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It was 1995 when the Fort Worth Star-Telegram assigned Tim Madigan to write a profile of Fred Rogers. This fortuitous interview sparked a magnificent friendship between the two, one that would see both men through periods of grief as well as the hope of new beginnings. I'm Proud of You is the story of this friendship and of the enduring legacy left to us all by Fred Rogers.

Tim's career as a journalist was flourishing when he met Fred Rogers, but his personal life was a shambles. As Rogers welcomed Tim into his family, his church, and his life, Tim found an advisor who imparted a gentle but powerful perspective on spirituality, marriage, depression, and the nature of true friendship. With the television icon's loving and patient guidance, Tim eventually came to understand that his emotional troubles were rooted in a deep fear that his father had never truly been proud of him. Hence the mantra of the friendship between the two, the phrase Rogers used to conclude dozens of letters and e-mail messages to Tim: "I'm Proud of You." Tim's friendship with Rogers helped him to mend his relationship with his father and become a better husband and father himself, all the while marveling at how many simple pleasures he had overlooked throughout his life.

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From Reader Review I'm Proud of You: My Friendship with Fred Rogers for online ebook

Cynthia Egbert says

This wasn't perfectly written but I am not sure that a memoir such as this is really about the writing, it is about the purging and the cleansing and I found this to be a beautiful example of what the author needed. Like so many other, Mr. Rogers was a fixture in my life that made an impact and I loved hearing the ways that this gentle man reached out to those around him and I loved learning who Fred Rogers turned to for learning and strength. Of course there are a ton of quotes I loved in this one, I will share a few.

"Another time he wrote that he had discovered the South African word ubuntu, which means: 'I am because we are.' 'Isn't that lovely!' he said. 'My identity is such that it includes you. I would be a very different person without you.'"

"I started to look behind the things that people did and said: and little by little, concluded that Saint-Exupéry was absolutely right when he wrote in *The Little Prince*: What is essential is invisible to the eyes. So after a lot of sadness, I began a lifelong search for what is essential, what it is about my neighbor that doesn't meet the eye." -Fred Rogers

"You're ministering to me, Tim," he said. "By listening you minister to me."

"As William Orr said, 'The only thing evil can't stand is forgiveness.' Imagine evil disappearing in the atmosphere of forgiveness!" -Fred Rogers

"Leadership service will not be perceived as authentic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which he speaks...The great illusion of leadership is to think that others can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there." -Henri Nouwen

"A friend is more than a therapist or confessor, even though a friend can sometimes heal us and offer us God's forgiveness. A friend is that other person with whom we can share our solitude, our silence, and our prayer. A friend is that other person with whom we can look at a tree and say, 'Isn't that beautiful,' or sit on the beach and silently watch the sun disappear under the horizon. With a friend we don't have to say or do something special. With a friend we can be still and know that God is there with both of us." -Henri Nouwen

"At at Hollywood function some time earlier, Fred had been on the dais with several other celebrities, including the comedian Drew Carey, who regaled the audience with his vulgar comedy routine. Fred said, 'I was wondering, What can I say to these people after listening to something like that?' What Fred did was begin his own speech in his customary way. He asked his audience, people who had been rolling at the vulgar humor of Drew Carey only seconds earlier, to take precisely one minute and remember all those who had 'loved them into being. I'll time you on my watch,' Fred said. So the room fell silent. 'Within a few seconds I could hear sniffles in the audience,' Fred said, sounding mystified by the experience. 'Isn't that amazing?'"

"Sometimes," my five year old son said into my shoulder that night, "life is so beautiful, you just have to cry."

Robyn Spencer says

Thought I was never going to finish this one. Too wordy, too much ego petting needed.

Tim Madigan says

I think it's great, but I'm biased. I wrote it.

Evelyn FIGEROID says

This was not the light-weight little book I expected. It was profoundly moving. It shows so much of what made Mr. Rogers such a special human being. He knew how to connect with other people in a meaningful, life changing way. The book contains many notes exchanged between the author and Mr.

Rogers. These notes cover many topics such as friendship and love, faith, recovery, and loss and grief. The author discusses honestly his marriage, his relationship with his father, and the death of his brother. It shows Mr. Rogers as an insightful and inspiring man of faith.

This book has given me insight into how important even the small connections we make each day are. It has given me the desire to slow down a bit, look people in the eye when they speak with me, to really try to understand what they might need from the connection, and to try to see what I might have to give.

Dean Anderson says

Have you ever heard anyone say, "It's not very good, but I think kids will like it"? It might be a book, a play, a TV show or a movie. Perhaps you've said it. Because, you know, the kids haven't seen Citizen Kane, so they'll be satisfied with Prince Puppy Pooper V. As long as there are bright colors and loud sounds, they'll like it, right?

