was a dark, but clear sky with glistening stars and no moon. Looking at the sky, I wondered if there were more stars in the universe or more grains of sand on the beach. Either way I felt small and humbled.

Driving home that night, the thought hit me that not only was the ocean vast and huge, our planet was so much bigger. That led to thinking how small our planet was when compared to our solar system, the Milky Way, and the universe.

Our planet and the universe have been around for millions and billions of years, I thought, and would continue to exist long after I am gone. There was something comforting in becoming aware of the vastness of both space and … time.

Those thoughts made me feel small, yet … hopeful and found expression by writing this poem.

Chapter 5

Happiness of Knowledge

The sea never runs dry and the ice never melts.

The light will never stop, and I have never felt

The uncertainty of change except in the change.

I am anchored to what I know, this I won't exchange.

Exchange for knowing what I know is not true,

For how would I live if my sky were not blue?

If life ceases to stay within what I know as real,

Then where lies happiness, how can my soul feel?

Life in my world offers ripened fruit on trees.

I have but to pluck it and I become free.

Free with my own will and the choices that are mine,

Given to me by myself to pick the grape from the vine.

Tis a noble aspiration to seek truth in its purest state,

But after a search without a find, how will you debate

My happiness of knowledge with the knowledge of happiness?

For which would be the better life, destructive nonetheless?

Notes and comments about this poem:

A popular phrase I frequently use and share is - “it is what it is”. The notion that there is a bedrock reality that exists regardless of how I describe it was planted in my brain long ago.

As I prodded the boundaries of adult life and tested unknown waters, I often retreated back to the certainty of this bedrock reality of - what is.

It became a refuge for me when I became confused or even frightened once I discovered how little control I actually had over events.

I wrote this poem to remind myself that I could always find happiness, if not comfort in knowing there were some things I could always control. So even when life throws a curveball my direction and it seems like I cannot do anything about it, I can.

No matter how much things might change, there are things I can control such as my attitude and perspective. Having this control always gives me freedom to accept change, regardless of how drastic it might appear.

One of the points I tried to make when writing my first book, “Life In Harmony” in 2018 was how important it is for me to find a balance in life between my natural curiosity to understand and accepting there are many things I cannot know. I learned to balance learning new things with accepting that life will always have mysteries

and that is okay.

As much as I love learning and reading and absorbing the latest and greatest discoveries, if I do not take time to smell the roses, I am depriving myself of enjoying this present moment.

I think this poem reflects the point I was trying to make in “Life In Harmony” about finding balance. The poem helped remind me that we always have a refuge in being able to retreat to nature and to the bedrock reality of what is. There I can find peace and contentment even in the midst of constant change.

Chapter 6

IT

I reach the top of the hill with the sun against my back.

My astonished face looks down, as the lightning cracks.

IT has the young babe in IT's grasp, trapped in IT's iron jaws,

And I know I must save the babe from IT's inexorable claws.

I rush down the hillside amid the eternal storm.

IT ignores my mundane bribes and clings to the newborn.

I feel helpless against IT, then with a flash I see

The cold gleaming steel of the blade that will aid me.

I pluck the protruding knife from the stone,

And thrust the knife into IT until I reach bone.

The baby screams in pain as IT's jaws clamp tighter still,

And once, twice, three times I stab with intentions to kill.

I feel the crunch of skin through the handle of the blade.

IT releases the child and my heroism fades.

Have I killed IT? If I have what have I killed? I ask.

Then IT's head turns and IT removes IT's mask.

No! No! I cry out in fear, followed by a surrendering sigh.

My frightened body stares in disbelief as I look into IT's eyes.

Lightning bolts from the eyes, carrying life's key.

My eyes burnt, I see, I haven't killed IT, IT has killed me!

Notes and comments about this poem:

This poem was written when I was around the age of 18 or 19. I was living with my mom and going to the local community college. One day mom was at work and I was home with my younger siblings. My youngest sister, Tracy, had a new kitten that was probably a couple of months old. One of the other kids had caught a snapping turtle and had it in a cardboard box on the carport floor.

