



If You Only Knew: My Unlikely, Unavoidable Story of Becoming Free

Jamie Ivey

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What if you knew all the moments of my past that I am not proud of? What if you *really* knew me, the messy parts that I've hoped to forget and worked hard to conceal? For so long, my greatest fear was what you might think of me if you only knew the whole story.

It's exhausting, this guarding of our stories and struggles. Fear of being found out had caused me to hide—but I wasn't just covering my flaws, I was unintentionally blocking the beauty of God's grace. My journey to real freedom began when I quit running from my mess and started trusting Jesus to make something beautiful of it.

This book is that story. It's stepping out of shame and insecurity into gospel freedom. It's letting God turn our failures and frailties into testimonies of His faithfulness. I've discovered that when we quit hiding, God gets the glory and we are able to fully embrace not only our relationship with Him, but also with one another.

Transparency brings freedom, and in every moment, we'll find that God can absolutely be trusted.

If You Only Knew: My Unlikely, Unavoidable Story of Becoming Free Details

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Shannon Whitehead says

Unlike many reviewers, I had no idea who Jamie Ivey was prior to receiving this book for review and had never listened to her podcast. I feel that I got a chance to get to know her through reading "If You Only Knew" and appreciated the book for its vulnerability and Gospel-centered message—I mean truly Gospel-centered, as in she tied the work of Christ back into every mistake she's made and lesson she's learned—and for that reason alone I would recommend this book because I believe that God can use it to help free many people. She was truly preaching in a lot of sections. However, my appreciation for the work is not because it was well-written (I thought the writing style was quite flat), but an acknowledgement of the value of her story and her willingness to tell it. Many people need to read it and find that they're not alone, and now countless people will because of the author's faithfulness.

*This review is based on a free digital advance copy provided by the publisher. The book will be released on January 30, 2018. The opinions expressed are my own.

Megan Wright says

“The pages of this book are drenched with ‘me too’ tears, poured out over a so-far lifetime of failing and following, failing and following. Yet God has forgiven me, just as God has forgiven you. And even on days where we may see more losing than winning, His faithfulness and forgiveness will hold us together. For as bad as it’s been and as bad as it can get, Jesus is better. Let us all be women who believe that to be true.”

I really enjoyed this book. It's very convicting as Jamie sheds light on what being vulnerable and living in community looks like.

Ashley says

The writing isn't spectacular, but her goal in her writing as she states in the beginning is to tell her story as if you are both sitting at the table in her back yard. She intends the book to be very casual. I really appreciated her honesty about her past and how God used difficult and shameful circumstances to draw her back to him. I am even more encouraged by her confession of how her past shapes her current sin and heart struggles and how she presses into a gospel centered community in those moments. I love her charge for women in the church to be in open and vulnerable community where the messy and unfavorable aspects of life are discussed and confessed so Jesus can be glorified and seen as better.

Robin says

The easiest thing to think that the way things are is the way they are supposed to be. That we have no choice in how things in our lives will go. Though I do believe in some destiny I also believe that we can make

choices to direct what that destiny will be. I believe we must listen to guidance in our hearts. Reading through Jamie's story made me realize how much hiding we do in this world. We hide the feelings we have about what we really want, really believe. We hide the way we feel about ourselves.

Jamie gets real in telling her story. She has opened her heart to see that others need to read what she has gone through and still goes through and that we can all make a difference and be there for someone going through something.

Life should never be done alone.

Cheryl says

For someone who has spent most my adult life avoiding people of my youth because I was ashamed of who I was back then, this was an empowering read. Jamie is one of the most courageous women I know right now for not holding anything back and putting herself out there.

Amanda Espinoza says

I read this book in one day, because it was that compelling. This book surprised me, because it isn't the precious commonplace story I've come to expect from Christian women writers.

Jamie Ivey sets up the reader sharing about other sinners from the Bible, then she dives into her own story of how Jesus rescues her. Along the way she steps on various soap boxes. She encourages women to be vulnerable. She urges Christians to stop being shocked by sin. Finally, she encourages the reader to seek out community even if it's difficult to find.

This book can be read by any woman at any stage of life. She focuses on the gospel and church instead relying on tales of parenting. I would feel comfortable giving this book to a single woman.

I was already a fan of Jamie Ivey and now I'm even bigger fan.

Amanda says

3.5 stars. I feel almost guilty not rating it higher because I don't want to disparage the message of the book -- my issues with it were mainly stylistic. The conversational tone that is so prevalent in Christian women's books gets old to me over a whole book, and I would have probably enjoyed it more in blog posts. Also, the author spends the introduction and the whole first chapter building up to her story so that by the time you finally reach what she's been building up to (over 1/4 through the book) the story felt a little deflated.

Those personal preferences aside, I do believe the message of the book is important. My main takeaway was that living in shame -- hiding our faults from others -- hinders the fullness of grace in our lives. The author stresses that authentic Christian community needs to get over "sin-shock" and differentiate between "worldly guilt" and "godly guilt". I keep seeing in my reading the importance of community in our lives for growth, and this book champions this as well. It doesn't give specifics of how to build that community, but the

starting point is transparency about our failings among invested friends.