Kids' entertainment is assumed to be a few rungs down on the quality scale, and it's assumed that those who produce entertainment for kids just couldn't cut it in the world of "grown-up" entertainment.

I loved having those assumptions challenged as I read I'm Proud of You, Tim Madigan's memoir of his friendship with Fred Rogers. Yes, that Fred Rogers. They call him "Mister Rogers". Of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood".

Fred Rogers was not looking all his life to make it the world of show business. He didn't dream of being a movie star but settled for the world of children's television. Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian minister. One day he happened to see a children's television program with a lot of noise and commotion and pie fights. He thought, "I can do better than that. And kids deserve better than that."

He realized that parents entrust their children to television at times, and that this did not always have to be a bad thing. So he made a television show that addressed children as people worthy of respect who had unique challenges and opportunities ahead of them.

His program (which became a staple of public television) addressed everything from bedwetting and bedtimes to death and divorce. He addressed children's real problems in the safe and calm world that was his neighborhood.

Watching Fred Rogers, it was easy to assume he was a simple man. Which he was -- but simple in the good and not the negative sense. His was a simplicity that came from integrity and honesty and not from being

slow on the uptake.

In fact, Fred Rogers was well read and well traveled. He loved to read challenging works of theology by writers such as Henri Nouwen, Frederick Buechner and Thomas Merton. He was good friends with the pianist Van Cliburn, and he met prominent world leaders.

We have a problem in our society because we see so many of the qualities that are important as signs of weakness. Many of the qualities that characterized Fred Rogers the man and his program (gentleness, tranquility, kindness and a lack of cynicism) are perceived as out of step with the "real world" of us sophisticated adults. But these are some of the very qualities that typified the life of Christ and that we are called to emulate.

In our entertainment and conversation, we too often value a knowing snarkiness that proves we aren't vulnerable. It doesn't take long for that cynicism to sneak into the entertainment and the lives of our kids. And our kids lose out because of this.

In the book, Madigan talks about how difficult it was to talk to Fred Rogers when he was considering divorcing his wife. How could one talk to Mister Rogers about such a thing? But Fred Rogers reached out to Madigan with compassion. And he expressed gratitude to Madigan for being willing to share his pain with him.

Madigan said that he didn't want to sound sacrilegious, but he felt that when Fred Rogers cared for him, it was like Jesus was there. Which is, of course, how it should be when we care for others as well. Jesus took time to give children his best (Matthew 19:14).

Stacy says

I really enjoyed this. That said, I think that Madigan was a little self-indulgent, and one large chunk of the book really doesn't involve Fred Rogers much at all.

It is Tim Madigan's memoir as his life intersected with Fred Rogers.

That's okay, but I was much more interested in his insights into Rogers than his self reflection.

If anyone does know of a suitable (and available) biography of Fred Rogers, I would love to read it. My daughter wanted to do him for a book report on a person who made an impact on their community, and sadly this was the best book we found (and she felt it was really inadequate for what she needed).

Jamie says

This is a beautiful book.

Amy says

Wow, this book hit that spot of really wanting me to be more open, more others focused, more gentle and more generous.

Sara says

I really love the story that this memoir chronicles. What is not to love about Mister Rogers? My frustration

with this book was that it could have benefited from a better editor (more trimming) and less focus on the author's need to prove again and again how "important" he had become to Fred Rogers. To be clear: I really like much of what he had to say, I just wish that he had said these things with less emphasis on his own ego.

beanie says

A moving account of the impact of encouragement in friendship. We should hope to have at least one friendship like this. Be prepared with tissues.

LaRae says

A beautiful little book filled with love and encouragement, friendship, connection, intimacy, forgiveness, looking for the best in people and the world, and living fully in the present moment.

Treating others with kindness and love, and giving them one's full focus and attention, really can change the world.

Ron says

This book is a mixed bag. People who love the book - please remember my experience doesn't need to take away from yours. Not in the least. I'm happy for everyone who gained connection, understanding, and emotional growth in their reading - and I, like you (probably), want to grow in my experience of connection and brotherhood with my fellow human beings.

I found it to be a worthwhile read, as I'm fascinated by Fred Rogers and his legacy - and I value the push for men to become more open and familiar with their emotional experience of life. The fact that white men are more threatened by self harming behavior between the ages of 45 and 55 than any other danger to their lives bears out the need for more awareness. Guys are depressed, and middle life brings changes that they aren't prepared to handle.

That said, there are some odd tones throughout the book that I was able to give a pass until around 60% of the way in. The author keeps introducing people he briefly considers the most important people on Earth, only to lead up to details of how he responds to their deaths and critical hardship. It's very strange to me how each of these individuals can be his biggest priorities for fleeting moments of time that coincide with their death and suffering.

