

Review: A Burning in My Bones

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A Burning in My Bones:

The Authorized Biography of Eugene H. Peterson, Translator of the Message

By Winn Collier (WaterBrook)

For pastors and laypeople alike, Eugene Peterson was for decades something of a ministry oracle, a voice in the wilderness of consumer Christianity calling to God's people with a message that faith could be something deeper, simpler and quieter than evangelicalism's rat race. Through dozens of books and his most famous work, *The Message* translation of the Bible, Peterson sought to convey a Christianity that was rooted, applicable and meaningful. Winn Collier's authorized biography of Peterson, *A Burning in My Bones*, seeks to tell the story of the storyteller, distilling Peterson down to what made him an essential companion in ministry for so many.

For those who have read Peterson's memoir *The Pastor*, much of Collier's account of Peterson's early years growing up in Montana to a loving, spiritual mother and a hardworking-but-distant father is familiar territory, as are some of the stories of his time as a pastor. But this biography provides new insight into Peterson the writer and professor, not to mention Peterson the celebrity (he was friends with Bono!). In Collier's telling, Peterson found fame both bewildering and somewhat amusing, yet something that did little to change the former pastor's outlook on faith and ministry.

For a man whose work happened in relative obscurity for decades, the most painful section of the book comes at the end, when a Peterson in the twilight of his life gave an interview affirming same-sex relationships only to retract his statement a day later amidst of a storm of outrage from evangelical fans. The episode is chronicled dutifully by Collier and offers what must for now stand as the definitive story of what Peterson really thought.

For those looking for a flashy biography, *A Burning in My Bones* will fail to meet expectations—Collier writes with respect and admiration for his subject and never descends into sensationalism. But for those who simply want to know Eugene Peterson the man better, this book will help you understand what drove this pastor, writer and mentor to many.

Daniel Camp, pastor

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