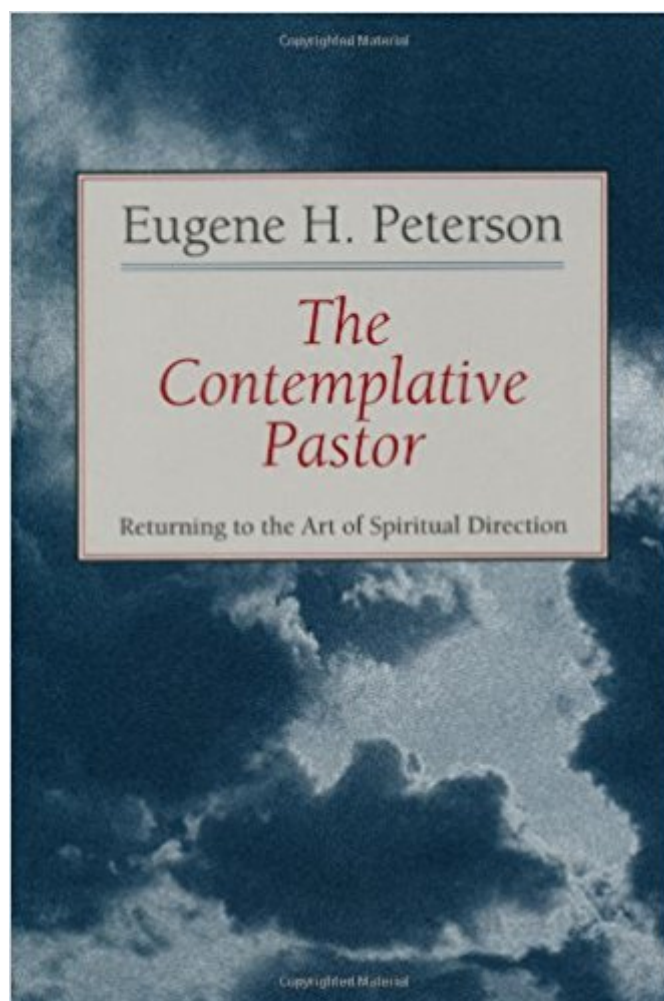


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The Contemplative Pastor: Returning To The Art Of Spiritual Direction



Synopsis

Any pastor who needs and wants to get back to basics will do well to absorb this book. Eugene Peterson, well known as "a pastor's pastor," here speaks words of wisdom and refreshment for pastors caught in the busyness of preaching, teaching, and "running the church." In *The Contemplative Pastor* Peterson highlights the often-overlooked essentials of ministry, first by redefining the meaning of pastor through three strengthening adjectives: *unbusy*, *subversive*, and *apocalyptic*. The main part of the book focuses on pastoral ministry and spiritual direction "between Sundays": these chapters begin with poetic reflections on the Beatitudes and then discuss such themes as curing souls, praying with eyes open, the language of prayer, the ministry of small talk, and sabbatical--all with engaging, illustrative anecdotes from Peterson's own experience. The book ends with several meaning-full poems that pivot on the incarnation, the doctrine closest to pastoral work. Entitled "The Word Made Fresh," this concluding section is a felicitous finale to Peterson's discerning, down-to-earth reflections on the art of pastoring.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

St. Anthony Messenger "This excellent treatise on the rediscovery of the authentic purpose of true pastoral care deserves attention, dialogue and action."

Eugene H. Peterson was a longtime pastor and is professor emeritus of spiritual theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. His many other acclaimed books include *Tell It Slant*, *The*

Jesus Way, Eat This Book, and the contemporary translation of the Bible titled The Message.,

What more can be said for Eugene Peterson? I read his books because of his economy of words. He doesn't use 10 paragraphs to say what can be said in 2. Rather, he'll do it in 1. Among his books, this is my go-to book that grounds me in my calling and prevents me from disillusionment. Love it and highly recommended.

There are few writers I enjoy more than Eugene Peterson. His love for God, for people, and for language routinely meet on the pages of his books. His work should be tasted and savored, but I find it difficult not to binge on his writings. Not surprisingly, Peterson exploring "the Art of Spiritual Direction" in *The Contemplative Pastor* (1989) was a book that I had a hard time setting down. *The Contemplative Pastor* is broken into three sections. In the first, "Redefinitions," Peterson explored three descriptors for a pastor: unbusy, subversive, and apocalyptic. I was recently moved by his description of the "unbusy pastor" in his later memoir *The Pastor* and had some familiarity with the idea of the apocalyptic pastor. Briefly, in Peterson's thoughts, pastors should be characterized by settledness, margin, and patience, working without frenzy in the day to day life of the church and of the world. The second section--the longest--is called "Between Sundays". Peterson meaningfully argues that much, if not most, of the work of the pastor takes place from Monday to Saturday. The nine chapters here are built around the beatitudes with an eye toward soul care. Each chapter begins with a poem and then moves into the realities of spiritual direction, exploring themes such as creation, prayer, language, small talk, and suffering. The final, albeit too brief, final section contains a number of poems about the incarnation. Peterson asked, "is it not significant that the biblical prophets and psalmists were all poets?" To answer his rhetorical question, yes, I believe it is significant. Words matter. Words convey truth, but they also convey beauty. Like his previous works *The Contemplative Pastor* by Peterson is a joy to read, whether or not you are a pastor.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, for it challenged me to return to ministry basics and to God's calling and purpose for my life. It is all too easy to allow our culture and social pressures to keep us busy doing what people desire, instead of keeping our focus on what God has called us to be and do. This book helped solidify the importance of prayer, meditation, and quality time spent in touch with our Creator and Savior. The daily disciplines of these tools help sharpen my focus and sensitivity, so that I recognize more opportunities for ministry in the marketplace.

It was an easy read, well laid out and multiple stories to help orient us to the idea's Peterson was throwing out. I did feel like some of the chapters repeated themselves and that he was just trying to fill up pages to meet a quota. All in all a good book that I still reference today.

Good book for reflection of ministry. Whether young or old, Eugene's illustrations from personal examples cause the reader to pause and ask the comparative question "does this describe me?" For those in ministry I would surmise that the answer to most, maybe not all, of the answers to the repetitious question above is "yes, this does describe me!" Now that you've identified that struggle, how do you correct it? Welcome to this book!

This book deserves to be read by anyone who is striving to survive as a Christian and knows what it is like to battle the winds of cultural mores. It has rejuvenated my commitment to a dedicated life as well as called me to return to reading scripture on a daily basis. Too bad I had not read this way back when I was preaching. So glad to have read it now. Let it be known that being a Christian in this U.S. culture is meant to be an effort that needs to be carefully parsed.

It is easy, when reading a book, to "fall in love" with an author or the concepts he or she discusses in it. With most books, the ardour often dissipates within days of the reading. That will not be the case with *The Contemplative Pastor*. Peterson's depth of analysis will require repeated visits to drink in the wisdom on these pages. His diagnoses of the core ills facing the pastor and his flock are keenly insightful. His prescriptions for these sicknesses fit well with Scripture, and they sit well with my soul. This is a "how-to" book in the purest and best sense of the phrase. It is not a book of behaviours to imitate but an attitude to embrace. If we want to matter, all of us who have been called into service for Jesus must serve as thoughtfully, faithfully, intentionally, thoroughly, humbly and gracefully as God will empower us to do. Thank you, Eugene Peterson for that important reminder.

We love Eugene Peterson.... we love this book. especially my wife. lol. arrived when promised.

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