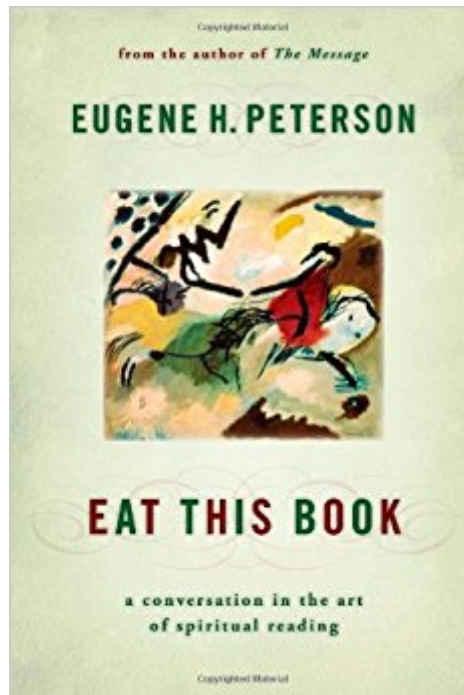




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Eat This Book: A Conversation In The Art Of Spiritual Reading



Synopsis

Eat This Book challenges us to read the Scriptures on their own terms, as God's revelation, and to live them as we read them. With warmth and wisdom Peterson offers greatly needed, down-to-earth counsel on spiritual reading. In these pages he draws readers into a fascinating conversation on the nature of language, the ancient practice of lectio divina, and the role of Scripture translations; included here is the "inside story" behind Peterson's own popular Bible translation, The Message.

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Customer Reviews

Peterson is a retired pastor and popular author best known for The Message, a paraphrasing of the Bible into modern idiom. In this slender book, he invites Christian readers to encounter the Bible anew. Drawing on language in Ezekiel and Revelation, Peterson says that we ought not read the Bible the same way we read a cookbook, a textbook, or even a great novel. Rather, Christians are to absorb, imbibe, feed on and digest Scripture. Peterson recommends a type of Bible-based prayer called lectio divina, in which the person praying meditates on a short passage of Scripture and listens for God to speak through the text. Peterson's exposition of lectio divina is one of the fullest to appear in recent years. Throughout, he cautions that lectio is not a systematic way of reading, but a "developed habit of living the text in Jesus' name." The last chapter, in which Peterson ruminates on his own experience translating the Bible, will be fascinating to Peterson's devotees, but is more myopic than the rest of the book. However, this is a worthy sequel to Peterson's 2004 hit Christ

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Christianity Today, "Award of Merit, Spirituality" (2007) Lauren F. Winner "• author of *A Girl Meets God* and *Real Sex* "Deep, stirring, luminous, even profound "• if you are going to read one book about reading Scripture, it should be this one." Gerald Sittser "• author of *A Grace Disguised* "Eugene Peterson has written a magnificent book about how to read the Bible. As any editor would say, a book must 'show,' not just 'tell.' Peterson's book does exactly that. The book itself has a biblical quality to it. Peterson uses vivid language; he tells and then reflects on wonderful stories; he invites readers to read their own stories in light of the story. This book is the fruit of decades of reading, pondering, conversing about, praying over, and living this story. Peterson encourages us to read the Bible as if we were dogs gnawing on a bone. *Eat This Book* made me lick my chops." Church & Synagogue Libraries "Peterson explores the ancient discipline of *lectio divina* and how its elements of reading, meditating, praying, and living can help us receive Scripture as 'formative for the way we live our lives, not merely making an impression on our minds or feelings. . . . Recommended." Publishers Weekly "Peterson's exposition of *lectio divina* is one of the fullest to appear in recent years. . . A worthy sequel to his 2004 hit *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*."

Eugene Peterson is one of my favorite theologians. Like Henri Nouwen, Peterson has an unusual gifting with words. He phrases his thoughts with extraordinary insight. His ability to conceptualize truth is uncommon. And this book is no exception to his literary genius. Chapter four on biblical exegesis alone is worth the price of the book. In fact, it is the best book I've ever read on the nature and importance of exegetical research and *lectio divina*. This book serves as a reminder of our central task as preachers. Unlike any other profession in the world, preachers have the privilege to shape people's lives with Scripture. This book teaches us how to be moved and how to move others, how to enter the text ourselves and import the text into others. The unique insights here will drive you to make the study of Scripture your paramount priority for preaching and for personal growth. Like Nouwen's writings, it is the type of book that every sentence must be read and contemplated. I believe there is no higher calling than the call to transform lives through the framing of consonants, vowels, nouns, and verbs of the Bible. I highly recommend this book for every Evangelical preacher.

