



DETAILS



Not Finished Yet *Trusting God with All My Feelings*

June 25, 2024 | \$16, 32 pages, hardcover | 978-1-5140-0795-2

Painting Prayers

Sometimes, you see, Wren and Gran didn't paint flowers or clouds or birds or trees. Sometimes they painted their feelings. She and Gran called it "painting prayers."

Gran's art studio is one of Wren's favorite places in the world. Not only is it where Wren and Gran paint, but it's also where they talk about all the good and hard stuff of life—to each other, and to God. Join young Wren as she explores her feelings and discovers that God welcomes our honest prayers.

Here is the story of Wren—the main character in Sharon Garlough Brown's book *Shades of Light*. However, this story takes place during Wren's childhood, in Gran's art studio in Australia. It's there that Wren discovers her love of painting and is encouraged by Gran to use art as a way to express emotions and prayer.

This gentle story by bestselling Christian novelist Sharon Garlough Brown, paired with exquisite illustrations from Jessica Linn Evans, will be enjoyed by children as well as the adults who read with them. Also included is a note from the author to encourage further conversation about the content.



SHARON GARLOUGH BROWN is a spiritual director, speaker, and author of the bestselling *Sensible Shoes* series, which includes spiritual formation novels *Sensible Shoes*, *Two Steps Forward*, *Barefoot*, *An Extra Mile*, and their study guides. She and her husband, Jack, live near castles and the North Sea in Scotland. This is her first children's book.



JESSICA LINN EVANS is an author-illustrator whose books reinforce wonder for creation, inspire adventure and invention, and encourage loyalty and friendship with the lovely. She is the author and illustrator of *Penguin Sets Sail* and the illustrator of *Little Mouse Finds A Friend*, *Waiting Through Winter*, and *Solar the Polar*. Jessica lives in the beautiful state of Idaho with her husband and three of her four wonderful children.



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Q & A



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Sharon Garlough Brown is a spiritual director, speaker, and author of the bestselling *Sensible Shoes* series, which includes spiritual formation novels *Sensible Shoes*, *Two Steps Forward*, *Barefoot*, *An Extra Mile*, and their study guides. She and her husband, Jack, live near castles and the North Sea in Scotland. This is her first children's book.

God Welcomes Honest Prayers

What inspired you to write this book?

Sharon Garlough Brown: As a spiritual director and retreat leader, I'm passionate about inviting people to journey deep into the heart of God through practices of prayer and other spiritual disciplines so that we can be healed, transformed, and shaped to become more like Jesus. The more confident we are in the height and depth, breadth and length of God's love for us, the freer we become to bring our honest selves to him in prayer, without fear or shame. In *Not Finished Yet* I translate some of the work I do with adults for children, encouraging them to find ways to express their thoughts and feelings to a God who loves them and listens to them with care and attention, no matter what they have to say.

Is there a common thread that runs between your novels and this children's picture book?

Sharon: Each of my books contains spiritual disciplines that help us practice being attentive and receptive to God's presence and love. Though I don't use the word *lament* in *Not Finished Yet*, this is the spiritual practice at the heart of the story as young Wren learns from her grandmother how to express her honest thoughts and feelings to God. My *Shades of Light* series, in which Wren is the twenty-seven-year-old protagonist, includes art as a spiritual practice, both in creating art as prayer and in praying with art to open conversation with God, especially during seasons of sorrow and loss.

Are there elements of this story that reflect your own experience?

Sharon: I was twenty-one years old and a relatively new Christian when an older work colleague gave me a copy of Philip Yancey's book *Disappointment with God* as a college graduation present. Honestly, I remember staring at the title and feeling offended by it. I suspect I silently judged my colleague for a lack of faith or even blasphemy. I'll never forget, though, the words she spoke next: "You may not think you need this book now, Sharon, but there might come a day when you will." I silently took offense at that too. How could I ever feel disappointed with God?