Sally says

This is a tricky book for me to review.

Based on the message and heart of this story and the author's testimony, I'd give it 5 stars! So many truths and freeing ideas put into an easy to read conversational style.

But.

If I'm rating on the writing, it's a 3 star review. Hear me out - it's not that a person needs to be an accomplished writer to produce a good book, but they should have an accomplished editor. Honestly, there were just so many words.

First, acknowledgments in the beginning of the book, then an introduction, then a forward, then a first chapter that read like a forward . . . then FINALLY getting into the actual book by chapter 2. All of that coupled with a lot of repetition throughout the book made a wonderful, easy, but deep read much more difficult to get through than needed.

BUT!!!

The heart of this book - it still showed through.

see? hard for me to review.

Zachary Houle says

I think everyone's got a skeleton or two in their closet. I know I certainly do. This isn't the time or place to really talk about the bad I've done in my life, but, suffice to say, it's enough that I was curious about Jamie Ivey's If You Only Knew. The book?—?while aimed more so at women readers?—?is about all those sordid mistakes you've made in the past, and how you might be able to come through them to a place of peace. Given that the author is a conservative Christian from Texas, you know the answer to the predicament: Jesus.

I'm not going to admonish the author for her beliefs, because that's not how I roll. But after reading John Shelby Spong's upcoming book Unbelievable, I had a hard time reconciling God and/or Jesus as a supernatural person living in the clouds up in the sky. This version of God is sort of what Ivey presents to us, so, whether you like it or not, that aspect of the book is something you're going to have to sit with. That said, there are still parts of If You Only Knew that are relevant to everyone, no matter what your leanings are in the culture wars. Take away the atonement theology and doctrine of sin that Ivey believes in, and you'd have a book that liberals like myself wouldn't have too much of a hard time swallowing. (That said, I think this is a book best suited for conservative evangelicals.)

Read the rest here: https://medium.com/@zachary_houle/a-random-thoughts-on-jamie-ivey-s-if-you-only-knew-1000000000000000000...

Angie says

I bought this book because I love her podcast! This is her story to finding freedom from the bondage of sin. She is incredibly vulnerable in these pages and encourages others to be the same because walking around like we have it all together doesn't help anyone. She talks about the importance of having a fight club; friends that you can open up to and they will speak truth in your life, point you to Jesus and pray with you and for you. She speaks truth in this book and talks about the importance of dragging our sins and struggles into the light because the darkness is where the enemy plays and the light is where freedom is found and God can be glorified through us.

Jen Anderson says

I appreciate Jamie's honesty and vulnerability! She makes you feel heard and understood while still telling her own story.

Amanda says

I received this book for free from the publisher through Netgalley. My review and opinions are my own.

Many of us have, at some point, thought "if this person knew who I really was, they wouldn't speak to me again." This book is for us.

Jamie Ivey writes about her past openly and honestly, and follows every part of her story with how the gospel frees us to be honest, vulnerable people. It's a gospel-soaked book and a joy to read. I don't tend to like books that rely heavily on the author's life to talk about Jesus, but the way this book is written makes it different from other story-heavy books.

The only reason I gave this book 4 stars instead of 5 is that I wish it had been written to a broader audience. Yes, Ivey is a woman - but that doesn't mean her book has to be written directly to women. Men can also identify with feeling this way, and while a woman's specific sins and struggles may not directly relate, men should be able to work out situations in their lives where they have struggled with something similar (just like women who have struggled with completely different things will have to do).

Amanda Jack says

Talk about being an open book! This memoir, while simply written is of a woman growing up in the church who has failed, many times before she came to know Christ and struggled even after coming to know him, and about the freedom and fullness of grace experienced in confession and repentance. One of the most relatable books I have read in a while.

Mary Rachel says

Loved reading Jamie's story of redemption, which reminds me so much of my own. She writes exactly as she talks in her podcast and is careful to bring all glory back to Christ in both her struggles and her victories. This book emboldened me to share my own "story of rescue" with others. A quick, challenging read. Only negative thing for me (though very minor) is that her themes started to feel somewhat repetitive toward the end.

Allie Thomas says

The introduction says it all: Stories are important. When we see our stories not as "obstacles to freedom, but rather as the key to unlocking it," a book like If You Only Knew becomes a MUST READ.

In her first book, Jamie Ivey does just this - shares her beautiful, broken, and redeemed story - to encourage her readers to remove the labels they put on their own journeys and to own how the gospel can truly work in our lives. She reminds her readers that "our stories are not really as unique as we think" and gently challenges us to find the common ground with others and banish the lies that say we aren't "good" enough to do good in God's kingdom. If you've ever listened to Jamie's podcast, enjoy reading memoir, or love the encouragement that comes from knowing someone else a little better, this book is for you.
