

Author: Jamie West Zumwalt
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Author Bio

Jamie West Zumwalt is an author and lead pastor of Joe's Addiction, a coffee shop community in a "red light" district of Oklahoma City, where marginalized people living in poverty, addiction, mental illness, and homelessness have found a place of belonging.

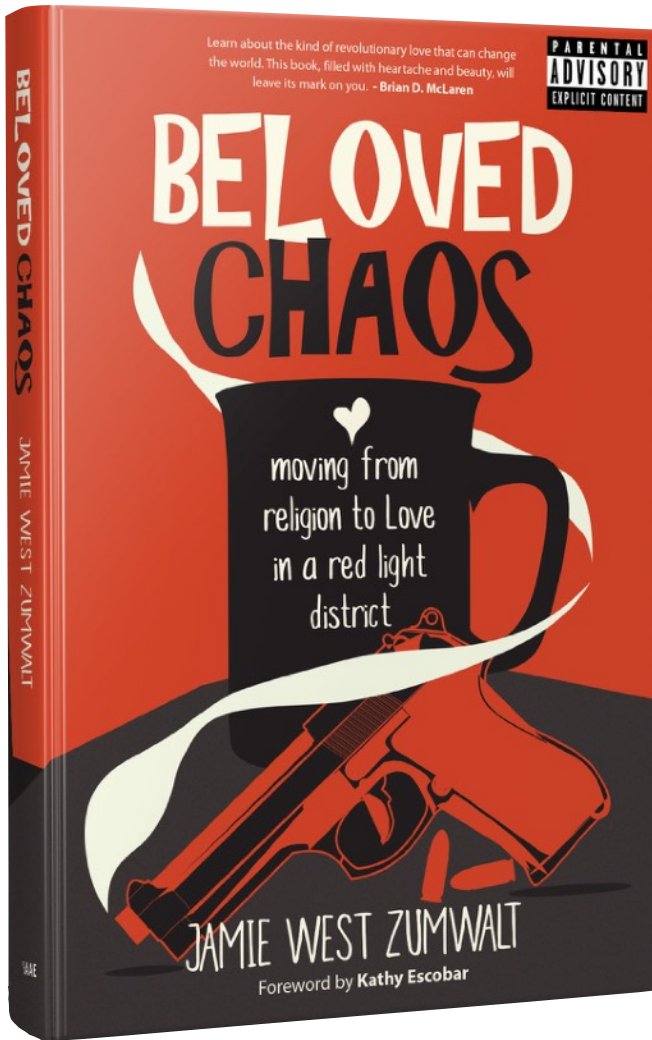
Jamie grew up in conservative, Evangelical Christianity, became a missionary in Taiwan and then a trainer of hundreds of missionaries who went to places around the globe to spread Christianity, until a personal faith crisis challenged everything she believed.

Her book, *Beloved Chaos: moving from religion to Love in a red light district*, tells stories of the Joe's Addiction community, as well as the evolution of her own faith from religious fundamentalism to a more open and inclusive Way of Love. Jamie now speaks at colleges, churches, and conferences, inviting people to enter into the Dream of a Better Way that she believes makes a Better World.

Jamie and her husband, John, have five biological children and many more who call Jamie, "Mama." "Mimi" is her favorite title though, given to her by her one granddaughter.



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Book Bio

What do you do when your faith no longer makes sense, when everything you thought you believed falls apart?

After twenty years in ministry, Christianity suddenly was no longer working for Jamie Zumwalt. In the midst of this crisis, she opened Joe's Addiction, a coffee shop, to conduct a Grand Experiment:

- Is it possible to live what Jesus taught —giving to those who ask, caring for the poor, forgiving and loving your enemies?
- And if possible, can it transform not only individuals, but an entire community?

Experience a red light district plagued by poverty and violence, as Jamie weaves her own story of overcoming sexual abuse, shyness, and judgmental religion with the stories of those living on the margins. From giant, tattooed gang enforcer, Forklift, to little Mary, the sex worker, we learn the patience necessary to fight despair and restore hope to men and women experiencing homelessness and addiction. Jamie challenges ideas about God and people and invites us to leave religion to follow the Way of Love, creating a Community of Hope that becomes a little taste of heaven, here on earth.

