



You Are His Masterpiece: Hope When Life Throws You a Curve

Judith Lacy Hewes

A. J. McCoy, Illustrator

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You Are His Masterpiece is a healing self-help book with recommendations for trusting in God's process.

Judith Lacy Hewes's hope-filled religious self-help book *You Are His Masterpiece* is a guide for those dealing with significant spiritual and personal losses.

Through the loss of her daughter's pregnancy, a cancer remission, and a family friend's stillbirth, Hewes dreamed the words "A mother's eyes are like pools in a sea of grief after she loses a child." By accident, she sent a harmful, condensed version of the quote to the friend. She then beseeched God for a way to write words that heal rather than just validate pain. The result—this book—guides the grieving to see God's presence with the aid of biblical stories that reflect experiences of loss.

The book acknowledges a variety of grieving situations, including the loss of life from COVID-19, loss of health, and loss of income. This welcoming opening is followed by direct, powerful verses with metaphors including ferocious, devouring beasts and the enveloping ocean used to convey terror and grief. Oil paintings are an additional medium through which the book seeks spiritual meaning, as with a portrait of a smiling woman in a head wrap who's hooked up to a chemotherapy machine, accompanied by the verse "threaten your hold on God... on life."

The framing, expressions, and subject matter of the book's illustrations are earnest and weighty. God is compared to a potter who molds human experiences—including those of loss; this notion is complemented by the images of a potter's hands, framed in warm browns and white watercolors. Indeed, many of the early illustrations are framed in a white void. This makes the later expansiveness of a desert, a mountain valley rained on by God's tears, and the resurrection cave of Jesus with the rock pushed aside all the more meaningful. Further, there are comparisons between contemporary suffering and the suffering of Job, Noah's tumultuous ocean endurance, and God's sacrifice through Jesus that are forwarded with sympathy.

However, such powerful evocations fade in the second half of the book, which dives into suggestions for how to be a good believer, accompanied by examples of how *not* to be one. These descriptions are neutral, withholding judgment, but they still complicate the book's previously uncomplicated tone, which focused on healing and serenity. Further, references to Jesus's return are introduced—a further implication of judgment. Indeed, the book's later questions and suggestions for contemplation detract from the subtlety of its earlier work, as where the text points out God's tears in the illustration of a sky without necessity. Additionally, the biblical verses put forth as subjects for contemplation are quite well known, and the text does not sufficiently show how they all connect to its messages about being a good believer and finding spiritual healing.

You Are His Masterpiece is a self-help book with recommendations for trusting in God's process as the best way to heal.

ALEENA ORTIZ (April 25, 2024)

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