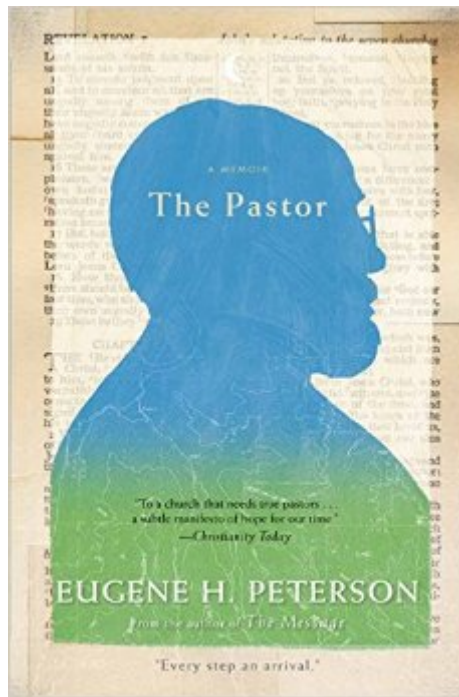


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# The Pastor: A Memoir



## Synopsis

In *The Pastor*, author Eugene Peterson, translator of the multimillion-selling *The Message*, tells the story of how he started Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland and his gradual discovery of what it really means to be a pastor. Steering away from abstractions, Peterson challenges conventional wisdom regarding church marketing, mega pastors, and the church's too-cozy relationship to American glitz and consumerism to present a simple, faith-based description of what being a minister means today. In the end, Peterson discovers that being a pastor boils down to *paying attention and calling attention to what is going on now* between men and women, with each other and with God. •

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...I want to insist that there is no blueprint on file for becoming a pastor. In becoming one, I have found that it is a most context-specific way of life: the pastor's emotional life, family life, experience in the faith, and aptitudes worked out in an actual congregation in the neighborhood in which she or he lives - these people just as they are, in this place. No copying. No trying to be successful. The ways in which the vocation of pastor is conceived, develops and comes to birth is unique to each pastor."  
- Peterson  
Hand-cuffed. I don't even know how to write a review of this book. A review is what you write when it isn't personal. A review is what you do for books. *The Pastor* is far more than a book. You need to understand that Eugene Peterson saved my vocational soul just over a year ago. And since that time I have been pointing people - especially pastors - to his books. Especially young

pastors. So how about a non-review? Maybe the evangelical world has been a circus for a long time. But I didn't notice. I didn't notice all the center rings, high-trapeze acts and dancing bears. And the unspeakable horror of then realizing you not only paid for a ticket but got paid to take part. You walk out of the arena with sticky soles under you, past the sideshows and into clean air but you have no idea if you should go back in. Who will help you now? Is the insanity the only choice? Is there a voice of sanity in this wilderness? I remember lying in my bed. The weight of being a pastor was on me and I wanted it off. I knew I needed some help. Maybe circus is the wrong way to describe what is happening in America. For I was surrounded...hemmed in by managers and CEOs, shopkeepers and PR men and women.

Over the years I have benefited immeasurably by the writings of Eugene Peterson. I think just about any dedicated Christian can pick up just about any work by Eugene Peterson and spiritually benefit from it. But this is especially true of pastors, of whom I am one. Eugene Peterson understands pastors like no one else! The truth is that God has exalted the role of pastor, and yet men continue to demean it, undermine it, or ignore it. Peterson's "The Pastor: A Memoir" is therefore a very welcome work to a man who has become a pastor to pastors. In this work, Peterson hopes to restore the dignity of the role of the pastor. I highly recommend it to all who are called to serve in God's Church, and especially to those who may have lost their way or feel inadequate to the great vocation to which God has called you. It will bring rest to all who are weary and heavy laden. But Peterson goes about his task in an unusual and refreshing way. What is perhaps most striking about Peterson's work is something suggested by the titles of his chapters. What you don't find is a list of theological themes or pastoral roles but what looks like experiences from Peterson's life. This is because "The Pastor" is the story of the formation of Eugene Peterson as a pastor. Telling his stories is his way of teaching us how to be pastors, for, as he says, there is no one blueprint for how to become and be a pastor. "The Pastor" is a wonderful look at the formation of one pastor, Peterson, told through the stories and experiences by which God formed him as a pastor. Peterson's story, while unique, is also therefore the story of every pastor. There is such a depth of personal wisdom made meaningful to all that "The Pastor" teaches in a way that few other books do.

In *The Pastor*, Eugene H. Peterson tells "the story of my formation as a pastor and how the vocation of pastor formed me." Peterson is best known as author of *The Message*, his "translation" of the Bible into "American words and metaphors and syntax." He recently completed a five-volume

series--"conversations"--about spiritual theology. And he has written numerous books about the pastoral vocation, the seedbed out of which all his other books has grown. This memoir narrates the journey of a Pentecostal kid from Montana becoming a Presbyterian pastor in Maryland. For pastors, it is must-reading. For one thing, Peterson's story shows how God uses the particularity of our circumstances to shape us into the people he wants us to be, under the tutelage of Holy Scripture. For another thing, it offers a searing critique of the commoditization of American religion that turns "each congregation into a market for religious consumers, an ecclesiastical business run along the lines of advertising techniques, organizational flow charts, and energized by impressive motivational rhetoric." And finally, it does all this through a storytelling that alternates between humor, anger, frustration, and hope--the emotions all pastors face in their ministries. Example: Peterson recounts being bullied by Garrison Johns in elementary school. Instructed by his mother to "turn the other cheek," Peterson endured the insults and beatings until "[s]omething snapped within me." He wrestled his tormentor to the ground, pinned him with his knees, and began pummeling him with his fists. His entreaties, "Say `uncle'" met with no response, so he began shouting, "Say, `I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.'" After a couple more hits, Johns said the words, gaining Peterson his first "convert."

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