When his brother is diagnosed with terminal cancer, he waits an entire year before visiting him - then harps on the importance of each and every instant of his remaining days. It feels unintentionally vampiric - and I say unintentionally with every hope that you'll hear me loud and clear. I don't think he means to come across this way at all - and I'm certain his responses are more healthy than many (most?) men could bring themselves to write about and experience fully - but it reaches the point of distracting preoccupation for him.

There seems to be a market motive, however unconscious, for the book in that it admittedly follows in the footsteps of Tuesdays With Morrie and that book's success and audience. It does so in a less spiritual and engaging fashion - - but again, I don't think anyone has overt negative or dishonorable intentions.

The end acknowledges that the story was scrutinized and directly steered (in an editorial sense) by Fred Roger's business partners and family. A journalist should balk at such a proposition - but perhaps it was the only way to gain approval for publication. I don't know if that compromise resulted in an honest portrayal, though - and at the end of the day that may be a tragic result.

It's good to know that Fred Rogers had outlets to communicate his abundant suffering. The importance of suffering in some religious traditions is certainly promoted and aggrandized throughout the story. That's an aspect of Christianity that I find heartbreaking in its scope of unintended consequence - which seems to result in reduced efforts to alleviate suffering on a grander scale. Fred himself did untold worlds of good on that front, when it came to ministering to the emotional awareness and self acceptance of children. That's his unsullied legacy. The underpinnings seem to indicate a tortured soul who related strongly to other tortured souls - and if you are looking for answers or examples to alleviate that undercurrent of fearful dependence on supernatural aid, you won't find help here. You'll find people who examine the pain, reframe it to give it meaning beyond the natural world, and seem to hop from pain to pain - supping upon the sharpening of the mind that it can bring. Many people find this to be a good thing, apparently. I feel we can do better.

Raymond says

I became aware of this book through Ryan Holiday's book recommendation newsletter. It is a very good book about the friendship between two men: the author and Mr. Fred Rogers. Mr. Rogers was such a kind and gentle person to Tim. Mr. Rogers was also always supportive and prayed for Tim during "The Furies" as the author calls his trials and tribulations.

Crizzle says

Obligatory 5 stars for a book about Mr. Rogers, especially during the time we're living in currently... everyone needs a little more Mr. Rogers in their lives. Actually, this wasn't so much about Mr. Rogers as it was about the author's 7 year friendship with him during the hardest times of his life in the 1990s, and how Fred helped him letter by letter, email by email, phone call by phone call. We get to see what it's like to have a friendship with Mister Rogers, just like in the book I read about a half year ago - "The Simple Faith of Mister Rogers". This would be an especially good read for someone going through their own very hard time - grieving the loss of a loved one, etc.

In our family we always talk about how we can't wait to meet Mr. Rogers in Heaven someday. He's one of the very best human beings to have ever lived, and is my personal hero!

Tiffany Reisz says

We lost a living saint when we lost Mister Rogers. What a tender touching book. <3

Scott Southard says

I guess I wanted this book to be something different than what it was. I wanted to learn about Mr. Rogers but we are given very little of his biography here (nothing on his inspiration on his show), save what we see

through the author's eyes (we don't even get the original article the author wrote on Rogers). That is fine, but different than the book I was hoping for. I can't grade the book based on my wants!

So why 2 stars? Because if Tim is the main character, why is his perception so limited to us? It's almost as if he assumes we know who he is at the start. Yes, he talks about anger and sadness, but he seems to hide himself. For example, he begins the book by talking about him and his wife having problems. Why? How did that start? It was fixed, how? We don't get that.

He wants to write a book with himself as the main character, he just doesn't want to be the character. Another example: He talks about an article he wrote winning a "Turkey" award for mistakes; but he never really shares why those people felt his writing needed that award, we just read his reaction and that it was unfair.

Tim doesn't have to write about himself like this, he clearly had no problem writing in detail about his brother and his death of cancer, why couldn't he have given himself the same disclosure, the same openness? By the end, I never felt like I knew him, no idea what it felt like to sit and really talk to him, and no idea why Mr. Rogers felt that connection to him. My gut feeling is that this book is one Madigan had to write, but I just don't know if he was truly ready to write it yet, he was still dealing with too much.

I expected the book to be a little religious, but it was a little annoying and then outright frustrating. Every page seemed to deal with God and prayer. I get that Mr. Rogers was a minister and religion is important to the author, but for readers of other beliefs (or non-beliefs) it can be annoying and can interrupt the flow of one's reading.

Looking back, overall I found the book a missed opportunity and the writing a little dry. Journalism is a skill of writing the facts (Madigan is a journalist), a book you need to "feel." Maybe it would be better if Madigan turned his journalist skills to writing a biography of Rogers, focusing more on his journey. That might be a more natural fit in the future for his writing.