TESTIMONIALS



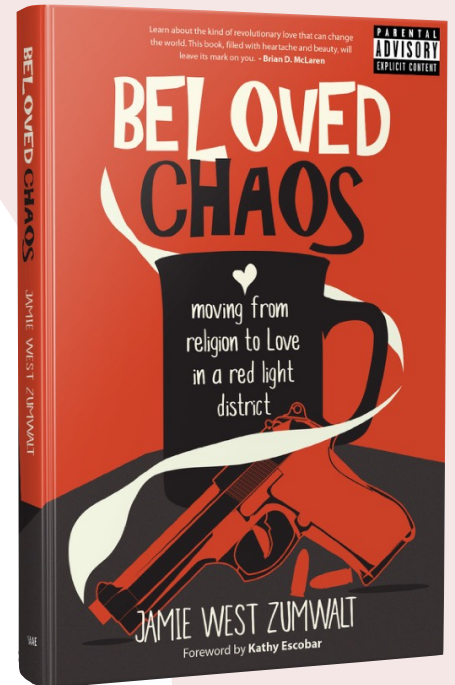
“The kind of revolutionary love that can change the world.”
-Brian D. McLaren



“Power to inspire!”
-Phileena Heuertz



“Made me laugh out loud!”
-Thomas Jay Oord



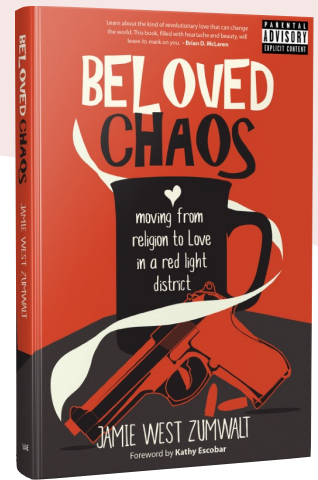
“Jamie Zumwalt and her crew are extremists for love. The pain is real, but so is the beauty. Read this book and you will be deeply impacted.” -Craig Greenfield

“With vulnerability, Jamie engages in some of the best local theologizing I have ever come across; revealing what Love looks like in the midst of pain, rejection, loss, violence . . . And it is indeed, a Beautiful Chaos.” -David Scott Vining

“Jamie Zumwalt has written a love story. A raw, real, unfiltered look at unconditional love in action. Be ready to have your religious sensibilities challenged!” -Steve Hollingsworth

“Zumwalt’s true stories narrate the poverty, human brokenness, abuse, and exploitation that is happening right now in American cities.” -Marty Michelson

Target Audience



WHO SHOULD READ

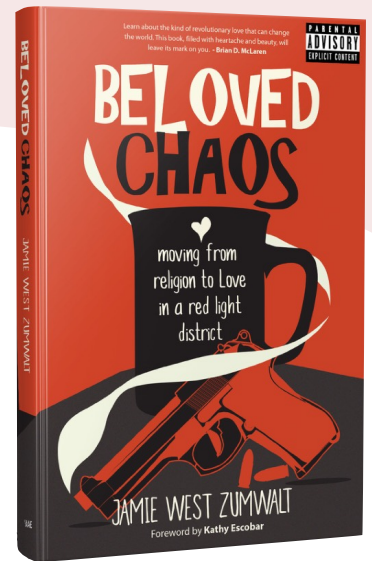
- Those who have ability and opportunity to choose how they want to spend their one life.
- Anyone disillusioned with Christianity as they have experienced it.
- People who want to make a difference and people who want to be significant.
- Those who think there is still hope for fixing our planet.
- Curious individuals about the world of gangs, sex industry, and drug addiction.
- People who are considering opening a similar kind of coffee shop ministry or work among the poor.
- Especially inspirational to millennials and people of faith.

