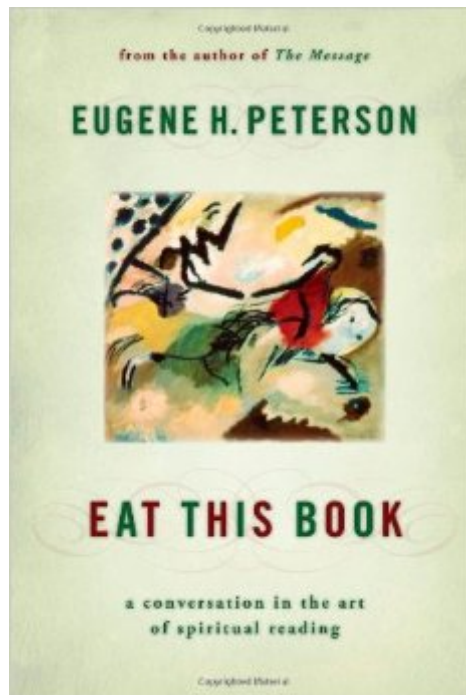


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# Eat This Book: A Conversation In The Art Of Spiritual Reading



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Too often we USE the Bible, but Eugene wants us to enter into and LIVE it. He presents lectio divina (sacred reading) as the best way to do this. Lectio divina is a four-part way of reading Scripture: Lectio. Read. God is speaking, so I listen intently to what he says. Meditatio. Engage. God is speaking to me, so I listen personally. Oratio. Pray. God is speaking to me, so I listen personally and reply personally in prayer. Contemplatio. Live. God is speaking to me, so I listen personally and reply in prayerful living. The final section of the book is an illuminating introduction to Bible translation and ultimately to The Message (his translation) itself. He argues that literalism in translation encourages USING the Bible as a tool, in which case we're in charge, not God. But putting the Bible in the same language as our day-to-day lives encourages LIVING the Bible, in which case God's in charge, not us. The publisher is also releasing a study guide for small groups that I have written with Eugene. Once you read the book on your own, I think you'll understand why

it is so important to study (and live!) together as a church. Don't just use the Bible. Eat it! Let it get inside of you and change you. Live it.

Peterson has become my new favorite theologian. I wish reading him had been an option when I was in seminary. I have a suspicion that he's still not on the menu because he sees theology as something more than an academic exercise. Theology is ultimately about experiencing God and serving the Kingdom-goals that are not always in tandem with the academy. This second volume of a projected five volume series is an exceptional work on the nature of scripture and how we relate to it, absorb it and live it. Rather than treating scripture as a still life from which we extract a theology, Peterson emphasizes the reader entering the story and allowing the story to transform our lives. More than just telling us to read and absorb, he helps us rediscover one of the church's older practices, *lecto divina*. He emphasizes that this is not a technique but an attitude of prayerful, respectful reading. So, rather than telling us what scripture is and isn't in cold, sterile categories, he shows us its value for the spiritual journey. Peterson is distilling a lifetime of teaching, growing and ministering in this series of books. I hope that we as church are wise enough to push the academy to listen to his voice.

This is the first book I can recall reading that addresses "How to read the Bible" ... There's 3 essays here: *Eat this Book* - John the Revelator, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah all ate God's message on command. What does the gastronomic lesson teach? Consuming God's message goes beyond the typical scriptural read. *Lectio Divina* - Christ asked "How do you read?" in Luke 10:26 ... God only talks with you ... not through someone else. You can only hear him when you are addressed. Here's a discipline for creating the opportunity. *The Company of Translators* - A great walk through the back alleys of translating the Good News for contemporary consumers through the ages. Is the 16th century King James hard to digest? Unless you read ancient Hebrew or vernacular Greek bolstered by late 19th and 20th century linguistic revelation, it makes sense to try to understand the message as close to the dirty, dusty streets of the gospel writers as you can get with words alone. The language of place and time needs transport into terms we can grasp. We recognize the limitations of the written word ... words don't capture body language, the emotional state of the participants, the state of mind of the listener, the smells, the backdrop ... all things that make for understanding beyond words. The job of the translator is indeed a challenge to strangle the most complete sense of the words into contemporary context. The job of the message consumer is no less challenging. This can be an easy read or a study. It depends on your appetite I guess.

Eugene Peterson, translator of "The Message", is a true wordsmith. Part of the pleasure in reading this book is the way in which he crafts his sentences, encouraging you think deeply and to read further. Subtitled "The Art of Spiritual Reading," this is no manual on Bible study approaches but it seeks to evoke a desire for us to delve into the Bible to search out God's voice - leaving our own selfishness and personalities behind. The metaphor of eating the book - really taking it within us and having it become part of us - was reinforced throughout the text. The last two chapters sat slightly oddly in this book. They describe how Peterson began his "The Message" translation of the Bible and then discuss the important discoveries of ancient papyri at Oxyrhynchus and Ugarit and how they affected our understanding of the language of the New Testament. I loved these two chapters but I felt they were a slightly uneasy fit in the overall book - I would have preferred them to be the preface to another book entirely - one I sincerely hope that Peterson chooses to write! Overall, this book is a pleasure to read, it spoke to me and convicted me about my approach to the Bible and the limits that we put on it through our superficial reading of these holy texts.

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