

Endorsements of *Cancer Is Funny* by Jason Micheli

"I don't know if cancer is funny, but I can tell you that *Cancer Is Funny* is often hilarious! And the parts of Jason Micheli's astounding book that aren't hilarious brim with profound reflections on life, death, God, and the absurd wonder and tragedy of being human. And it doesn't hurt that the writing is superb. This is not a book for people with cancer, this is a book for people who are mortal."

Brian Zahnd | pastor of Word of Life Church, St. Joseph, Missouri, and author of *A Farewell to Mars* and *Water to Wine*

"This is the real thing, people. If you have friends with cancer, parishioners with cancer, family members with cancer, or have cancer yourself (and who does not fit into at least one of these categories?), you'll find this book indispensable."

Jason Micheli has learned that the only answer to the question 'Why is God doing this to me?' is, 'We don't know.' This gifted pastor-theologian tells rivetingly authentic stories of encounters with dread illnesses—including his own—and with sudden or imminent death, including the possibility of his own. It is all presented in a no-nonsense way that most such books, for all their good intentions, do not achieve. Like every honest sufferer, he is one of those who 'perpetually wander in and out of belief.' He reads the Psalms of lament the way they are meant to be read—with anger and anguish and protest and the wrenched-out-of-pain insistence that he will continue to hold on to the God that seems to be either absent or actively against him.

Black humor is the best weapon against our common Enemy, but rarely today is it wielded, literally *in extremis*, with the cultural expertise, razor-sharp intelligence, and—best of all—keen theological understanding as here in Pastor Micheli's book. He will cure you of any platitudes you might be tempted to fall back on when addressing life's most excruciating tests. He rages against God in the best Hebrew-Christian tradition, and he rages against explanation of evil in a way that teaches us to resist until Death swallows us up—always clinging to the promise of Scripture, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' In any case, Pastor Jason will have you laughing out loud over and over, and you will learn something important along the way."

Fleming Rutledge | episcopal priest and author of *God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament*

"Ironically and maybe similarly the last peaceful words of hard drinking and tuberculosis-ridden Doc Holliday, the former dentist and calm deadly gunfighter, were "This is funny." In *Cancer is Funny*, Jason Micheli, a Methodist preacher, presents surprising and fearless sarcasm and unexpected perspectives of his emotions, challenges and reverence in his daunting battle with deadly cancer. Having heard Jason's good use of irony and humor in church, one sees all of his unvarnished, unleashed creative thinking in this non-preaching, truly meaningful book that will bring greater understanding to anyone who does not need parental guidance."

George Allen | former U.S. Senator, Virginia

"Some authors impose order and hidden blessing on suffering at a distance from the experience, unmoved by its weight. Others surrender to it with thinly veiled fatalism. Stripped of artifice and excuse, Jason Micheli invites us to plumb its depths with telling honesty, where we discover a God

whose enemy is misery, whose pain is forever joined to ours, and whose name is hope.”

Frederick W. Schmidt | author of *The Dave Test, A Raw Look at Real Faith in Hard Times* and *Rueben P. Job Chair in Spiritual Formation at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary*

“Jason Micheli’s sardonic yet truthful account is moving to those of us who dislike autobiographies, perhaps because it isn’t one. On the way to disclosure, Micheli lets readers engage with the most important questions of life and faith: What is suffering? What are moments of genuine encounters with another human? Why pray to God? When and how does love happen? As Micheli relies on humor in tackling these issues, he enacts the conceptual distinction set up in the introduction between deflective coping mechanisms and the shedding of pretense. Cancer is funny, in other words, not because your comedy evades sincerity more effectively with jokes about full-body hair loss, but because vulnerability is as inevitable, inescapable, and existential as your humanity. Micheli navigates this distinction deftly, weaving it with thoughts on the incarnation, and his self-deprecation never betrays him. Self-deprecating humor can easily become for the reader the doughy pancakes that lose their appeal and swell as you’re chewing them. But because *Cancer is Funny* sticks with the initial motif of a true rather than a resembling ontology, the exploration of human precarity remains compelling. Micheli is as equal to the task of writing a cancer pathography as to the task of writing an accessible treatment of human struggles with pain, love, fear, and God.”

E. Johanna Hartelius | University of Pittsburgh

“Illness creates loneliness but Micheli resists that development by sharing his struggle with cancer. He does so with good humor which is not only a gift because, as he suggests, cancer is only funny in a tragic way, but also the most fundamental quality for a well-lived and faithful life.”

Stanley Hauerwas | Gilbert T. Rowe Emeritus Professor of Divinity and Law at Duke University

“This book is completely inappropriate and that’s exactly what it needs to be. Jason has perfected the art of pastoral irreverence. Cancer isn’t funny except when it is. Don’t feel guilty if this book makes you laugh your ass off, but don’t be surprised if Jason tricks you into loving God more in the process.”

