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THE PASTOR by Eugene Peterson, Author of *The Message*, Million-Selling
Contemporary Translation of the Bible

**New Memoir by Eugene Peterson Tells the Story of His Vocation and Laments
the Church Growth Ethos He Says Has Ruined the Pastorate**

Eugene Peterson, translator of the multi-million selling contemporary English version of the Bible, *The Message*, spent 29 years in the pulpit, 20 years as a professor, and has written 30 influential books on church, spirituality, and the Bible. Now, in his latest book, **THE PASTOR: A Memoir (February 22, 2011; HarperOne)**, he recounts his “haphazard” formation as a pastor. He also challenges the church-as-business model, and laments the pastorate as “a way of life that is in ruins,” corrupted by the “strategies of religious entrepreneurs with business plans.”

“I had never planned to be a pastor, never was aware of any inclination to be a pastor. And then—at the time it seemed to arrive abruptly—there it was: Pastor. I was a pastor long before I knew I was a pastor; I just never had a name for it,” he writes.

Peterson grew up in Montana, where big sky and breathtaking natural beauty became “sacred space” that shaped him as a person and a pastor. As a child, he accompanied his mother as she led Pentecostal services for men from the logging and mining camps, developing his pastoral imagination. Meanwhile, the community atmosphere of his father’s butcher shop colored his understanding of congregation.

Peterson recalls how his calling to the pastorate was nurtured by many teachers and mentors, from Scripture to seminary to congregants. He also found sustenance in the support of his wife, Jan, and the friendship of colleagues in ministry. He writes of his evolving spiritual theology and his understanding of church and pastoral experiences, including:

- On a Pastor’s Workplace: “a gathering of saints and sinners.”
- On a Pastor’s Assignment: “to pay more attention to what God does than what I do and then to guide others to this awareness.”
- On Church: “a colony of heaven in the country of death, a strategy of the Holy Spirit for giving witness to the kingdom of God.”
- On How Church Growth Ethos Diminishes Vocation: Turning congregations into consumers “a blasphemous desecration of the way of life to which the church ordained me.”
- On the “Badlands: A six-year period of “passivity” that he learned was the dormancy necessary for growth, during which he discovered his second vocation as a writer.

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Peterson spent 29 years as pastor of Christ the King, a Presbyterian Church USA church that he was called by the denomination to build in a suburb of Baltimore. There he discovered that being a pastor wasn't about how many people filled his pews each week but rather about "paying attention and calling attention to 'what is going on right now' between men and women, with each other and with God." **THE PASTOR** gives witness to "this way of understanding pastor, a way that can't be measured or counted and often isn't even noticed."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eugene H. Peterson, author of *The Message*, the bestselling contemporary translation of the Bible, is professor emeritus of spiritual theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, and the author of over thirty books, including *The Jesus Way*, *Practice Resurrection*, and *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. He and his wife Jan live in Montana.

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by Eugene Peterson
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