



# whole

poems on reclaiming the pieces of  
ourselves and creating something new



marla taviano

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and creating something new**

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Excerpt

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*Publishing books that help you heal, grow, and discover.*

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Gorgeous cover art and design by Olivia Taviano

## **dedication**

to every beautiful person  
committed to my wholeness

whether you live in my house  
or we're friends in real life

or we've never actually met

I thank my lucky stars  
for you and I love you

and I'm committed to  
your wholeness too

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## **a note from the author**

In the spirit of succinct poetry, I'll keep this rare page of prose short and to the point.

I'm so deeply honored that you've joined me on this three-book journey (*unbelieve*, *jaded*, *whole*) over the past few years, and I wanted to thank you before you even start reading the final volume.

THANK YOU.

This book is all about me wanting to be whole; the different ways I'm getting closer and closer to healing and wholeness; things I've discovered on my journey; and the beautiful community of people far and wide—alive and no longer living—who have helped me become more whole.

Just like in *unbelieve* and *jaded*, you will read some of my very favorite quotes from some of my very favorite authors, friends, and even fictional characters. Some of the quotes have been woven into my own poems (the authors are credited in the endnotes). Some are so brilliant, I've opted for them to stand alone. As always, my not-so-secret hope is that you'll be intrigued and enticed to go read their books for yourself.

One of the really cool things about wholeness is that it goes both ways. The more whole I become, the more passionate I become about *your* wholeness. Just like the wonderful folks who have contributed to my wholeness with their words, I hope *my* words, in some small (or big) way, help you become more whole as well. This book was truly a labor of love.

Marla

*hello*

**a note on the trilogy**

when people are first  
deconstructing their faith

they're often not ready  
for the full Marla

which is why *unbelieve*  
is the soft opening

to *jaded*, the  
bitchy little sister

but there are no rules here

you can skip right to  
*whole* if you'd like

as long as you know that  
in real life there's no

shortcut to wholeness



**what you see is what you get**

I know y'all like to know  
what you're getting into

when you open a book  
and believe me, I would

love to tell you but this  
one had a mind of her own

she even changed her title  
on me without asking, then

yawned and told me to chop  
a buttload of poems about god,

the bible, and church, because  
she just doesn't care anymore

(I still kept a bunch in because  
she is not the boss of me)

so I've got no idea where  
this baby is headed

maybe take a peek at the  
end and let me know?

**say my name**

when you get to the  
end of your book titled

*more*

and realize half of the poems  
are about becoming

*whole*

**on the loose**

don't pigeonhole me  
try to pin me down

ask where I've landed

don't tell me to *pick a lane*  
and really don't tell me to

stay in it once I pick it

those days are over  
I've been uncaged

the world is my oyster now

and I don't know what  
that means exactly

but I aim to find out

**\*rubs hands together\***

my friend told me that

“people love your poems  
so much because  
they can feel the  
grief and love and  
even the playfulness”

I want my words to  
live up to her praise

so who’s ready for  
an onslaught of

pithy  
playful  
loving  
grieving  
poems?