My sister had been warned to keep her kitten away from the turtle but on this day the kitten's curiosity got the best of it as it went closer to the creature in the box.

I was in my room doing school work when my sister began yelling and crying. I went to the carport to investigate and immediately knew we had a problem.

I was the only adult at home and felt it was my duty to take charge and save the young kitten who was screeching in pain as the turtle's jaws clamped down on the kitten's front left ankle.

I did not know what to do (other than throw a towel over the kitten to keep it from scratching and biting me). It was lashing out at anything with as much ferociousness as it could manage. I first tried splashing water on the turtle's face (I really had no clue what to do). I knew snapping turtles were like bulldogs and once they clamp down on something they hold on tight.

Splashing water did not work so I tried using pliers to squeeze the turtle's mouth open. It was a stubborn turtle and refused to let go.

I did not want to hurt the turtle, but the kitten's pain and cries were getting worse. My sister was becoming more frantic and I was beginning to get desperate.

When I could not stand it any longer and no other solution was forthcoming I went into the kitchen and returned with … a knife.

I was against killing and violence. I consider all life to be sacred. But my desperation was strong enough to suggest I could just "prick" the turtle with the knife it would release the kitten.

The poem speaks for itself as to the final outcome.

Not only did the turtle die that day, so did a sliver of myself. All I can say is, the kitten was free.

I will add, my job title when I retired was Manager of IT. There are times when I smile at the irony. And I will also mention this was titled and written six years before Stephen King wrote his book "It".

Chapter 7

Society's Fall

A breath of salt air with lingering clouds above.

A view from a mountain overlooking a world of

life, love, and happiness for me.

I once was blind, but now I see.

Some struggle to live, in vain.

They become depressed during the rain.

They are down and out with a want to die.

Out of their mouth comes why, why, why?

I sit in the universe, at peace with myself.

Nothing is important, but I'd still like to help.

It's hard to understand because they must explain,

If they would not ask why, they'd enjoy the rain.

I'm happy and content with this thing called life.

I have rid myself of society's strife.

Society has given fears and conflicts for all.

My love for life allowed society's fall.

Notes and comments about this poem:

I wore a big social chip on my shoulder in 1977 and 1978. I had a deep love for all people, but not our culture and social norms. I was a big fan of Kurt Vonnegut and Tom Robbins. I read all of their books, often applauding their accurate social commentary.

As I read this poem now, I admire the young wisdom expressed by a very young and naive author.

There is a timeless truth expressed in contrasting our insatiable curiosity to ask why with our yearning to balance our lives and be at peace with both ourselves and nature.

Over forty years have passed since I penned these words but I still avoid asking why and often chose to be in nature, … enjoying the rain.

Chapter 8

Matched Imperfections

With his power of thought

And his power of money,

With himself he has fought

through a timeless journey.

The golden drops of sunshine

descend upon the trees.

Beauty man says is "mine",

But left alone would live in harmony.

Without man the Earth might be perfect.

No one to cause it's pollution.

And man the eternal reject.

Unwilling, matched imperfections.

Notes and comments about this poem:

I have to smile as I read the line ".. live in harmony". My first book "Life In Harmony" was published in 2018, decades after I wrote the above words.

I have far more admiration for humanity and even our culture than I did when this was written. I would no longer think of humans as the "eternal reject". Even with our many faults we have achieved some brilliant successes.

However, my love for our planet and for nature remains just as strong today as it did then.

I am happy to say humanity is far friendlier to our environment today than it was in the seventies.

Chapter 9

Gentle Magic

A frigid damp mist surrounds me.

No room for warmth in this coldness I must flee.

In a gloomy darkness hiding the secrets of the cave

With its death filled boulders, I won't be saved.

Alone am I now, I have died,

From the soporific lariat of my suicide.

Vainly I call for help, then stop and cry

As a tear drifts placidly from my eye.

I think I am falling again,

Never to return, never to win.

The lascivious contorted faces of my hell

Remind me of the world from which I fell.

My mind has left me, I don't know where I am.

Another boulder falls with the sound of bam!

But alas far below I can see

An escape. Or is my mind alluding me?

No, I will survive if I dare.

