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Announcer: The Art of Leadership Network.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, it's Carey here. I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. And man, I hope you're loving the Integrity Series. This miniseries, just six episodes, and we're talking about moral failure in the church, and I also want to profile a couple of leaders that, I think, finished really well. Eugene Peterson being one of them. So today you're going to hear from Eugene. I'm actually going to replay an interview I did years ago with him. But before we get there, I'm going to talk to his biographer and also his son, Eric. So that's coming up. And we're going to look at the wrestling match that Eugene had. And well, today's episode is also brought to you by Gloop. You can get free texting for your church by going to gloop.us/texting, and by my free Preaching Workshop, you can register for free now for a limited time at preachingworkshop.com.

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So I loved sitting down with Eric and with Winn. I mean, who's in a better position to talk about what Dad was really like, than a son? And we're going to talk about Eugene's battle to not lose his soul, because he had a battle there. His workaholicism, and how that impacted his family, Bono, and celebrity, and the tension that Eugene overcame to create a contemplative life was not automatic. So, Eric has a Bachelor of Arts in Theology from Whitworth University, an M Div from Princeton, and a Doctor of Ministry from Portland Seminary, and he became deeply impacted when he was young from Young Life, started a club, and then served for seven years as an Associate Pastor at Marine View Presbyterian Church in Tacoma. After that, he founded Culvert Presbyterian Church in 1997. He's also written three books. *Wade In The Water*, *Letters to a Young Pastor*, which he wrote with his dad, Eugene Peterson, and *Letters to a Young Congregation*. Winn Collier is also sitting down with us today. He is Eugene's biographer.

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The biography is called *A Burning in My Bones*. He is the founding pastor of All Souls Church in Charlottesville, Virginia, and now teaches pastoral theology and directs the Eugene Peterson Center for Christian Imagination at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. And Winn also has four additional books in addition to his biography on Eugene Peterson. Hey, I'd love for you to let me know how

you're enjoying the series on integrity. Hit me up on social. I'm @CareyNieuwhof on Instagram, @cnieuhof on a lot of other channels, or email me at carey@careynieuwhof.com.

Hey, you're a preacher just like Eugene Peterson. If that's you, I want you to go and register for my preaching. A workshop can go to preachingworkshop.com. It's absolutely free. And this is why I'm doing it. Do you ever get the feeling that you pour your heart into your sermon then people forget it the moment they drive away on Sunday. That happens way more than you think, and it's disheartening.

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To pour your soul into writing it, deliver it for 40 minutes, and by Monday morning, it's like the message wasn't even preached. Well, my 60-minute preaching workshop can help you immensely. It's free.

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So, what I want to do is I want to help you develop messages that people can remember for months, even years, after you preach the sermon.

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And as a result, you'll be able to connect with the unchurched, you'll be able to help people grow in their faith, and people will be able to share the exact phrases and lessons that you shared with their friends and family months, or even years after. The workshop only runs a few times each year, I've already helped 3,500 pastors preach better sermons this way, and they're applying it to their lives over and over again. So registration closes on July 10th.

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But if you're listening to this before then, go to preachingworkshop.com to register for free. I only offer this a few times, so make sure you act now. And did you know that texting is now the number one preferred way to communicate? So I sat down with Dylan Wilson from Gloo and I said, okay, what's with that? And here is a clip of that conversation.

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Dylan Wilson: I mean, the number one thing about texting right now is that 97% of texts that you send to people will get seen and delivered, that's their open rate. And that's much different than the low visibility that we have on other platforms. And,

you know, the 20% that most of us are experiencing via email. One of the most unique places where I feel like church leaders are missing out on text is via prayer.

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We've seen a lot of churches start to leverage, you know, kind of swap their normal prayer collection cards out for leveraging texts for their congregants and their community to send in prayers, that's really enabled them to increase the number of prayers because it's really easy for people kind of, at a glance anywhere, to submit their prayer requests, for them to record all the requests in one single place. But then also to assign those prayer requests to other teammates and members of the team who can help follow up with those people.

Carey Nieuwhof: Church leaders, if you want to really connect with your people visit gloo.us/texting to discover how you can build relationships with your congregation and visitors through texting absolutely free.

And now my conversation with Eric Peterson and Winn Collier.

Well, welcome to the podcast, Winn and Eric, it's really good to have you.

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Good to be with you.

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I've been very excited about this conversation and we're going to talk about the life and legacy of your dad in particular Eric, and Winn, you're the authorized biographer of Eugene Peterson. So, I've been very excited for this, but I think it's pretty easy to throw your hands up at the state of church and church leadership today and roll your eyes or become cynical or deconvert. But Eugene was dismayed about the direction of the church as early as I think the 1960s, is that an exaggeration? What did he see, even decades ago that disturbed or bothered him about the state of the church?