BOOK BENEFITS

- Reveal how the big dreams of making a better world start in our own neighborhood.
- Encounter the world of the sex industry, addiction and generational poverty that is often hidden from sight
- Find courage to begin taking intentional action steps toward loving those who society often sees as unlovable.
- Be inspired to seek their own destiny in bringing some of heaven to earth.
- Join the author's own story of overcoming sexual abuse, shyness, and judgmental religion with the stories of gang members, sex workers, addicts, and people experiencing homelessness.
- Provide practical examples of how ordinary people without extraordinary ability can make big changes on our planet.



Book Excerpt



Chapter 22: Destiny

I walk out of the kitchen and Gary is right there. He stops in his tracks and stares at me. “Gary!” I exclaim, “I haven’t seen you in a long time!”

Gary lives outside and has pretty extreme mental illness. The last time I saw him, he was dirtier than I had ever seen him. His skin was brown, not from a tan, but from dirt. His layers of clothing reeked of urine. He had only come in out of the cold for just a few minutes to warm up, and then he set out again walking down the street. That’s where I usually see Gary, walking down the street. I don’t know where he comes from or where he’s going, but he’s always walking.

This day, when I greet him, Gary just stands there. Frozen. His light blue eyes always have a glassy sheen to them. He seems like he is looking right through me. No response. I ask him, “Can I help you with something, Gary?”

He says, “Yeah. I would like a tall iced tea.” Then he smiles, “With lots of sugar, please?”

“I think I can handle that,” I tell him.

I am surprised. In the few years I have known Gary, I have never seen him order a drink. He always drinks the free coffee or a cold cup of water from the cooler. I am surprised that Gary even has money. I’ve never known him to panhandle, and the uncle who was his Social Security Payee gave up helping him manage his money a long time ago.

I go to the tablet to ring up his order. “Two seventeen,” I say. Gary pulls out a small fold of bills and hands me the cash. As I am scooping ice and pouring his drink, I mention to him that he looks good. Gary has sometime recently taken a

bath. His clothes do not reek, and his overgrown hair and beard seem to have been brushed, although, he still looks like the last man on earth. His hair hangs long and wild. He wears a thick scraggly beard, and his tan leathery skin is now due to the sun, not just dirt.

Gary smiles. Then he asks, “Does your iced tea have healing powers?”

I say, “I don’t think I can say that it does.”

“Can it cure my multiple gunshot wounds?” he asks.

“You have multiple gunshot wounds?” I ask him as I pour a steady stream of sugar into his cup.

“You can’t see ‘em now, but yes. I have multiple gunshot wounds.”

I stir his tea with a long spoon. “Well, I’m glad you’re not bleeding all over my floor,” I say, as I look him in the eye. His eyes brighten, and gradually a grin spreads across Gary’s face. I hand him the tea and ask him to taste and see if it is sweet enough. He takes a sip and then says, “It presents perfectly.” His head is bowed, but he smiles, looking at me through the tops of his eyes. I put a lid on the cup. Then Gary turns and walks out the door into the hot Oklahoma sunshine, sipping his tall iced tea.

I don’t know how to explain to you that these types of encounters make everything else I do at Joe’s Addiction pale by comparison. The Hindi word, “namaste,” often said as a greeting, means: I see and acknowledge the Divine in you. I live for these moments when the real person at the core, underneath the illness, allows me to see them. That moment of connection feels like I have just seen *God*.

Interview Questions

- **Who in the community (past or present) has had the biggest impact on you personally? Spiritually?**
- **Has there ever been a time when you have felt fear while working among the gangs, homeless, drug addicted, and felons?**
- **How do you respond to those who tell the homeless: “get a job.”**
- **We hear about burn out a lot in ministry, yet you have been doing what some consider the most intense type of ministry for 12 years. What keeps you from burn-out? When you are running on empty, how do you refuel?**
- **What are steps to take if we want to help our own communities but can’t quit our day jobs and start a Joe’s Addiction?**
- **How has this experience affected your family?**
- **What keeps you moving forward in the work?**
- **What do you do outside of Joe’s Addiction?**
- **What three pieces of advice would you give to others who want to create a community like Joe’s in their own city?**
- **What is one thing we should avoid if we want to help others?**
- **What was the writing process like?**
- **What is your biggest dream for Joe's Addiction?**
- **Knowing what you know now, would you do it all over again? What might you have done differently?**
- **There are other people/ organizations doing similar work like you're doing with Joe's Addiction. Is there any coordination between organizations working with the homeless communities? If so, then what is being done or if not, then should there be some coordination and sharing of methods and resources to help each other?**
- **What is the one story that has broken your heart?**
- **Your ministry includes sex offenders, why?**
- **What is your favorite moment from the book?**
- **What is a favorite moment that didn’t make the book?**

