



# Dear God

HONEST

PRAYERS

TO A  
GOD

WHO

LISTENS

Bunmi

Laditan

# Praise for *Dear God*

I am not religious. This book should not be for me. But it was. Beautiful prose . . . brutal honesty . . . comfort and grace and relevance. Every moment I was reading it, I was not alone. What kind of magic is this?

**JENNY LAWSON**, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF *FURIOUSLY HAPPY*

Already known for her hilarious storytelling, Bunmi Laditan returns with more of her humanity on display. Here she speaks with God honestly, giving us permission to do the same.

**AUSTIN CHANNING BROWN**, *NEW YORK TIMES*  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *I'M STILL HERE*

Bunmi Laditan vulnerably and courageously shows us how to bring our doubts and accusations, our fears and uncertainties, to God directly. Bunmi opens her heart on every page, from the mundane to the deeply personal, as she blurs the lines between poetry and prayer, love and fear, trust and mistrust. If you've ever been afraid to bring your full self to God, ashamed that deep down you're not good enough for God to listen to, *Dear God* is a window into someone who has learned that faith isn't about trusting what we know but about trusting that we are known.

**JARED BYAS**, AUTHOR OF *LOVE MATTERS MORE* AND  
COHOST OF *THE BIBLE FOR NORMAL PEOPLE* PODCAST



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*Dear God*

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*To the God who sees me*



## NOTE TO THE READER

I was raised in a religious household and around religious people, but can say in all truth that while religious ideas permeated my mind, they never touched my heart. I know there were some good people of faith around me, but I found myself fixating on the hypocrites, growing angry as I saw them flourish and their harmful actions go unchecked. I felt very little love in religious settings, only the weight of the cultural rules and disdain for those deemed as “outsiders” and “sinners.” So I became one—an outsider. I wandered. I knew of God but had no relationship with God, and I felt a deep-down hatred for religious people—especially Christians, who I felt had repeatedly rejected and scorned me.

When I met and married a Jewish man, I was not required to convert to his faith, but I did. My upbringing had instilled in me the value of raising children in one faith tradition, and something about this people—who had been chased, hunted, all over the earth and yet still believed in God—spoke to me. I respected them. I wanted my children to learn their heritage of resilience in the face of extreme persecution. I wanted them to know the importance of *mitzvot* (good deeds), *tikkun olam* (repairing the world in any small way), and to be able to toast *l’chaim* (to life) even in difficult seasons.

So I studied. I forsook all past beliefs, shed the weight of my religious bitterness, and embraced the role of a Jewish mother. I

was good at it. In fact, I loved it. Fridays were for kneading soft challah dough in my kitchen, my baby strapped to my back, sleeping against the rhythmic folding.

Saturdays were for rest and *shul* (synagogue), where I recited the *Shema* (a daily declaration of faith) and felt the power of the ancient prayer that calls all of Israel to set her sights on her Maker: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”\*

I dutifully and joyfully signed up my oldest for Hebrew camp, decorated Chanukah cookies, dressed with *tzniut* (modesty), fasted on Yom Kippur, and studied Hebrew. I was content, happy in fact, in my new tribe.

When the marriage ended, however, I found myself floating. Suddenly the faith that had bound our family felt like a cruel joke.

I spent the next few years spiraling in and out of mental and emotional crises. I still occasionally baked challah, but never felt the same lightness of spirit when I did. I observed whatever holidays the culture around me deemed important, but I never prayed. Not even liturgical prayers.

Did I mention I was living in a new city, a new country, and barely knew a soul?

And yet something kept me afloat. I was always aware of a feeling of being seen and loved but didn’t know where it came from. Luck? Karma? Nature? I didn’t know.

A few years later, after having another child in a relationship that ended, I was once again on my own. Putting my hope in relationships hadn’t worked. Putting my faith in every and any religion I could find—from paganism to multiple religions—had

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\* Deuteronomy 6:4.

worked for a while but ultimately left me feeling lost. So I decided to go to the Source.

I prayed. Wearing jeans and a hoodie, I approached the throne of a God I wasn't even sure existed and asked, "Who are you?"

And he answered.

Today, my Friday afternoons are filled with rushing to prepare for Shabbat, my three children giggling and playing as they anticipate their favorite day of the week—the one with no chores! My mind swirls with all the things I need to do: sweep the floors, make sure the *cholent* (stew) is going in the slow cooker so we have a warm meal on the one day I don't cook, and have the kids learn the *parsha* (weekly Bible portion). My mind is at peace. Not because I feel enveloped in the safety of a community or religion, but because I know *him*.

In my house, we call him *Yeshua*. You may know him as Jesus. To me, he's not a historical or political figure; he's my brother, friend, and literal savior.

I'm aware that, to many, my life may seem anything from strange to blasphemous. But if my *mashiach* (Messiah) observed Passover and kept Shabbat, I will too. One of the first things my God, whom I call Abba (father), reminded me of when I began to speak to him, was that he was there when I held the Torah in the synagogue during my conversion. He was there when I emerged from the warm waters of the *mikveh* (ceremonial bath).

It's only when I leave our cozy home that I sometimes feel as if I walk between two worlds—a mainstream Christian one with whom I share a Messiah, and a mainstream Jewish one with whom I share a painful history, daily life traditions, and relentless faith. It's not always easy, but I count myself blessed to finally know the peace that covers all circumstances.

