



Jamie Ivey

why satisfaction
and success
are closer
than you
think

**YOU
BE
YOU**

“In *You Be You*, Jamie inspires us to be all God created us to be, and do all we’ve been purposed to do. In her down to earth, tell it like it is, transparent, and humorous way, Jamie dispels the lies many of us believe about ourselves and invites us to accept that who we are in Christ is exactly who we need to be in order to outwork his purposes in the world. I love this woman, and you will love this book.”

Christine Caine, founder A21 and Propel Women

“Fresh. Encouraging. Inspiring. In *You Be You*, Jamie Ivey invites readers to readily raise their voice, accept their God-given uniqueness, and find freedom in who they’re becoming regardless of what they’re doing. No matter what stage of life you’re in, I’m confident this resource will make embracing your God-given identity and the eternal weight of your calling a palpable reality.”

Louie Giglio, pastor of Passion City Church, founder of Passion Conferences, and author of *Not Forsaken*

“This book is an unhurried afternoon coffee date with a truth-telling friend who wants you to flourish. Jamie’s honesty is refreshing and will point you to the God who has purpose for both your days and the giftings you possess.”

Ruth Chou Simons, artist, national speaker, and bestselling author of *GraceLaced* and *Beholding and Becoming*, founder of GraceLaced.com

“Over the years, I’ve felt the sting of not measuring up. I’ve looked at others, wishing I had their spark, their ability, and their creativity. Looking around only made me less excited about what God put inside of me. I love that we have a good friend like Jamie who helps us recognize how our unique God-given talents were never meant to be buried under mounds of comparison. Instead they are to be recognized, celebrated, and used to bring God glory in the ways only we can. What a gift this book will be to your soul!”

Lysa TerKeurst, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries

“In *You Be You*, Jamie Ivey helps you discover yourself while echoing the biblical truth necessary in order to do so. She takes you through a three step process of finding, accepting, and becoming yourself. I would recommend this book for anyone who has lost touch with or never really discovered their true self!”

Alena Pitts, actress in *War Room* and
author of the *Lena in the Spotlight* series

“An empowering, game-changing book on purpose, calling, and the unrivaled value of your unique story. Jamie is an emphatic cheerleader for women in all seasons of life all over the world. Through her raw and vulnerable story-telling, hilarious perspective, and refreshingly practical application of biblical truths, you’ll finish this book with the realization that living boldly in your calling—exactly as God made you—is more accessible than you’ve ever imagined. Give this book to every woman you know, and let’s witness callings activated all over the world.”

Hosanna Wong, author, spoken word artist,
and international speaker

“This book is so needed right now. In a world where we are desperately searching for direction and affirmation in all the wrong places, Jamie points us to the only One that matters. It’s refreshingly honest and hopeful, and you’ll find your shoulders relax as you read the truth in these pages. If you’ve ever felt like you lost yourself in life, read this book!”

Christy Wright, #1 national bestselling
author and host of *The Christy Wright Show*

“The vulnerable way that Jamie invites us to journey with her to the realizations she’s arrived at is both refreshing and intimately inspiring. I am so very grateful for her gentle voice that speaks truth to places where it’s sometimes hard to hear, only to bring healing to any person willing to listen. Her words shine a light with humor and sincerity, and to anybody willing, can genuinely help You Be You.”

Laurie Crouch, host of *Better Together*,
Trinity Broadcasting Network

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Chapter 1

Good Time for a You-Turn?

I often wonder what it feels like to have a midlife crisis. Do you all of a sudden wake up one day and wonder if you're on the right track? Do you look around at your life and decide you're just not enjoying it anymore?

The times I've seen a midlife crisis played out on TV, it always involves a man leaving his wife and kids and driving off into the sunset in a sports car with a girl half his age. The happy couple is usually smiling real big, their hair blowing in the wind, and they most definitely have their hands up in the air.

Personally, I think that sounds like the *start* of a crisis, not the end of one.

So maybe a midlife crisis is not what I'm having. But I did sit in my counselor's office recently and ask her the kinds of questions that sound like a crisis of *some* sort could possibly be on my horizon.

- Who am I?
- What am I here for?
- Does this all matter?
- Who cares?
- Am I succeeding?
- Am I a failure?

The ironic thing about these questions is that it's not the first time I've asked them, and I doubt it will be the last. Maybe you've asked them too. It's our nature to want to matter, to be special, to make a difference, to win at life. And it's natural in our pursuit of these things to evaluate how we might be doing on that quest. It drives some of us into a counselor's office, some of us into late-night strategizing sessions with our girlfriends. Unfortunately it might even drive a few of us into that sports car analogy where we just plain choose a new life.