FAQ

What exactly is Joe's Addiction?

Joe's Addiction is a coffee shop community. It is a place where people "hang out," drink coffee, develop relationship and do a lot of life together, learn to follow the Way of Love, and take care of one another.

What inspired you to start this coffee shop?

In the midst of an intense faith crisis, my husband and I decided to put the teachings of Jesus to the test. Is it even possible to live the things Jesus taught—giving to those in need, forgiving people who hurt you, turning the other cheek, loving your enemies? And if so, does it make any difference? Does it change anything? We wanted to try to live this Way and see what happened.

What made you decide to put Joe's Addiction in a such an impoverished section of Oklahoma?

This neighborhood is very poor, the average annual income being \$11,000. Besides the sex industry that is the main purpose of this area, there are many people struggling in drug addiction and mental illness, many people living outside, homeless, and lots of gang activity. According to the story of Jesus, these are kind of people he hung out with. We figured if we were going to experiment with his Way, then this would be the perfect place.

Why a coffee shop?

I grew up in Seattle, WA. Coffee is in my veins. Coffee shops are a comfortable place where people don't think it's weird to strike up a conversation with a stranger.

Can you tell people a little about what you do in the community?

Rather than a place where poor people can get a "hand out," Joe's Addiction is a community. Together we are learning to Love One Another. So we host recovery meetings. We share our food, both in groceries and in community meals. We recycle clothing and household items through our Free Store—sharing what we have with one another. We provide sleeping bags, tents and warm clothing to friends living outside. And most of all, we provide relationship—family who will walk with each other through the really tough stuff of life.

Can you share some of your most inspiring stories you have heard or experienced through the guests of Joe's Addiction?

I can relate stories of gang members, sex workers, addicts and people experiencing homelessness. The struggles of their lives, as well as the beauty of living in community where we care for one another. I also enjoy telling of the evolution of my own faith, as I have experienced life with these friends over the last twelve years.

Were you afraid to take your children into this kind of setting?

Yes. Terrified. Not only was I afraid of the violence and potential physical injury or possible death, but I was even more afraid of the "sin" that I would be exposing my children to. We had been raising our kids in a very conservative, very sheltered, homeschooled environment, where they were protected from knowing about the kinds of things that are so common in this community. Drugs, alcohol, crime, sex work. I was afraid they would be attracted to "sin." But what we experienced has been quite the opposite. Our children have grown up without judgment that I had, an understanding of the realities of the world, and with a great love and compassion for people who are suffering. My kids have become some of the kindest people I know.

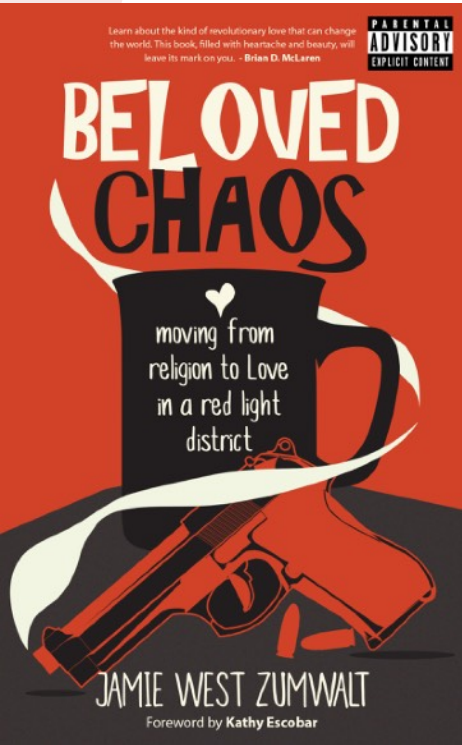
What is a church service like at Joe's Addiction?

