

the fish and fowl and beast.
 But I craved knowledge to please my hungry will
 With moral freedom's deadly fruit,
 which plagues creation still.

Yet God loved humans, who strayed from Eden's path
 To wander—body, soul, and mind—
 beneath redemptive wrath.
 He set a Table with His own Beauty's Love,
 Inviting our return to feed
 on Wisdom from above.

Life's Tree has furnished this Food of mystery,
 Renourishing the wayward self
 back to its destiny.
 Christ is the Nurture, restoring Eden's bliss:
 His flesh and blood, the holy Meal
 that sinners mustn't miss.

— David L. Hatton, 5/9/2015

19-045-1-Why I Write Poetry

poetry, prophecy, inspiration, song, melody

Psa 45:1

My heart overflowed with a good theme, and I began to write.

INTRODUCTION: (*Let me read you part of a familiar poem...*)

—**Psa 45:1-11 (NLT)**, ¹Beautiful words stir my heart. I will recite a lovely poem about the king, for my tongue is like the pen of a skillful poet. ²You are the most handsome of all. Gracious words stream from your lips. God himself has blessed you forever. ³Put on your sword, O mighty warrior! You are so glorious, so majestic! ⁴In your majesty, ride out to victory, defending truth, humility, and justice. Go forth to perform awe-inspiring deeds! ⁵Your arrows are sharp, piercing your enemies' hearts. The nations fall beneath your feet. ⁶Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. You rule with a scepter of justice. ⁷You love justice and hate evil. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else. ⁸Myrrh, aloes, and cassia perfume your robes. In ivory palaces the music of strings entertains you. ⁹Kings' daughters are among your noble women. At your right side stands the queen, wearing jewelry of finest gold from Ophir! ¹⁰Listen to me, O royal daughter; take to heart what I say. Forget your people and your family far away. ¹¹For your royal husband delights in your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.

—*Scripture* is full of poetry; Adam was the first poet: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (ESV). *Why this rhythmical use of language?* God built it into us. *The Psalms* are all poems, and *prophecies* often came *poetically*.

[The Prophet Habakkuk wrote some of the most eloquent poetry in the Bible.]

—Before I discovered what I wanted to do in life, I was *already a poet*.

A short explanation of **Why I Write Poetry** is summed up in **Psa 45:1**

(NKJV) My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. In other words, **my heart overflowed with a good theme, and I began to write...**

I. It Began on My Father's Lap...

A. My dad read to me from 2 books: the Bible & *101 Famous Poems*.

B. I was taught by him: “*The fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom. So son, pray to get the fear of the Lord so you'll grow up to be a smart man and not have to work so hard for a living.*”

C. But I caught from him his love for good poems. [I never got to hear all the poems in that book. He always went back to his favorites, until he learned them by heart. I was so proud of him one Father's Day at church when he quoted “**IF**” by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you

Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too;
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
 If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
 And treat those two impostors just the same;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
 If all men count with you, but none too much;
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

TRANS: That high esteem for poetry coupled with “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” produced in me what Psa 45:1 talks about: “*My heart overflowed... my tongue became the pen of a ready writer.*”

II. My Oldest Surviving Poem Is from Age 13, Why?

A. Two elements go into making a good poem: inspiration & skill...

1. *Inspiration* isn't just a *feeling* about an idea, but an *openness* to let that idea capture your heart and grow until it *overflows*.

prophesy [or write poetry]?

—Our human creativity doesn't end on earth (at least, not for Christians) but will continue in Heaven [another by Rudyard Kipling, “**L'Envoi**”— the title roughly means, “*the send-off*” and it was often used in reference to conclusions ... When Earth's last picture is painted and the tubes are twisted and dried, When the oldest colours have faded, and the youngest critic has died, We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it -- lie down for an aeon or two, Till the Master of All Good Workmen shall put us to work anew!

And those that were good shall be happy: they shall sit in a golden chair;
 They shall splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of comets' hair;
 They shall find real saints to draw from -- Magdalene, Peter, and Paul;
 They shall work for an age at a sitting and never be tired at all!

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
 And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
 But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,
 Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They Are!

—But I want to conclude with another poem which I wrote a year ago. Later on this week in camp we'll be having Communion, and this poem might help get you prepared for it; it's about the Communion Table in relationship to what happened in Eden; it's called “***Eden's Table***”....

I lived with nature, and nature cherished me.
 The Maker meant for us to dance
 throughout eternity.
 But I loved a wisdom nature didn't know.
 She only knew Who gave her life
 and caused her form to grow.

I too sought beauty, though beauty was my home.
 In hot pursuit of pretty things,
 I left her side to roam.
 But, in my searching, I lost my deeper sight.
 As on I chased elusive dreams,
 I stumbled in the night.