It's a gentle magic reaching from the air.

Notes and comments about this poem:

This poem was written during a time of depression. I have always been a big fan of Judy Garland. Her unique and powerful voice captured me when I first heard “Over The Rainbow” while watching “The Wizard of Oz” as a six year old child.

At the age of 18, I bought my first Judy Garland record album and I fell completely in love with her. My mother began buying Judy Garland albums as Christmas or birthday gifts for me.

I found a couple of books about Judy and eagerly read about her life. Life was not kind to her. Some people were not kind to her. I remember having a sense of admiration that she was brave enough to commit suicide (although the official account calls it an accidental overdose). In my depressed state, I had respect and admiration for her, even though she died - way too young.

I respect people who are honest with themselves. Sometimes it is hard to admit we do not like the way our lives are going. I thought, it is better to do something about it rather than pretending everything is okay or just going through the motions of life.

I now view the death of Judy Garland not as a suicide and especially not as something to be admired, but rather for what her death was - tragic.

I was in my own dark space when I wrote this poem. Listening to Judy's music, I found what I considered a kindred soul.

But no matter how pessimistic I found myself when depressed, there always seemed to be a hope somewhere over the rainbow, even if it was only a hope in … magic.

Chapter 10

Your Laugh

Many feelings have been told in rhyme

And to borrow from others words is no crime

But when hearing you laugh I but would

Say what is true your laugh makes me feel good

The sounds of birds bring in the spring

To them it's a new year of which they sing

A beautiful sound of which there are many

But your laugh it means more than any

Your laugh brings happiness to a room full of sorrow

I happily await the next tomorrow

To hear your laugh so care-free

Gives life the only meaning to me

Notes and comments about this poem:

I chose to include the above poem in this collection to honor my bride. Kathy had a chat room on the internet the last ten years of her life. She made many online friends there and they would cut up and have fun and talk late into the night with lots of laughter.

I sometimes joined her on weekends, but always went to bed early when I had to work the next day.

There are many nights when I went to bed early and I woke up at midnight or later from hearing her deep wine induced belly laughs. I often chuckled and would roll over and go back to sleep with … a big smile on my face. I treasure the memories of her laughter.

This was written when I began noticing my mom laughed a lot. Every memory I have of my mom has her laughing or smiling. This poem was written before I ever met Kathy, but when I read it recently, I felt I had to include it in this collection in memory of both my mom and Kathy.

Chapter 11

Life Goes On

The sky is gray, the wind is blowing

But she is tired, in her eyes it's showing.

She sleeps so soundly, her troubles gone

The rain comes down and life goes on.

What is life? Who am I? Tell me please, tell me why.

But the eyelids close and cover her eyes

She sleeps so soundly, her troubles gone

The rain comes down and life goes on.

It's not so bad when weariness wins.

But when she wakes she's troubled again.

She slept so soundly, her troubles gone

The rain has stopped, but life goes on.

Notes and comments about this poem:

I worked as a land surveyor in Crestview, FL in 1977. A girl I graduated with (Devona, see Chapter 1) also worked for the same company (in the office). We carpooled and became best friends during the thirty mile commute.

One day she was waiting for me to come back to the office so we could go home. She was in a dark place emotionally, after a hard jolt from an ex boyfriend. When I arrived at the office, she was peacefully sleeping, far away from the tears she had that morning.

I wrote this poem a couple of days later.

Chapter 12

The Seed

There was once a seed that drifted with the wind.

It had no strength, from nature itself to defend.

The seed was cast among the thorns where it all but died.

But a river changed its course and with the river the seed did ride.

The movement of the river was just too much to fight.

The seed surrendered to the river thinking the river right.

But then one day with a sky of gray, the river angered so.

And threw the seed upon the land so the seed might grow.

The seed and land, hand and hand, gave to each other life.

The seed took root and thus anchored down threw off all strife.

Still so small yet growing tall the seed did branches sprout.

And I walked along one quiet day and to me the tree did shout.

It told a tale about life to me

And bade me walk by the sea.

To the sea we did soar and the shout became a roar.

I covered my ears so as not to hear

But the strength of the wind carried off my fear.