Sometimes for me, these questions become my way of trying to forecast the future, imagining what my life will be like when I'm old and gray. I can see my husband, Aaron, and myself sitting on our back porch watching our great-grandchildren frolicking in the pool. Because, yes, I'm almost certain we should live in a house with a pool so our kids

will bring their kids, and their kids will bring *their* kids, and everyone will love going to the old person's house who has the great pool!

I see Aaron wobbling over to his grill where he's preparing burgers and veggies. I see myself pouring lemonade and bringing out the cookies. Store-bought, naturally. Because if I'm not baking homemade cookies at forty, you can be sure I won't be doing it at eighty. I might be old, but I won't be dumb! I'll still know how to get my people home to hang out with me.

A pool and good food. That ought to do it.

But seriously, I think looking ahead can be a healthy exercise, as long as the goal is to let it impact our *now*, our *today*. I once heard someone say (wisely, I thought), "Imagine who you want to be at eighty, then work backward to where you are now, and you'll see what you need to do to become the eighty-year-old you envision." Because death is coming for all of us. I know that sounds like the most morbid way of all to open a book, but it's where I think we should start. *At the end*. That way, we can go ahead and be grappling in now-time with the kinds of questions we know we'll be asking ourselves as we grow older.

I've yet to meet anyone who, when they reach the end of their lives, hopes to find that they wasted their years, hours, and moments. Deep inside, we all want to make a mark here on Earth with the time God has given us. We all want to matter. We all want to be a woman who lived her days well. We

all want to be a woman who hears God say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant” when our days here are over. We all want to be faithful women.

That’s why, almost more than anything else in my life right now, I love being one of the people talking straight into your ear, telling you how doable, how attainable this goal can be for you. I love being that friend of yours who cheers you on as we journey there together, showing you the truth about who you are and who God is, based on what His Word says.

This desire of mine for being a cheerleader to other women actually goes back a ways. I’ve known for more than a decade that something inside me wanted to encourage people toward living bigger lives, thinking more deeply about their passions, and then *going* for them, looking long and hard at the talents God had given them and then putting them to work.

I used to blog, for instance. I’m thinking lots of us could probably list that experience as part of our résumés. At first, when I was living a few states away from my parents, blogging was mostly just a tool for keeping my mom and dad in the loop with what was happening with our kids. I’d write funny stories and share pictures that would make my guys blush now if they saw them—you know, like the picture where a little boy was potty training and was constantly wearing his underwear backward? That’s the cutest thing on a two-year-old. Not sure why all of us moms were comfortable posting pics of our kids in the Spiderman undies, but whatever.

IveyFamily.blogspot.com. You could've looked it up but, thankfully for my kids' sake, I don't think that page is around anymore.

At one point, after our family began the adoption process for our two kids from Haiti, I updated my blog and gave it a new look, as well as a new name, because I now had a new message to share. I was dreaming big dreams—DreamingBigDreams.com—and I wanted to share those big dreams of our new journey and endeavor with everybody who chose to read about it.

Now that I think about it, not much has changed since that time. This book you're reading is full of those same messages. I want so much for you to chase your dreams and do big things because I am confident big things are awaiting us all. I believe you have world-changing abilities inside you, that your ideas are truly worth something, and that you should pursue your dreams as far as they will take you.

I say all of this, however, with one huge caveat.

You've probably heard and seen these sayings pop up in your Pinterest feed, the things people put out there to motivate and inspire us.

- Girl, you got this.
- You're enough.
- Hustle more.
- Get things done.
- Pick yourself up by your bootstraps.

- You can do anything you put your mind to.
- You control your destiny.
- You are your own boss.

All of these ideas are good. They're super motivating. But I'd like to suggest they're lacking. They are shallow and unsustainable. Not one of them is capable of bringing lasting hope and peace to your life. Not one of them is powerful enough to help you overcome whatever real-life struggle you're facing. I'll even go far enough out on the ledge to proclaim that these truths alone can be damning. Notice I said, "these truths *alone*." Most of them are not entirely bad in themselves. In fact I've probably said them all to different people at various points in my life. But what I'm seeing today is a world where women of faith are taking these cute little sayings and standing on them as if they were the way and the truth and the life.

They're not.

That's the danger in these sayings. They can't hold up under the pressures of the world. Because, no, you're *not* enough, girl. You *ain't* got this. You *can't* hustle enough, can't get enough things done. You *can't* do everything you set your mind on, no matter how badly you want to do it. You *don't* control your own destiny, because the One who made you has the days of your life already numbered, planned, and written for you. And sometimes, life can be so hard that there aren't enough bootstraps in all the world to pull yourself up

with. Know what I mean? Yes, I think deep down you know what I mean.

We are only enough because Jesus is enough. The only good things coming from you and me are coming from the Father.