Morgan Guyton | author of *How Jesus Saves the World from Us: 12 Antidotes to Toxic Christianity*

“Jason hits the mark with his book *Cancer is Funny*. While most people view a diagnosis of “stage serious” cancer as a somber and sober topic, Jason brilliantly shows the humor that can be found in so many mundane and scary steps along the cancer path. It is brutally, humanely and laughingly honest.”

Susan Allen | author of *The Remarkable Ronald Reagan*

“Don’t let the title of this book fool you. It’s not just funny, and it’s not just about having cancer. Jason Micheli writes serious theology for everyone with a mortal body and a questioning spirit. Just top notch.”

R. Kendall Soulen | Candler School of Theology, Emory University

“Put down that outdated magazine in your oncologists office! *Cancer is Funny* will take you on a journey from Jason’s mind all the way to the inner parts of his body that ends up revealing his soul. Jason lays himself bare so that you can look, laugh and feel better during the often faith-testing, twisted ride that is cancer. What is funniest is that this book will grab you and remind you of what matters in life.”

Brian Stolarz | attorney and author of *Grace and Justice on Death Row*

“Writing with the brutal honesty and wit of Annie Lamott, Jason Micheli takes his readers on a harrowing journey of discovery . Smart enough to know that easy answers about God cannot be found—

ever—Micheli is a theologian of the only theology that matters—the theology of death and life. Cancer may not strike you as funny, but Micheli certainly is as he confronts his (and our) worst fears and shows us that life is a gift, even in the midst of great suffering.”

Jeffrey C. Pugh | Elon University, author of *The Homebrewed Christianity Guide to the End Times*

“Coming to terms with death ain’t easy. And yet, as Jason Micheli says, none of us is getting out of life alive. Thankfully Jason Micheli has given us a surprising book like *Cancer is Funny*, which, it so happens, is as hilarious as it is thoughtful and deeply faithful. *Cancer is Funny* is funny. It’s also personal and reflective, urgently so. It will not only teach you about yourself, it will teach you about God too. A riveting journey through the suffering that, as he puts, God may or may not be doing to him—a question everyone of us has asked, or will some day soon. Don’t be fooled by the title. Suffering, it turns out, can lead to laughter because you can’t face death without rediscovering the wonder of life.”

David Fitch | BR Linder Chair of Evangelical Theology, Northern Seminary and author of *Faithful Presence*

"Sometimes you read a book you have to finish. Sometimes you know you have to read it again. On occasions you read a book that makes you think, laugh, drop some tears, & want to grab a drink with the author. Jason has done that, plus I have a list of people who will be getting this book as a gift. If you love solid theology, powerful testimony, & a text you will ruminate over, you will love this book."

Tripp Fuller | author of *The Homebrewed Christianity Guide to Jesus*

“*Cancer Is Funny* is a stunning monument to human perseverance and divine grace amid the specter of finitude. The very fact of its construction, like that of the ancient pyramids or the Taj Mahal, is as improbable as it is awe-inspiring and beautiful. The result is a wonder to behold. Jason Micheli is that rare Christian minister who serves up truth unvarnished, live-blogging with graphic honesty his experience of ingesting deadly poisons designed to spare his young life, against sobering odds, from an unforgiving cancer. Fasten your seatbelts, dear readers. There is turbulence ahead. Prepare to laugh and cry. Prepare to live and die.”

Robert C. Dykstra | Charlotte W. Newcombe Professor of Pastoral Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary

“If smart-ass humor is the best evidence of fighting spirit, Jason Micheli is Charles Bronson of cancer patients. He disrupts all the clichés of cancer chronicles: he’s not old or saintly and peddling comfort or resolution. He’s a preacher who’s not at peace, a GenXer who acknowledges that irony is his security blanket. Staring down the barrel of a life-threatening disease, he proves that irreverence can be the flip side of faith.

JC Herz | author of *Learning to Breathe Fire*

"What gets lost in all the stories about the decline of religion is how many people have left church because they find its leaders uninspired and institutionally minded. Jason Micheli is neither. He is as funny as he is smart and both come through in refreshing, irreverent ways in *Cancer is Funny*. If you're spiritual but not religious or if you're religious but have forgotten how to be spiritual, Jason Micheli reminds us that God can be found in the world beyond the Church, even in incurable cancer. And Jason shows us with raw candor that wherever God is to be found, joy and laughter are possible."

Diana Butler Bass | author of *Grounded: Finding God in the World—A Spiritual Revolution*

“Jason Micheli is one of the most hip, funny, deeply-theological-without-being-boring pastors in my church today. Jason is an engaging, always substantive-without-being-showy communicator of the

faith. Now that he's got Stage Dangerous Cancer Jason's wit, faith, and genius turns even that tough journey into a pilgrimage toward God. Only Jason could transform cancer into a source of comedy but also a great occasion to teach the rest of us how to think like Christians about life, sickness, death, and God. Jason is able to do this because he, as much as anyone I know, believes in a living, redemptive God who is with us, in good times and bad. A funny, faithful book."

Will Willimon | Duke Divinity School, bishop in the United Methodist Church