And then I touched her lips.

Felt the face with finger tips.

It was new, this world of fantasy

Where self is lost and me becomes we.

And we laid down in the sand

I felt silence through our hands.

Notes and comments about this poem:

As I gathered old poems for this book, most of them were in an old three ring notebook. They were typed and placed in the notebook years ago and for the most part forgotten about.

I dug the old notebook out of a closet to see what I might want to include in this book. Some of the poems, including this one, had probably not been read since I first typed them and put them in the notebook.

As I read it for the first time in many years, I searched my memory for what inspired it. I recall a change within me after my first niece Tinaya Marie was born (see Chapter 3). Tia helped me to have a new attitude and love for life that remained even after her death.

I was always something of an introvert and far too shy to ask a girl out on a date. But that did not stop me from dreaming of what it would be like to meet someone, fall in love, share hugs, and hold hands. I thought romance would be something along the lines of merging my own identity with that of my lover.

This poem was written after Tia's death and before I saw Kathy for the first time (see Chapter 2). I was trying to capture the joy I felt in life (despite Tia's death) and merge it with the purest form of love, the love between two people - that for me was still fantasy.

I have to smile and note the reference to “silence” in the last line, especially in lieu of my daily practice of sitting in silence.

I now place a very high value on silence. I make a daily effort to become quiet and listen for that still small voice within.

Chapter 13

New Life

Distorted shadows stretching across a silent motionless river

In twilight, with a dying wind bringing a final shiver

To a life that has laid down for the promising night,

For a peaceful rest without struggle, without fight.

A gradual darkness enveloping the sunless sky.

And no more thinking and wondering why.

The life that once knew itself in the light of day

Is now in the serenity of night, slowly fading away.

Everything has fallen into a rhythm like the sound of waves.

No more decisions, for in the dark the sleeping life is a slave.

The soul emerging from confinement is free at last.

To unite with all life and the moon doth a shadow cast.

My soul lies here
In a new form of life,
With no more fears,
I've conquered all strife.

I am everything that was,
Everything that is is me.
The past, I am the cause,
I will never cease to be.

Notes and comments about this poem:

This is the last poem I wrote. It was written sometime in 1983 near the time when our daughter, Justinn was born.

Many of my poems invoke darkness and self torment from a time in my life where cynicism often ruled.

With the birth of our daughter, I had a sense of … new life. Not just for her, but for me as well. The light of life, of my new life, engulfed my thoughts and emotions.

I felt it was “fitting” to say goodbye to the darkness that crept into some of my earlier poems. I decided to write this final poem as a way to express this new light in my life after Justinn’s birth.

As I reread this poem 38 years later, it struck me that the theme of this poem, or at least some of the emotions I was trying to capture revolve around freedom and new beginnings.

Having children (and now grandchildren) has a way of altering our perspective on life.

Some people are prisoners, captive to many chains in life: emotional, financial, relationship related, work related, or even chained to their past.

Often the chains that bind us are self-inflicted. I wrote this poem as a way to say goodbye to my old chains and to cast them off and become free.

Even with the sad and unexpected loss of my beautiful bride in 2019 when she was only 62 years old, I read these words and still feel the deep joy of life.

We are much more than we realize. Life is an incredible gift, an amazing journey.

Once we are released from our confinements and we lay down the things that restrict us, a new and genuine sense of life emerges spreading wings of freedom, taking us to loftier heights.

Chapter 14

Song Lyrics

In 2002, Kathy and I began building houses for Habitat For Humanity. We volunteered nearly every Saturday from 2002 until 2014. We helped build 25 new houses during that time.

It was also in this time period when I became the music leader at Calvary Baptist Church. I liked to sing while working on Habitat houses. Attending church on a regular basis and singing while building houses, opened the door for me to try and write my own songs.

The first song I wrote was called “Forgiven” (2001). People that heard it liked it enough to encourage me to continue writing more songs.

The second song I wrote was called “No Matter What”. I had the honor of being surprised while visiting my friend, Wayne in PA and having him and his daughters sing this song at their church. Needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised and grateful.