So when I say *You Be You*, understand I'm not just spouting a cheap shout-out. I'm saying YOU have a strength of calling that originates in the mind of God.

**We are only
enough because
Jesus is enough.**

I'm saying YOU have a voice and platform that matters immensely today simply because it's the voice He's given you. I'm saying YOU have talents and giftings that He's invested in you, designed for a purpose way bigger than yourself. I'm saying YOU can be defiantly, biblically assured that no trial, no tragedy is oppressive enough to suffocate what He's put you on this earth for.

And this means YOU can experience satisfaction today. YOU can experience success today. Real satisfaction, real success, comes from doing what YOU do, doing it where YOU are, and doing it in faithfulness to the God who has lovingly, strategically put YOU there.

I realize things may look different than you imagined them being at this time in your life. It may not feel as satisfying as you'd hoped, not as satisfying as life seems to be for the people you're constantly comparing yourself against. But

that's because of how easily we confuse satisfaction and success with a pretend, phantom lifestyle that doesn't really exist.

I think we have been asking ourselves the wrong questions about our lives. Instead of asking, "Did I do enough today?" what if we asked ourselves, "Did I become more like Jesus today?" Instead of asking, "Was I successful?" what if we asked, "Was I faithful?" Less about us and more about Him. Less about accomplishments and more about our hearts. Less about my glory and more of His glory. Less about comparing our life to *their* lives, and more about comparing our faithfulness to His calling on *our* lives.

I really, truly believe you can do more than you think you can. I believe it's possible to come to the end of your days and

**You can do it—
because God
Himself has
already put it
there inside you.**

be absolutely certain, all the way into your bones, that your life mattered. That you made a difference. That you did the best with what God gave you. That you became more like Him that day. That your striving wasn't for your-

self but for a greater purpose than your own.

And this book is me being your cheerleader, promising you that you can live out God's will for your life, no matter what season you're in, no matter how your days are looking right now.

You can do it—because God Himself has already put it there inside you.

I'm in my forties now, and I love it. I almost feel like Will Ferrell in the movie *Elf*, when he yells, "I'm in love, I'm in love, and I don't care who knows it!" Except I want to yell, "I'm forty, I'm forty, and—" Seriously, I think forty is awesome, and I'm giddy with excitement for what the next decade of my life holds.

I remember so clearly my mom turning forty because my grandmother helped me throw a surprise party for her. We bought "over the hill" signs and stuff and acted as though we were planning more of a funeral than a birthday party. I remember thinking my mom was SO OLD. I had no way to imagine ever being that age. And yet here I am.

Let's say I do live to be eighty, which is roughly the current life expectancy for a woman in America today. I'm not taking eighty for granted, of course. But using that math, I've got about half my life still to go. And I believe these years are going to be great compared to the forty that led up till now.

Because if I'm being super honest, I only count about twenty of those first forty years as being worth anything. (I don't really mean that. Every experience I've gone through is all part of the story that makes my life today, and your life

today, the testimony of God's grace that it is.) But, man, does it ever feel sometimes like I wasted mine.

Frankly, the years from twenty to thirty weren't all that exciting for me either, because I spent a lot of that time wishing for things I didn't have. I'll tell you more about this later, but I squandered a lot of my twenties resenting that I was at home with my babies while my husband was traveling the world leading people in worship.

Maybe that's why I love meeting women today in their twenties who are just killing it—the ones who are chasing God hard, listening to Him, leaning into His plans for them. It makes me so happy, seeing this young generation of Christ-followers coming up behind. Because for me, I was around thirty before I finally began living with this idea of making it all count, of living for something bigger than myself. The ideas I write about in this book were not really formed in me until then.

That's what's so beautiful to me about being forty—because basically, I'm only about ten years or so into thinking differently about my life, seeing myself more closely, I believe, to the way *God* thinks about me. And now I've got forty whole years ahead of me (or *one* year, whatever He's planned for me) to completely pour myself out for Him and others, for everyone around me.

And I am so excited about that. It's why I can hardly type fast enough to get everything down I want to say to you because I'm so eager to help you dive deeply into the

right-here, right-now calling that God has on your life. Encouraging you today just fires me up—helping you think deeply about all the places you’ve been, all the stories that you alone can share, all the giftings you have to offer, and how God can transform your whole life when you start seeing all these things through the lens of the gospel.

You can do this! You can show up for the life that God has already ordained for you. You have nothing—nothing!—to lose. Everything to gain. It is *your* day now, my friend—your day, your place, to live the kind of life that you and others can look back on and say, “She used her days well. She was faithful to the end.” I so want that person to be me. And I have a small suspicion you want it for yourself as well.

Join me on this journey of becoming women who cease striving to become someone we’re not and simply rest in the work that our true hero, Jesus, has already accomplished for us.