

# An Interview with Anne Jackson

Author of *Mad Church Disease*

**Q:** Tom and Jane are ministry workers. They catch a glimpse of your new book. They have friends who've faced burnout, but so far, they feel great! Why should they get a copy of *Mad Church Disease*?

**A:** During the first two years I served in a church, everything was great! I was able to run and run and run ... and I loved it. The thing about burnout is you won't know it happens until it hits you. In *Mad Church Disease*, I share a bit of my story before, during, and after burnout.

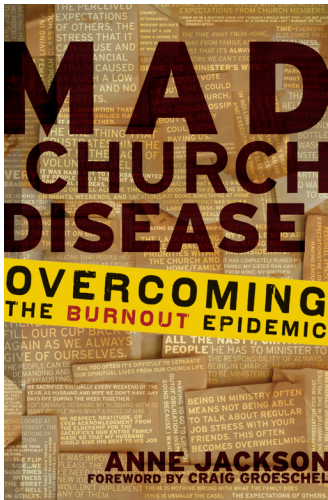
Burnout is also multifaceted, and in the book, we explore common symptoms and risk factors. Most importantly, we learn why burnout happens ... God wants to use us to change the world, and that makes the enemy really mad. It's his sole purpose to destroy us, but it's God's sole purpose to redeem us. Even if we're not burned out now, we've got to be on guard. *Mad Church Disease* explores principles of health that will help prevent burnout.

**Q:** Can you elaborate about burnout in relation to the size of a church? It seems like a rapidly-growing church would have stressed-out staff if droves of new converts are coming in, more discipleship courses are opening, and more worship services are launching. On the other hand, a church with declining attendance could have exhausted leaders if they are struggling to offer adequate programs and outreach while also keeping the light bill paid.

**A:** Burnout can happen, and does happen, in any church size. My family burned out in small churches in rural communities, and I burned out in a megachurch in the suburbs. Nobody is immune. The one common denominator is that Satan only wants to steal, kill and destroy us (John 10:10). He wants to do everything he can to stand in the way of the full and abundant life God intends for us. It is essential for all believers—regardless of where they serve—to stay connected to our Father through Christ. Apart from him, in any situation or circumstance, big, small, rich, poor ... we can do nothing.

Continued 





**Q:** What healthy results will we see in our churches if we take seriously the wisdom of *Mad Church Disease*?

**A:** Reading a book is great, but it's following through with the actions of it that will bring about health. My hope is that *Mad Church Disease* will help create environments that church leaders, whether paid or volunteer, and their families can discuss the issues of stress and burnout. If we create these safe environments and allow light to shine through our brokenness (instead of feeling like we have to maintain a perfect spiritual façade), others will see that light. Our communion with Christ and our community with believers will be strengthened.

**Q:** What has surprised you most about response to *Mad Church Disease*?

**A:** I'm surprised so many people can relate. It's sad, in a way ... yet at the same time, a tribe is forming of people who want to thrive in ministry. People who are sick and tired of being sick and tired and are committed to getting healthy. These people, who thought they were alone, are learning they aren't, and are beginning to carry each others' burdens. They're finding their courage and voicing their need for healthy environments. They're leading up, and leading by example. It's a polite rebellion against the way things (that lead to burnout) have been done. I can't wait to see where it goes!

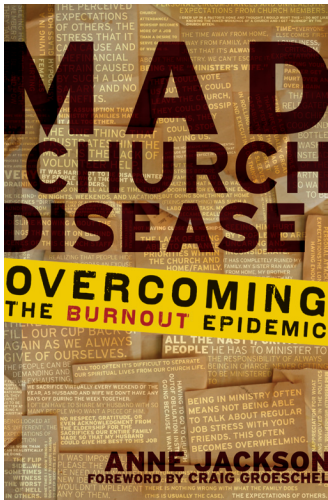
**Q:** Some people who need to read your book may be former volunteers. They are gifted laity who got burned out and quit serving. How can we reignite their interest?

**A:** I wish I could say that if you do everything you can to live a healthy life, you'll never get hurt again. That's not the case. Finding your passion, and in some instances, your ability to trust people again is difficult. The love talked about in 1 Corinthians is a love that hopes for the best, and trusts ruthlessly ... even in the midst of fear.

We are all called to serve each other—that's a biblical command. If we do it in our strength, it's not going to work. We have to lean into our relationship with Christ. Then, even in spite of hardships, will it be a joy.

Continued 





**Q:** If you could send a personal message to young people who are living with parents who are fully engaged in local church ministry, what would you say to them?

**A:** One word: COUNSELING! I'm halfway kidding. If you do find yourself getting a little messed up, talk to someone. It's incredible. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions. Learn from your parents, but search for answers as well. You'll develop a unique perspective and be able to minister to others in ways you'll never imagine by being the child of someone in ministry. It's hard ... most of the time ... but embrace it.

**Q:** What advice do you offer their parents?

**A:** Don't protect your kids too much. Let them see all sides of the church ... the beauty and the brokenness. By allowing them to see the "ugly" side of things, you never know what kind of passions will develop. Encourage them to explore and grow in their unique relationship and giftedness.

© 2009, Gospel Publishing House.