I love this book. It is vintage Peterson. In simple but compelling language, he informs and educates the reader on both how and why we should read the Bible seriously. I was gratified to see that he was really telling us how to meditate and internalize the power that lies in the words of "God's Word."

Eugene Peterson, the author of the Message paraphrase of the Bible is a prolific author. He has also authored several other books, including a 5 volume spiritual theology series. *Eat This Book* (2006) is the second book in the series. Peterson informs the reader about the importance of how we read the Bible and not just that we read it. Too often, evangelicals come to the Bible with a desire to parse and master the word rather than have the word master them. In the first section, he makes a strong case for the transformative nature of scripture. In the second, he presents the *Lectio Divina*, a method of sacred reading. Well, to be fair, he is careful not to provide a prescriptive method, but rather talks about what spiritual reading looks like. I particularly benefited from his description of the *contemplatio* as this has never been entirely clear to me before. In the third section, he addresses how Bibles are translated including his own approach to translating the Message. This section did not flow from the other two, but was interesting nonetheless. I think this is a beneficial read for those wanting to grow in godliness through interacting with the word.

Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading by Eugene H. Peterson. Chapters one through seven will be helpful for most Christians. In them, Peterson endeavors to make reading the Bible personal, relational, and transformational. Instead of someone being lord of the text, examining it as if in a laboratory, one is to submit their life to the transforming, power-filled, recreating, inspirational thoughts of Scripture. We should not use Scripture to string together positions that support our dogma or encourage a consumer attitude that allows us to be our own gods. We, instead, should approach Scripture to find out what God is saying to us and how we can live within his world; we are to enter and live the Story via the aid of Scripture. Peterson does not want us to read the Bible literally but seriously, in the language of Tyndale's 'plowboy'--everyday language that helps us relate to, understand, enter into and live within God's currently unfolding story. This isn't a book written by someone growing in the "art of spiritual reading", nor penned by a person who knows the topic in theory but not reality. Peterson has lived his topic for decades and again displays his typical ability to write theologically wide and deep thoughts that are digestible and real. Uniquely and contrastingly, he is in all rights both a biblical scholar and linguist but also a

pastor, discipler, and champion of the devotional life. Chapters eight and nine expose the setting, motives, worldview, and rationale behind Peterson's Message. I've read too much of Peterson to think that he is advocating a reader responsive method of hermeneutics; nonetheless, in translation work he is ever seeking for fresh insight that illuminates and amplifies the original. Quoting Bediako, Peterson is not tied to the history of translation but rather sees translation work as 'a moment of growth of the original [text], which will complete itself in enlarging itself' (173). I don't agree. He recognizes the value of other translations (176), but for him, 'the only way that style and tone could be conveyed to the people among whom [he] lived was through paraphrase'. [175] One senses that with regards to Peterson's perspective of reading and translating the Bible, his pendulum has swung from an original dogmatic, legalistic KJV Scofield only stance [174] to where he is today. That said,* The Message is worth reading, provided it is read like one would listen to a sermon--elaborated thoughts from an original text by a flawed person attempting to stand between two worlds--the world of the Bible and the world of his listeners.* Eat This Book is worth reading, as it contemporizes the long held practice of Lectio Divina.

Peterson's emphasis on the need for people to go beyond merely reading the word, but also allowing the word to read them is a compelling challenge. I found my appreciation of God's word and its rightful place in my life and the life of the church refreshed. Beyond merely a challenge, Peterson provides an excellent discussion of the origin, history, and practice of lectio-divina a discipline which has traditionally and historically enabled many throughout the ages to apply his challenge. The discussion of the history of common (Koine) Greek is also very enlightening. This book would be a very valuable resource or study for a small group, college age/adult group or a guide for a message series. It would also be valuable for giving to someone who has a desire to learn more about the background of the Bible no matter what their current beliefs may be. His discussion of the background of his Bible translation "The Message" was also quite interesting. Overall, I found the book very spiritually challenging, helpful and enjoyable. I highly recommend it.

Love Eugene Peterson!

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