*the old me*

## **how do I look?**

I used to be a  
conservative  
evangelical  
christian

now I'm just chilling  
in the fitting room

trying some other  
identities on for size

deciding if I'm  
ready to commit

and keeping  
the receipt

just in case

**j-o-y**

*Jesus first  
yourself last  
others in between*

for years and years  
I denied myself and  
picked up my cross

loved god  
loved Jesus  
loved my husband

my kids  
my church  
my neighbors

and if there was  
anything left,  
I'd love *me*

too bad there  
was never  
anything left

**anxious martyr**

every time good stuff  
happened to me

I could enjoy it for about  
90 seconds

before I braced myself  
for impact

I knew something bad  
was up next

you can't *learn lessons*  
while you're *happy*

god only teaches and  
grows you in the *suffering*

and a "good" evangelical  
desires nothing more

than to learn and grow  
in abject misery



**back in the day**

every little thing  
I did was in service to

god and religion

now I embrace  
whatever bits of

god and religion

serve me in my quest  
for wholeness for us all

**good flesh**

for most of my life  
I tried so hard

to push down my  
“sin” nature

when all that time  
it was really just

my “nature” nature  
and there wasn’t

a damn thing  
wrong with it

## **out of steam**

in a religious tradition

where words held  
great sway

I fit in well and learned  
to wield them powerfully

I still rely heavily  
on words

but the pendulum has swung  
far in the opposite direction

now I try to use words  
solely to love

and not belittle, judge,  
correct, and condemn

I have very little energy  
(and even less desire)

to fight, prove, explain,  
attempt to persuade

instead I just think and  
read and breathe and poem

**shake shake shake**

everything had to have  
a “kingdom” purpose—  
saving souls from hell

I felt compelled to evangelize  
even the most unlikely  
and unwilling converts

now if someone is  
completely unwilling  
to be converted to love,

I expend zero effort  
shake the dust off my  
feet (like Jesus taught me)

and walk (or skip) away

**exactly this**

“Still mad about  
growing up  
and being primed  
to joyfully welcome  
a christian fascist state.”

—**D. L. Mayfield**

## **I'm over it**

over what? christianity?  
deconstruction? or both?

yes  
and also  
no

I will never be  
completely “over it”  
whatever “it” may be

a completely hopeful,  
“moving on” kind of book  
would be dishonest

until this world is a fair  
and just place where  
all of us can thrive

we are angry and we fight

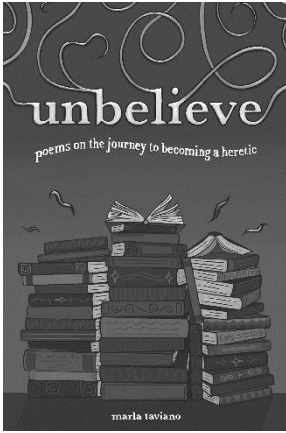
**AND**

we make space for  
love, joy, celebration,  
hope, and laughter

at the exact same time

# About the Author

Marla Taviano is into books, love, justice, globes, anti-racism, blue, gray, rainbows, and poems. She reads and writes for a living, wears her heart on her t-shirts, and is on a mission/quest/journey to live wholefarted (not a typo). She's the author of *unbelieve: poems on the journey to becoming a heretic*, *jaded: a poetic reckoning with white evangelical christian indoctrination*, and other books. She lives in South Carolina with her four freaking awesome kids and two adorable cats. Find out more at [marlataviano.com](http://marlataviano.com).

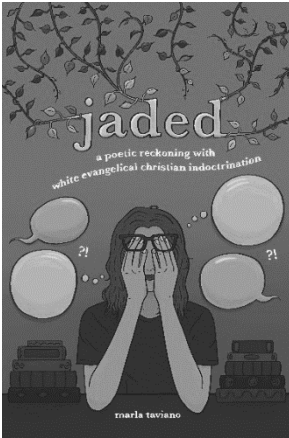


**unbelieve: poems on the journey to becoming a heretic**

Marla Taviano

Paperback, 6 x 9, 330 pages

Author, single mom, and former very-good-Christian-girl Marla Taviano welcomes you into a space of poems, observations, and truths to create new boundaries with toxic beliefs, and to let it all out, let it all go, and start heading in brave new directions.



**jaded: a poetic reckoning with white evangelical christian indoctrination**

Marla Taviano

Paperback, 6 x 9, 328 pages

For those picking up pieces of life and faith and figuring out how to heal and move forward, *jaded* is a collection of poems—short, thoughtful, brave, and spicy—about *still* getting stuff off our chests.



**please cut up my poems: and make some art! (for real, I'm serious)**

Marla Taviano

Paperback, 5 x 8, 194 pages

In this book, there are all kinds of words you can cut out and add to any photo or illustration to create your own word art. Hang it on your wall or your refrigerator or share it with a friend. It's word art made with love.