And I liked eating, so nature held a feast
 To strengthen me to serve and rule

C. *Short, well planned, carefully crafted poems can preach louder and longer* than sermons, yet *this poetic potential is ignored today.*

1. Poetry isn't perceived as a calling, when today's schools label it *passé*: just an *old-fashioned, obsolete* mode of writing.
2. As believers, we shouldn't be asking, "*Is poetry still in vogue?*" but "*Is the Original Poet behind the Bible still into using poetry, and is He calling me to be one of His poets?*"
3. I believe God still looks for willing hearts as channels of His *poetic-prophetic voice*, as young Samuel was when he cried out, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." [in CFO creatives, God inspired in me a *free verse* poem to express what I believe was His heart overflowing with a good theme: "**The Dance**" (*Poems Between Heaven and Hell*, p.66)

Three great pairs of loving hands Firmly grasped in joyous dance, Spreading brilliant, sparkling orbs Around a universe of void, Filling worlds with natures gems, Moving newly-fashioned minds With awe until they bow in praise!	And dwell upon their meager meals Of human wisdom's pride and boast. Break out, Three Dancers! Dear God dance! Hit the pew, on pulpits dance! Turn classrooms to a whirling reel, Melt hardened hearts with prancing fire To spread the flame throughout the world And shine to all, this tale to tell: The Three still live! The Three still dance! Come join them for eternity! — David L. Hatton, 7/30/1984]
Years go by..., the brilliance lasts; Yet creatures imaged from the Three Forget the awe, count commonplace The dazzling, artful universe	

CONCLUSION:

—Of course, I'm prejudiced. I think public schools never should have stopped making kids memorize classic poetry. The poems seen in this nation's daily newspapers never should have disappeared. Magazines, both secular and Christian, *never ought to have eliminated their poetry sections*. Today's pews should still be hearing good poems read from pulpits, as our grandparents heard in almost all sermon. Such modern *deficiencies* insure that each new generation is more poetry-illiterate.

—If God used poetry so effectively in the past, yet it's so neglected now, I think the culprit behind the neglect is obvious. Satan always tries to undermine God's strategies, but the devil is powerless against one Poem, "**The Perfect Poem**" (*Poems Between Darkness and Light*, p.54).

—Ultimately, the answer to **Why I Write Poetry** is Jesus, the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah!* And my answer echoes the words of Amos 3:8, The lion has roared— who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken— who can but

2. *Skill isn't just knowing the language rules but practicing how to weave words into a meaningful message in an ear-pleasing way.*

- B. My earliest poems were like *training for a sports event* until the day of performance on the field, or like *making sketches to prepare for a real painting*. (As my *skills in writing rules and tools* grew, I finally got the *courage to perform in the arena... to paint the image on canvas* and dare to unveil it for people to see my artwork.)

TRANS: ["A Christmas Thought" (*Poems Between Heaven and Hell*, p.13)]

When Christmas comes with Christmas trees And Christmas gifts and fine candies, I wonder what the Savior sighs As He stares down from Heaven's skies. // Not many people dare neglect To pay this day its due respect By the exchange of gifts in turn. But of the meaning, what concern? // A time for fun, a time for play, A jolly time is Christmas Day! Look at the gifts beneath the tree. A gift for me! A gift for me! // What happened years and years ago That we do honor this day so? // I think it's kept to give applause To some old man named Santa Claus. // No school next week, it's Christmas time, So class, let's sing the Christmas rhyme; "O'h hurry, hurry, Christmas Day! Please hurry, Santa, on your way!	Bring with you candy canes and toys For all the little girls and boys." // Oh, this wicked season's chills And Christmas cards and Christmas bills!// The party's still young, pal, don't leave. Have one more beer; it's Christmas Eve. // Yes, the memory of the Son, Who is the Christmas Holy One, Seems to have found a minor place Behind the mask of a Christmas face. // Tell us, Grandma, we want to know, At Christmas time, why does it snow? // Someone up in Heaven, my dears, Cries many sad, unhappy tears And as they fall, the cold world's air Freezes them all without a care. — David L. Hatton, 1963.]
--	---

III. **Poems don't always preach...** (as they did on my dad's lap.)

- A. The *heart can overflow merely with personal feelings*. [After my ER coworkers found I was a poet, two of them brought poems for me to evaluate. One was a *twin who'd just lost her sister*; the other, a *fellow going through divorce*. Both, with no poetic skill, let their grieving hearts overflow.] (Writing poetry can be *therapeutic*: a way not just to cope with pain, but to *externalize internal pain* on paper, so it can be looked at objectively, or shared with others, or turned into a tombstone.)
- B. Before I began sharing my poems, I loved Percy B. Shelley's quote: "A poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude

with sweet sounds.” (Unrequited love poems are common, and in high school my lonely heart poured out many I never kept, but I did preserve a humorous one that some of you young people might identify with: “**Hey, Cupid!**” (*Poems Between Heaven and Hell*, p.15).