We sing some karaoke. Mostly songs about our commitment to Love, many of them recognizable songs they might hear on the radio. We have a snack and smoke break. We share with each other our "prouds and sorries" from the week, achievements or ways we're looking more like the Way Jesus taught people to live, or apologies for failures or hurts we have caused one another. This is my favorite part of the service. We cheer and forgive each of these together. Then we listen to an interactive message about the Way of Love that Jesus taught and agree again to keep practicing this Better Way of Living.

What has kept you positive throughout your journey?

The stories. The healing I see happening in people. In myself. Reminders of where we came from and where we are now. We are getting better.

STORY IDEAS FOR REPORTERS:



Complexities of substance abuse recovery. NA, AA, Sober living homes, treatment centers and hopelessness.

Coffee shops that are humanitarian. Coffee shops as the new neighborhood living room/community center.

What difference can one person make? Individuals are necessary for social change. Individuals can make a difference in every small corner. Looking at the small picture.

Homelessness is on the rise. Practically addressing the problem of homelessness in our own back yard. Simple steps to help individuals in crisis.

Aspects of Community Development.

The mental health crisis. Lack of mental health care availability. Potential violence from mentally ill people. Mental illness as a community responsibility.

Gang violence. The myth of gang family. The world of gang justice. What happens when a gang member wants to leave. Rehabilitation of ex gang members.

The role of city government, the police and shop owners in the life of a neighborhood.

From spiritual crisis to spiritual awakening. Coping with the loss of faith. Evangelicalism is in decline and many millennial and gen z are walking away. Surviving personal metaphysical existential crisis.

Food deserts. When the only stores in walking distance are convenience store, with inflated prices and limited options. The impact on families, health, and budgets. Starting community gardens.

Injustice of the prison system and the need for reform.

Complexities of the sex offender status. Public branding, shame, and the inability to pay one's debt to society. Are all sex offenders "Chomos?" Lack of political will to address the issue hurts both the safety of society and justice for the individuals.

The culture and complexities of generational poverty. Expectations and value systems are different. Life expectancy is low.

Better models for church/faith communities.

DOWNLOADABLE PHOTOS

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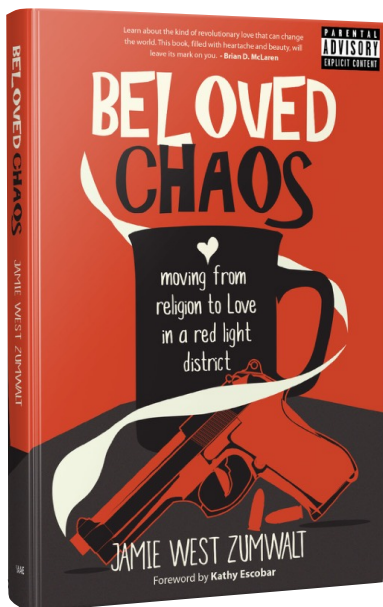
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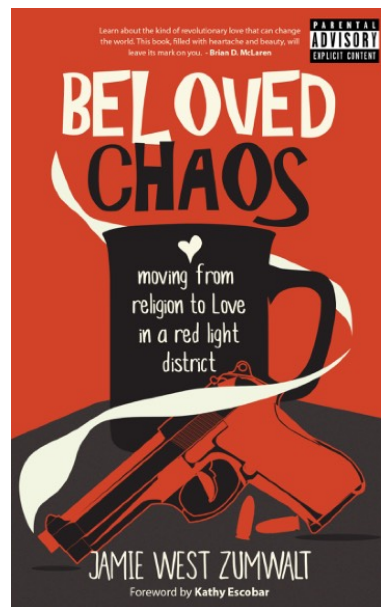
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