All of the following songs were written in a five year period. I wrote the words and music and often played and sang them at local churches.

Music has always had a special place in my heart, especially gospel music. My maternal grandmother was a music leader and instilled a deep respect for gospel

music in me.

Music can reach places within us that words alone never can.

Here are the lyrics to some of my favorite songs written between the years 2001 to 2006:

The Message
http://hosttg.com/mp3/tlc/message.mp3
January 4, 2004

He had a message - he loved to tell
And he shared with everyone
His voice was gentle - and inviting
Wandering souls found a home

He spoke of peace - and and understanding
A simple life with love for all

He's nothing special - people said
He's just a plain working man
But lives were changed - by his message
though he's gone the message stands

He spoke of peace - and and understanding
A simple life with love for all

I heard the message - long ago
And my life is not the same
Now I'm guided - by a Light
That will always show the way.

He spoke of peace - and forgiveness
A simple life with love for all

He spoke of peace - and and understanding
A simple life with love for all

The One

I was tired of all the talk - tired of empty words
I was ready to give up - until the day I heard

You can
Let your light be the one - even if its the last
Let your light shine so bright - others can see the path
You can
Let your light be the one - even if your alone
It can reach out to all - the light of God is strong

People search for hope - but often find despair
In darkness they're alone - and no one seems to care

You can
Let your light be the one - even if its the last
Let your light shine so bright - others can see the path

You can
Let your light be the one - even if your alone
It can reach out to all - the light of God is strong

I Thought My Life Was Over

I thought my life was going well - I thought I had it made
Then suddenly things changed so fast - I'd never be the same
I thought my life was over - oh how could I go on
And then I found I'd live again - I learned God's love is strong

In Jesus I found a hope - that has stood the test of time
No matter how my life may change - I'll have peace of mind
I thought my life was over - oh how could I go on
And then I found I'd live again - I learned God's love is strong

I can smile when life gets hard - Jesus is always near
In my mind I've been renewed - He is greater than my fear
I thought my life was over - oh how could I go on
And then I found I'd live again - I learned God's love is strong

This song was written the day when the space shuttle Columbia was destroyed in 2003. I often sang this in church while playing the piano. The words were comforting after Kathy died in 2019.

There's A Place

There's a place you can go There's a place you can stay
There's a place you can go There's a place you can stay
It's found in love - love's the answer - you can trust love - to know the way
There's a place you can go go in faith - go today

There's a light you can follow There's a light to light your way
There's a light you can follow There's a light to light your way
It's found in love - love's the answer - you can trust love - to know the way
There's a place you can go go in faith - go today

There's a voice you can hear in the silence He is near
There's a voice you can hear in the silence He is near
It's found in love - love's the answer - you can trust love - to know the way
There's a place you can go go in faith - go today

A Child of God
Sung to the tune of Danny Boy:

A child of God has gone to be with Jesus
There's no more pain or suffering for him
He's found sweet peace and entered in eternal rest
And there will stay and be forever blessed
He'll spend eternity with Jesus.
And with the loved ones who have gone before.
So don't be sad
He gave his heart to Jesus
A child of God by faith in Christ alone.

The above song was written and sung at Will Gaylord's funeral. My son, Marc sang it with me. Afterwards mom (who attended the funeral) asked me if I would sing it at her funeral. I told her I would try, but when the time came, I was an emotional wreck having lost Kathy just two weeks earlier and was not able to sing it for mom. I know she would understand.

Forgiven
http://hosttg.com/mp3/tlc/forgiven.mp3

You can struggle with all of your might - On your own you can do nothing right
Trust God's word and you will see - Jesus can make you free

Forgiven that's what I am -Forgiven by the blood of the lamb
Forgiven through nothing I've done - Forgiven by God's only Son

By God's grace I am saved - With Jesus I'll not be afraid
I'll let Him show me the way - And live by faith day after day

Forgiven that's what I am -Forgiven by the blood of the lamb
Forgiven through nothing I've done - Forgiven by God's only Son

I can do all things through Christ - Since Jesus came into my life
Love, joy and peace come from Him - But only when He lives within

Forgiven that's what I am -Forgiven by the blood of the lamb
Forgiven through nothing I've done - Forgiven by God's only Son

No Matter What
http://hosttg.com/mp3/tlc/no_matter.mp3

When life is hard, it seems unfair - We're alone and troubled and in despair
There's peace and rest from one who cares - Turn to Jesus, He's always there

No matter, no matter, no matter what - God loves me and you!
No matter, no matter, no matter what - His word is always true
No matter what may come your way - live by faith day by day.
No matter, no matter, no matter what - God loves me and you!