Where is the stupid Cupid guy? I'd like to take his little neck And twist it all the way around His little bow; he's made a wreck Of me, that mischief-making runt. Three times I heard that silly "twang" And each time only me he hit. If I had my way, he would hang So high for all he's done to me. I'd stuff his arrows down his throat	And tie him up and gag his mouth And in a leaking, sinking boat I'd shove the rascal out to sea! But, I'd be gentle with the brat If only when he shot his bow His arrows wouldn't be aimed at Just me alone, but that he'd start To shoot into another heart, The one he made me set apart. — David L. Hatton, 1967
--	---

TRANS: Poems can let off emotional steam, but *they can also preach*. Before college, *godly wisdom* was starting to take hold of my poetic skills, and I left behind a sober message about true love in my high school's literary magazine: “**Love**” (*Poems Between Heaven and Hell*, p.16).

Vainly spent has been my time Dreaming wishes into rhyme, Hoping hopes of love. // Beauty inspires quick desires, Fascination's torch it fires; But, this is not love. // Neither body, tall and strong, Nor a bright face in the throng Constitute real love. // "Cestus" belts, to win love with, And Cupid's shafts are but myth, So, do not cause love. // Gazing eyes and lovely smile Merely last a little while: Give no sign of love. // But in friendship, love unknown,	Until small bonds are outgrown; Then begins real love. // Sharing happiness and pain In both drought and fortune's rain Is the trait of love. // Suffering the "self" to end For a dual-one to blend: This, in truth, is love. // Thence arises beauty's light, Shining into passion's night, Oh, what might has love! // Poor man, then, whose love is thrill Of sight and touch, for he will Never know true love. — David L. Hatton, 1968
--	--

IV. The Poetic Realm of Creativity Can Become a Calling...

A. There are many realms of human creativity where *inspiration* and *skill* merge: music, art, drama... but rather than list them, let me read about them: “**Creator**” (*Poems Between Darkness and Light*, p.59).

Someday you'll compose a song or sing one very well,
Feel a thrill of satisfaction in a tale you tell,

Draw a picture, paint a portrait, shape a lump of clay,
Plan and build a dream-house, act a part within a play,
Plant a lovely flower garden, set a gem in gold,
Cut and piece and sew an outfit new and sharp and bold,
Tinker to invent a gadget saving people time,
Write an essay or a story set in prose or rhyme,
And, while feeling fresh fulfilment where you have achieved
In the goal of each ambition by your mind conceived,
You will pause when all about you birds are singing, too,
Wind is whistling, stars are shining, everything you view
Whispers softly hints behind them of a happy Mind,
As if all that is around you stands both sealed and signed
By a Person, Great Designer, One you imitate
When you follow yearnings to be skillful and create.
— David L. Hatton, 2/22/1992

B. But the creative avenues that use words are *especially influential*:

1. Good words affirm life; bad words can destroy it— **Prov 18:21**, The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
2. Because of poetry's prophetic dimension, Satan seeks to raise up false poet-prophets while God seeks to raise up godly ones:

“**Worthy Poets**” (*Poems Between Birth and Resurrection*, p.76).

Those pretending to be poets, who are pranksters, pimps and pests, Are not poets, but are preachers preaching pride that pesters guests. // But a poet is a potter, throwing clay to carry jewels, Or a painter painting portraits, setting beauty free from fools. // Worthy poets serve as waiters for the God who gave them wit, Laying feasts upon the table where the wisdom-seekers sit. // They proclaim, as ancient prophets, from their visions in the night, Treasures lost within the darkness, guidance found within the light. // Amid politics and prattle, claiming what is right or wrong, Dare be still to sit and listen to the poets and their song. — David L. Hatton, 3/18/2008	<i>Here and Beyond</i> When words enfold clandestine thought And lips conceal a hidden heart, A rhythmic ruse is sometimes taught To ears attuned to verbal art. // Arranged by practiced wit and skill, A verse can reach into the mind And grab the reins, for good or ill, To guide or garble, loose or bind. // As painted lies may trick the gaze. So poor but pleasant lines, when heard, May lay a trap of moral maze For minds to miss the higher Word. // With eloquence in days of old, When seers sang false prophecy, They captured simple souls with bold Refrains enshrined in poetry. // Let all beware these phrases tooled By wayward tongues with measures bright. Prevent your will from being fooled: Immerse yourself in psalms of Light. — David L Hatton, 4/18/2016
--	--

[**Another poem**] as a warning against
“**False Poetry**” (to be in *Poems Between*