If you'd have told me ten or twenty years ago that I'd say all this, I would have called you a liar. But all it takes is one encounter with the fisherman from a tiny, unimportant fishing village, a Messiah who loves like no one else, to be forever changed. It was through him that I finally and truly began to know God.

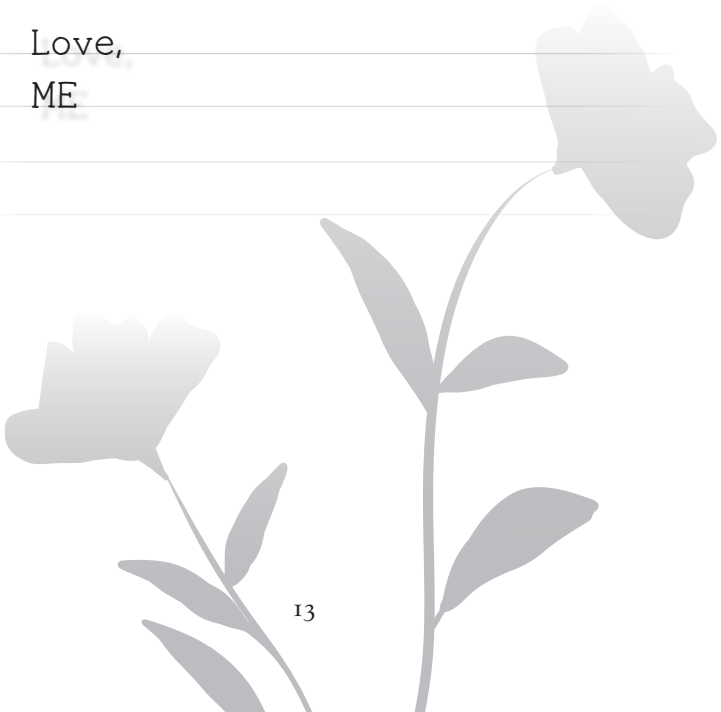
And the journey began.

Come along if you'd like.

LOVE, BUNMI

An angel once told me that things  
grow in the sun but are cured in  
the dark. Whether you are in a  
season of blooming or refining,  
my wish for you is peace.

Love,  
ME





DEAR GOD,

*I was making a list of things I know for sure, but when I went to write “God loves me,” I couldn’t—it felt like a lie. I believe you love me, but I don’t know it. I think you do. Your book says you do, but I guess in the back of my mind I see you as a giant Zeus—a despot in the sky. You knew Eve would eat the fruit. You created the tree. You allowed the Holocaust.*

*Have you heard the phrase, “With friends like you, who needs enemies?” I suppose that’s why I find trusting you so hard. Jewish families in 1941 trusted you.*

*You said, “My ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts,”\* and I believe you, but I still brace myself for suffering I won’t understand.*

*I believe you have a plan, but are you painting your masterpiece with my pain?*

*Love. I don’t know what that means. I don’t know that you love me, and I suppose I don’t know if I love you either. I fear you and I respect your power, but I’m afraid your next move will take another chunk out of me.*

*What’s love got to do with us?*

ME

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\* See Isaiah 55:9.

DEAR GOD,

*I'm trying to stay hopeful, but doubt is my favorite food, guilty displeasure, and holy water. It doesn't quite keep me warm or satisfy my aching hunger for the feast of your promises, but it's something. A meal of two steps backward. Acidic punch. Empty. Never hydrates. Feed me.*

Love,

ME

DEAR GOD,

*You sent your son to die to show your love. That's intense.  
Van Gogh cut off his ear to show love.*

*Couldn't you have just restored the Garden of Eden?  
Maybe put an electric fence around the tree?*

*Sometimes I think, If you'd let your son die, what will you  
let happen to me, who is not a blood relative?*

*Your kind of love scares me.*

ME

DEAR GOD,

*Help me have the faith of a baby bird, a small child, an old woman. Speak to the fear in my soul so that it might recognize your voice, wake up, rise, thrive. Do something other than hide in the dark.*

ME

DEAR GOD,

*Sometimes, all the time, daily, every five minutes, I look at the world and know exactly why you flooded it.*

ME

DEAR GOD,

*You said, "I am with you always," and I assume you meant you are with me in spirit.*

*I believe you, but I need you to come down, from your holy hill, for a hug.*

ME

DEAR GOD,

*You know how when babies and toddlers fall asleep in the car and their heads flop down and to the side in a way that looks not only desperately uncomfortable but also like it's impossible to breathe? Do I ever look like that to you? Because that's how I feel. My life, my body, my everything needs adjusting so I can breathe again.*

ME



# Dear God

## Honest Prayers to a God Who Listens

By Bunmi Laditan

Dear God is a poignant collection of funny, often heartbreaking, and deeply insightful letters to God that bravely share the emotions we all feel as we grapple with this broken world and search for divine love.

With the same gutsy and poetic honesty that charmed readers around the world, Bunmi now shares prayers and poems that chart her faith journey toward reconnecting with the God she loved, lost, and realized had never left her side even while she wandered.

These candid fieldnotes will stir your heart and make you laugh out loud with Bunmi's self-aware humor and profound insight into the spiritual journey we're all trying to navigate.

**“Here Bunmi speaks with God honestly, giving us permission to do the same.”**

—AUSTIN CHANNING BROWN, *New York Times*  
bestselling author of *I'm Still Here*

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