Often we're troubled and often we're sad - Things don't go the way we plan
Be silent, be still, He understands - He'll never leave you just take His hand!

No matter, no matter, no matter what - God loves me and you!
No matter, no matter, no matter what - His word is always true
No matter what may come your way - live by faith day by day.
No matter, no matter, no matter what - God loves me and you!

Gospel Blues
http://hosttg.com/mp3/tlc/gospel_blues.mp3
December 2003

Gotta climb this mountain
Gotta climb this mountain
Gotta climb this mountain
Gotta climb this mountain
Gotta climb this mountain
Gotta climb this mountain
To the other side

Gettin kind of tired
Gettin kind of tired
Gettin kind of tired
Gettin kind of tired
Gettin kind of tired
Gettin kind of tired
Lookin for some help

I know God is able
I know God is able
I know God is able
I know God is able
I know God is able
I know God is able
I've seen him work before

He does all things well
He does all things well
He does all things well

He does all things well
He does all things well
He does all things well
Ain't no other way

Everything's gonna work out
Everything's gonna work out
Everything's gonna work out
Everything's gonna work out
Everything's gonna work out
Everything's gonna work out
Just wait and see

I wrote this song and made a CD with me singing it and playing the guitar. I dedicated it to my sister Tracy and gave her the audio cd when she was going through some difficult times.

There were other songs written in the same time period that for various reasons I chose not to include in this collection.

I often still sing some of these songs (like “The Message”) on my daily bike rides or when doing household chores or yard work.

I am grateful to my son, Marc, for allowing me to record him singing “The Message” with me. We included this song on a CD we recorded as a gift to my Aunt Lorretta (she wanted some recordings of Marc and I singing gospel music).

I cannot give a good explanation for why I stopped writing songs. I enjoyed the creative spirit that gave birth to these songs.

Perhaps new births become milestones in my life marking turning points.

It was the birth of my first niece Tinaya Marie that inspired my first poem and the birth of my daughter Justinn Desiree’ that inspired the last poem. So it would only be fitting that the birth of my first granddaughter, Taylor, would inspire one of the last two songs that I wrote. The song is now dedicated to all of my grandchildren.

Below are the last two songs I wrote:

A Time
Written for Taylor
http://hosttg.com/mp3/tlc/a_time.mp3
June 18th, 2004

There's a time to be born and a time to die
A time to mourn and to cry.

There's a time to reap and a time to plant
A time for joy and to dance.

And you can know what time it is
When you can find what's true.

There's Truth in light and life and love
And this is the time for you.

There's a time for silence and a time to wait
For the still small voice that comes by faith.

There's a time to seek and a time to find
The Truth that stands the test of time.

And you can know what time it is
When you can find what's true.

There's Truth in light and life and love
And this is the time for you.

Can I Go Too
Written September 28, 2006 for Marc Thomas

When you told me you were taking ... a new road in life

You told me you had to leave a tangled maze of lies

You did not want to tell me, for the pain you would put me through

But I only had one question ... can I go too

Can I go with you in your new life

Can I be there with you, standing by your side

If the life you've been living must start anew

Then my only question is ... can I go too

You did not want to hurt me, but you could not stay

The time had come to find ... a better way

I listened to your words, your cries of despair

Quietly, I asked ... do you care

If I go with you in your new life

Can I be there with you, standing by your side

If the life you've been living must start anew

Then my only question is ... can I go too

Appendix

I did not write the following, but wanted to include them in this collection:

Messenger of Love

Haste, messenger of love, and fly
Unto the one that holds my heart,
And this reply unto her sigh,
Oh, tenderly impart;
"I know no mortal shrine but her.
And she no fonder worshiper."