By the time I was in my midtwenties, Yancey's book had become the companion I needed while navigating painful seasons in which it was difficult for me to reconcile the goodness, power, and love of God with his apparent unwillingness to intervene in my life and in the lives of those I loved and longed for. Like the psalmists and prophets, I began asking hard lament questions like, "Where are you?" "If you love us then, why?" and "How long, oh, Lord?"

In the decades since then, I've had the privilege of accompanying many people through seasons of lament, offering them the same invitation and permission God gave me long ago: to express my disappointment, bewilderment, anger, and sorrow directly to him, without being afraid of disappointing or offending him with my honesty. What a generous God we have that he welcomes us to speak our pain to him—and about him—in prayer.



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What do you hope children will take away from *Not Finished Yet*?

Sharon: When my sister's children were young, their family would gather at the dinner table to share "highs and lows" from the day. "What's the best thing that happened to you today?" and "What's the hardest thing that happened to you today?" can become invitations to prayer as we bring to God all our thoughts and feelings and experiences—the things that make us happy and thankful as well as the things that make us angry, scared, sad, or disappointed. I hope children who hear or read *Not Finished Yet* can experience the same kind of freedom Wren experienced in having a safe place where she could be honest with a grown-up who loved her and encouraged her to express her thoughts and feelings to Jesus without fear.

What do you hope parents and caregivers will take away?

Sharon: I've met many people who, when they became upset or angry as children, were told by grown-ups, "Go to your room. And after you calm yourself down, then you can come out and have a conversation." Such a command can potentially impact our images of God, and we might become adults who believe we need to "calm ourselves down" and tidy up our prayers before we can enter into conversation with him.

I hope adults who read *Not Finished Yet* will hear the Lord's tender invitation to come to him with unedited thoughts and feelings and experience his love, compassion, and comfort. Lament prayers are bold and courageous prayers, which express deep confidence in God's mercy and kindness. I hope all my readers—adults and children—can practice being bold and brave with God, whether through words or tears or creative expression. Pouring out our pain is a pathway to being renewed in hope and trust in a faithful God who is working to make all things new. He's just not finished yet.



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Jessica Linn Evans is an author-illustrator whose books reinforce wonder for creation, inspire adventure and invention, and encourage loyalty and friendship with the lovely. She is the author and illustrator of *Penguin Sets Sail* and the illustrator of *Little Mouse Finds A Friend*, *Waiting Through Winter*, and *Solar the Polar*. Jessica lives in the beautiful state of Idaho with her husband and three of her four wonderful children.

Visual Representations of Emotions

What has it been like illustrating *Not Finished Yet*?

Jessica Linn Evans: I've enjoyed the whole process of illustrating *Not Finished Yet*. I designed the compositions and illustrations to go hand in hand with the emotion and feeling Sharon brought out in her text. This book also featured a lot of close-ups of faces, and I enjoyed focusing on painting the portraits of the characters and getting their expressions just right.

What else would you like the reader to notice in the illustrations?

Jessica: In most scenes, the color yellow represents happiness, and sky blue (like Gran's dress) generally means comfort. Also, I hope the readers notice that the weather represents Wren's feelings: clouds roll in when she feels frustrated and disappointed, but the sun breaks through in bright beams when she is at her most joyful. I'd also love readers to notice Wren's dog from Sharon's earlier book.

Is there anything you would like to share about your creative process?

Jessica: Because a lot of this part of Wren's story happens through a wonderful conversation with Gran, I wanted to further the readers' experience by visually representing Wren's emotions. I used different points of view and angles to convey some of this. For example, a very sad scene was viewed from high above to show how small and vulnerable Wren felt. Another scene in which Wren felt overwhelmed showed her disappointment as unusually large while she was much smaller than reality.

What message would you like children and adults to see through your illustrations?

Jessica: I would love children to see the wonder of God's creation, from the forming of storm clouds to the detail of a lorikeet feather. This same amazing Creator knows us better than we know ourselves. He loves his children, and we can confidently give all our feelings to him!



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