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**Anne Jackson Wants You to Confess—
She'll Go First in New Book *Permission to Speak Freely***

A Call to Reclaim the Church as a Safe Place for Broken People

In a string of public confessions, celebrities and politicians including David Letterman, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, and Tiger Woods have revealed their innermost secrets before the glare of TV cameras. Yet in an irony not lost on author Anne Jackson, the last place many people feel able to reveal their most painful secrets is the place they should feel safest—in church. “Why, of all places on earth, do we fear revealing our secret sin in the church?” she asks in her new book, *Permission to Speak Freely: Essays and Art on Fear, Confession, and Grace* (Thomas Nelson, \$16.99 trade paper, August 31, 2010). Jackson tells how she stopped hiding her own brokenness, and calls others to join her in a movement to reclaim the church as the safest and most grace-giving sanctuary on earth—a place where everyone can speak freely.

Permission to Speak Freely is a unique collaboration featuring Jackson’s essays and poetry, along with artistic renderings of confessions—photos, drawings, postcards, letters—submitted to her by mail or to her blog, FlowerDust.net. The project began in May 2008, when Jackson posed a question on her blog: “What is the one thing you feel you can’t say in the church?” The response was immediate and heartfelt. More than 500 comments poured in, confessions about addiction and adultery, admissions of loneliness and lost faith, and much more.

The purpose of the book is simple, Jackson says: “to share the confessions I’ve received, as well as my own life and experience, to show you that you’re not alone in your battle with fear and secrets. We are not isolated in our brokenness.”

The question came from Jackson’s own experience of being afraid to say something in church or to reveal herself to other Christians. Broken and alone is exactly how she felt for years, a Southern Baptist pastor’s daughter struggling with an addiction to porn, sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, being the victim of sexual abuse by a youth pastor, and coping with depression. Her story is one of “battling fear, hiding from God, hating

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the church, loving the church, and finding myself on a never-ending quest for more truth and more grace.”

Jackson’s problem with porn began when she was a teenager, typing “sex” into an internet browser that led to an addiction she’d fight for years. Even as the manager of Christian bookstore, she’d go home after work each night and look at porn on her computer. After confessing everything to God, she threw out her computer and refused to have internet service at home for several years to break the cycle. “The confession about the porn, the men, and a million other shameful things was the beginning of a spiritual reawakening,” she says.

Now Jackson is done with keeping brokenness in the dark. When she found the courage to bring her addictions into the light, she experienced the transformative power of grace and mercy. She calls for more confession, more “speaking freely”: “We will be unified more by our common humanity and need for divine intervention and we’ll be separated less by darkness and loneliness.”

Jackson’s message to those who feel broken, isolated, and paralyzed by fear, is that on the other side of fear is freedom: “Each time we decide to take a step away from fear, we begin to move forward into a life completely energized and rich in the freedom God has for us.”

“Somebody is waiting on you to tell your story. To share how you’re being rescued. To share how scary it is, but how beautiful it is,” she says.

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About the Author

Anne Jackson is an author, speaker, social change activist, and popular blogger at FlowerDust.net. Her previous book, *Mad Church Disease* was published in 2009.

Jackson has traveled around the world telling stories of hope found in the least likely of places. She is a contributing writer to various blogs and magazines as well as a speaker advocate for [Compassion International](#).

Since 2008, via online campaigns and speaking engagements, Jackson (and FlowerDust.net readers) have raised almost one million dollars for charitable causes. Jackson will be a rider on the 2010 [Ride:Well Tour](#), a cross-country cycling tour in June and July 2010. The goal of the trip is to raise awareness and funding for water wells in Africa. Ride:Well is associated with the [Blood:Water Mission](#) water initiative. Jackson lives in the Nashville area with her husband, Chris.

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