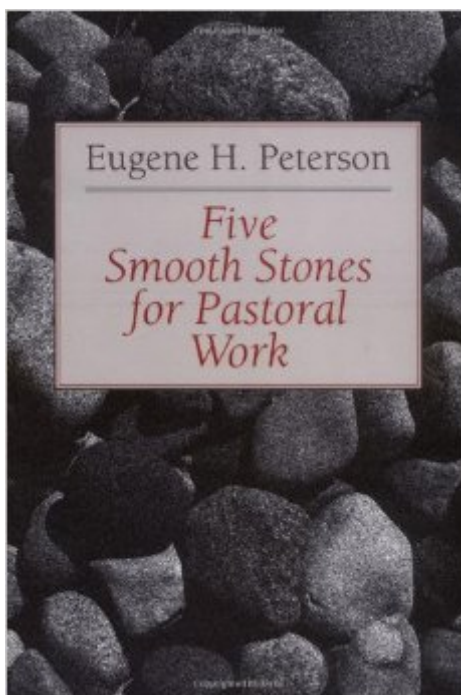


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Five Smooth Stones For Pastoral Work



Synopsis

Whereas much of the current literature on pastoring stresses up-to-date training and new techniques stemming from the behavioral sciences, Eugene Peterson here calls for returning to an "old" resource--the Bible--as the basis for all of pastoral ministry. Originally published in 1980 and now being reprinted to meet continuing demand, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* shows how five Old Testament books provide a solid foundation for much of what a pastor does: *Prayer-Directing: Song of Songs*, *Story-Making: Ruth*, *Pain-Sharing: Lamentations*, *Nay-Saying: Ecclesiastes*, *Community-Building: Esther*. Pointing to the relevance of ancient wisdom, adapting Jewish religious tradition to contemporary pastoral practice, and affirming a significant link between pastoral work and the act of worship, this book opens up to pastors a wealth of valuable practical-theological insights.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Eugene Peterson is a man with immense wisdom and experience in pastoral matters. In this book, he passes on a portion of this in an engaging and thoughtful way. There is much in this book that is helpful to ministers, even though Peterson's practical advice is not matched in quality by his biblical exegesis. I was thrilled at the very idea of this book, but felt that it did not live up to its promise. Peterson examines the five "Megilloth" scrolls. These are Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther - all books in the Writings, the third section of the Hebrew canon. In his very readable introduction, Peterson compares pastoral work to constructing a building using stones

already on the site. He notes that the Megilloth, though seemingly modest, were 'recycled' in this fashion, each being read annually at the five main acts of worship. Peterson views Ecclesiastes and Songs of Songs as being in tension with the feasts on which they were read, while Lamentations and Esther were read in a context of commemorating the events referred to in those books. This suggests that Peterson may be forcing the issue in attempting to connect the five scrolls to their corresponding settings. We do not, in fact, know how the choice was made with some of the Megilloth, and Peterson is indulging in speculation. Even though Peterson's methods of deducing practical lessons may be questionable, his pastoral wisdom is not. Clever as his analysis might be, the practical advice that can be garnered from Five Smooth Stones is superior to its exegesis. In his chapter on Lamentations, for example, Peterson argues that one's response to suffering must be anchored in the appropriate historical context.

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