Jennifer says

This book found me at the right time in my life. I was struggling with being a stay-at-home mom to a child with special needs. I started sobbing from the first sentence all the way to the last. It is a beautiful story about two very special people. Mr. Rogers's attitude toward life helped pull me out of my dark tunnel and learn to be grateful for all the beauty around me. Whenever I am feeling especially beaten down by my life, I reread this book for a while and I feel much better.

I always loved watching Mr. Rogers as a child and loved watching the episodes with each of my children. Mr. Rogers was an incredibly special man who looked at life in a special way and I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to attempt to emulate his philosophy on life.

Thanks, Tim for writing a superb book. I have purchased many copies and given them to family and friends. IPOY!

Jason Koivu says

Within seconds I was tearing up.

Let's make sure we're clear right off the bat. *I'm Proud of You: My Friendship with Fred Rogers* is not strictly about Mr. Rogers, but rather about how Rogers helped Tim Madigan through rough times, specifically Madigan's marriage, coming to grips with his relationship with his father, and his brother's life-threatening illness.

And to further clear up matters, I want you to know that I think this book is awesome. Yeah, it made me weepy throughout and yeah, it wasn't the Mr. Rogers biography I expected when I picked it up, but the moment I started reading none of that mattered.

I'm definitely not saying that everyone who reads this is going to have the same visceral experience as me, not if you weren't raised on Rogers' show as I was. That man could soothe with his words better than a soothesayer! (*rimshot*) And some of you may not appreciate all the god talk in this book. But hey, I'm an atheist and I managed to get past it. I think it helps if, every time the topic is broached, you transpose their Christian ideals to your own form of spirituality, even if that means nothing more than a belief in yourself. You do believe in yourself, don't you? You should, because you're a very special person. And if you do believe in yourself, well, that's faith!

***** EXCITING UPDATE!!! *****

A friend informed me that a friend of hers is writing the script for the film version of this book! I looked it up on IMDB and they seem to have the crew in order, but no cast yet. I wonder who will play Mr. Rogers.

Evan Hays says

A friend of mine loaned me this book, and urged me to read it. She knew that, like her mother and herself, Henri Nouwen is close to my heart and his work has ministered to me during some tough times. And she knows also of my love and care for children. Quite possibly, she was hoping to give me some ideas for my chapels at school. I don't know if she knew that I grew up watching Mr. Rogers, but of course, what child born in the U.S. in 1984 didn't?

We could never measure it of course, but how much worse off would our country be without Fred Rogers? There are just some people that you know immediately are saints, and he surely was one of them, and the fact that he used the still fairly new medium of television in such an innovate way to reach so many millions of children in such a profound way is truly remarkable.

This book captures the essence of Fred Rogers and all that I said above so well. It is a really touching story, and even just the journey of Tim Madigan is a worthwhile read, but I think the author does so well to intermingle his friendship with Fred Rogers with the challenges and triumphs of his own life.

This book has inspired me to pick up another Nouwen book sometime this year as well as to make sure that I take as many times as I can to sit and watch Mr. Rogers with my own children. Jackson has seen the first two ever episodes with me, and so far, they are the only thing on a screen that he has seen that he will actually pay attention to for any longer than about 30 seconds.

I promise you that you won't be sorry you pick up this book.

Oh, and I didn't discover until I was nearly done with this book that Tim Madigan is also the author of *The Burning*, about terrible race riots in Oklahoma. I read that book for a college class, and it was definitely one

of the best and most enjoyable history reads of my college years, and that is saying something because I read a lot of history books in college.

Rachel Bird says

When I bought this I didn't know Fred Rogers was Mr. Rogers from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. I didn't know anything about Mr. Rogers except that my mom couldn't stand his show and that there was a rumor going around that he'd had a dishonorable discharge from the military. I wish I'd known sooner what a beautiful human being he was.

Tim Madigan is a journalist who had the good fortune of interviewing Mr. Rogers years ago. That interview blossomed into a lifelong friendship. There is little more beautiful to me than grown men sharing deep platonic love and theirs brought me to tears more than once.

It was so intimate that Tim shared the trouble that had been brewing in him since he was young. He felt limited and frustrated in life because his father had never been proud of him. He asked Mr. Rogers if he would be proud of him in a letter. Of course he would. Mr. Rogers signed off most of his correspondence from there on out "IPOY" (I'm proud of you.)

Mr. Rogers really was as wonderful as he was portrayed on his show. He was there for Tim when Tim's brother was dying of cancer and with the entire family throughout the ordeal offering his support and suffering right along with them.

When Mr. Rogers finally passed he did so quietly so as not to draw attention to himself even though he was in excruciating pain from stomach cancer. He is a great mentor who will live forever through his legacy.

General consensus: This book made me a better person and I believe everyone can benefit from reading it. (I now sign off IPOY in the intimate correspondence I have with one of my greatest friends.)