Taken from a family Valentine card given in 1864.

My Aunt Dean gave me an old Valentine card from one of our ancestors. She knew how much it would mean to me because Kathy and I were married on Valentine's Day.

Aunt Dean and I both lost our spouse when we were 60 years old. Neither of us remarried and many times she and my great-grandmother Bessie (also a widower) have inspired me as I struggle with life without my bride.

I look at this card now and then and always think of both Kathy and Aunt Dean.

No Title

“I never knew the half myself, until you passed away.

But Oh, to live without you, as days and months go by.
To miss your shielding guidance, the approval of your eye!

To listen in the silence, for a voice I hear no more,
Or the echo of a footfall upon a soundless floor!
Ah, dearest, in that better home, I hope you may not know

The sorrow I am feeling, which you would pity so;
But oh! That I could tell you - perhaps the angels will -
How much, how much I loved you, and how I love you still.”

From my great grandmother, Bessie Ross Bailey - in memory of her late husband George who died in 1933 when Bessie was 44. Thank you for shining a light for me, Big Granny.

Around the same time that many of the previous songs were written, Marc and I were attending a local church and going to monthly gospel sings with my mother at different churches.

Marc and I often sang at these gatherings and he soon began writing his own songs. I felt it appropriate to include a couple of his songs here.

One of my favorite songs “Blind” was recorded by him and his sister, Justinn. I still listen to “Blind” regularly and love the song and the harmony.

Once a week, I play around a dozen songs on Kathy’s old family piano. One of them is a song Marc wrote called, “To Follow You”.

To Follow You
Written by Marc Gipson:

On this road that I must travel
I have a choice I have to make
To follow you, oh God
To live my life for you, oh God

To live my life for you, oh God
To do what you would do, my Lord
To walk with you on this journey
And to place my faith in my God unseen
Is to make a choice to follow you

It may be hard to follow Jesus
But just a prayer, a simple prayer
To you, oh God
Can change my life, and my heart

To live my life for you, oh God
To do what you would do, my Lord
To walk with you on this journey
And to place my faith in my God unseen
Is to make a choice to follow you

Walk With You Forever
March 2004 Written by Marc Gipson

I will always be with you
Though we're so far apart
And you can take my hand in your hand
Cause this journey's about to start
I will walk with you forever
On this road that never ends

Don't you know that I love you
Don't you know that I care
Don't you know that I'll be there
Through the pains that you bear
Where you go I will follow
I'll always be there, yes I'll be there

I can gaze into your eyes
For eternity and more
When I see your smiling face
I'm on heaven's golden shore
I will walk with you forever
On this road that never ends

Don't you know that I love you
Don't you know that I care
Don't you know that I'll be there
Through the pains that you bear
Where you go I will follow
I'll always be there, yes I'll be there

Blind
http://hosttg.com/mg/blind_mg.mp3
Written by Marc Gipson:

I can look into the stars
Or I can look beyond the mountains
I can gaze into the water,
Wade in all the oceans
But there's one thing that I know
In a world with such wonders
That I can look upon
I am blind

Open my eyes, to your love
Open my eyes to your mercy
Open my eyes to the grace that you gave to me
Open up my heart and let your spirit set me free
Oh, my God, let it be

In the world that I can see
In the world with so much beauty
That's taken by reality
That this world keeps throwing at me
In the world with such wonders
That I can look upon
That's why I'm blind

Open my eyes, to your love
Open my eyes to your mercy
Open my eyes to the grace that you gave to me
Open up my heart and let your spirit set me free
Oh, my God, let it be

Afterword

The title for this collection was taken from the first poem in Chapter 1. After selecting the poems for this book, I felt most of them reflected the theme from that first poem of not waiting until death comes before we find happiness and that being in nature can soothe the soul and quietly lift us to new heights.

We sometimes travel the world looking for something that is always within us, if we would just stop and notice.

I hope you enjoyed this collection of poems and songs.

If you would like to read my book “Life In Harmony” it is available on Amazon. Here is a link to a sample version of the book:

https://sites.google.com/view/life-in-harmony/home