ERIC PETERSON: I think the place I would start is to say he wasn't an instantaneous profit that is I think his recognition of the disparity of good ecclesiology took place over time. But I think the thing that he kind of eventually zeroed in on or came to realize is that the North American church had failed in as much as it had begun to adopt, sort of, business principles and models for kind of efficiency and effectiveness. And I think his instinct was, that's just not... the ways and the means of the church need to resonate with the ways and the means of the gospel. And he

recognized that there was a pretty big disconnect and that lack of congruence. It just left him feeling like this is not, but we're not on a good path.

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WINN COLLIER: Yeah. And I think with that too, is the fact that he felt that poison in his own soul. You know, as an organizing pastor, this wasn't just something he was critiquing from afar, but it's something that he felt the tension in his own early years of helping to found Christ Our King in Bel Air, Maryland. And I think he talks about how his competitive spirit and his drive to succeed. You know, some people think that he sort of fell out of the womb an instant contemplative, but it's something that was won over time because he saw the danger to himself.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Well, you know, I'm glad you kind of went there because on the one hand from the books, I've read of Eugene and the bios I've read, and then you know, your own work, when in the authorized biography, you know, *A Burning in My Bones*. On the one hand, you have this contemplative, prophetic, you know, self-described, I think I want to become a saint and I need a lot of work to do, on the other, you've got a very competitive runner who's great at track, a winsome personality. A guy who, if I got this right, showed up at college and said, I wonder what it takes to become student council president. So there was that sort of, and you know, in the early days of planting a church to feeling the pressure for growth and numbers even to keep the lights on and the doors open.

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Yeah, I mean there is a little bit of a dichotomy in his personality. Is that over extrapolating? Am I reading things into it? Or did he feel that tension himself too? That desire to perform and that drive?

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ERIC PETERSON: Yeah I'm not sure I was inside his head during that time but my sense now as I look back on it and understand more, that was a real tension. It was an ongoing struggle and he had to kind of work, I think, to shed some of those aspirations.

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I mean, he admitted, almost confessionally, to being a competitor. He knew that that was part of his temperament, and he knew that there were inherent pitfalls, both in terms of his work as a pastor. But I think more importantly, to the condition of his

soul. This was a little bit later on. I mean, the story that I want to tell you is, oh, I think he had retired from Regent, so he would have been 65-66. I was over in Montana visiting him and he was just talking about this invitation that he'd received. It was an invitation to be a keynote speaker at a stadium event, like a 40,000-person venue in South America, and he's kind of hemming and hawing around this invitation, and kind of whether to go. And in my mind, I'm thinking, you're Eugene Peterson, and this is a unique voice that the world needs to hear, and what's the problem here? We're going to multiply your influence, and we're gonna see The Prayer of Jabez, go all, you know. And so finally I just said, dad, what are you worried about? What are you afraid of?

And I think this memory will haunt me till the day I die. He looked me right in the eye and he said, Eric, I'm afraid of losing my soul.

And I was so caught off guard by that that I think I was just nervous. You know, in my nervousness, I just said, oh, well I guess that's your answer. You can't do that.

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But I've continued to think about that and to realize that, with maybe a couple of rare exceptions, that was a point at which he generally, if almost always, said no to those big venues, big stage invitations. And from, then on really, he was just in these environments where there was a personal connection, where he could have real conversation, where there was a small group atmosphere or where he was preaching a sermon for the ordination service of a previous student.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Eric, you know, and the funny thing is, you talk to young leaders today and it would seem like the dream, or I'm not even saying, maybe in my own soul, the dream is to be invited to be the keynote in front of 40,000 leaders, right? Like that's a really interesting self-restraint that your dad had.

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ERIC PETERSON: Yeah. But I think he practiced restraint previously. I think that became a discipline. I think he really did diligently follow the way of kenosis. He was trying to empty himself of that ambition, and pride, achievement stuff. And this is sort of the result of that I think he came to recognize that, I'm the custodian of this soul and I can't put it in jeopardy, and that kind of an environment is just way too seductive. So it just became really clear, I can't do that. I'm not a celebrity pastor.

Carey Nieuwhof: What is kenosis? The way of kenosis?

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ERIC PETERSON: It's a New Testament word for kind of, self-emptying. So, Paul picks it up in the Christ hymn in Philippians, have the same mind and you that was in Christ Jesus. That when the form of God emptied himself. And as the great ones, the spiritual masters, talk about the life in Christ, the life of discipleship is dying, there's crucifixion. I've been crucified with Christ and I think that's part of Eugene's grievance with the North American church is, it's like, it's all about triumphant, and winning, and success, and Jesus goes to the cross. And so the Life of Christ followers is one of kenosis of self-emptying, of humility, service, obscurity.

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Carey Nieuwhof: When you had access to all of his private letters, his diaries, obviously, all of his published works. What would you add to that about the internal battle that Eugene faced at different stages of his life?

WINN COLLIER: Yeah, you know, a big part of me almost wants to pause here for a moment because I'm feeling deeply moved, remembering myself how, I think, those of us who love Eugene, those of us who've read Eugene, those of us who at least know the name Eugene. It's easy for us to turn Eugene into a caricature.

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And that even things like, you know, small church pastor itself can become a kind of formula. And I think what Eric was just leading us into is the deep heart of it. Which was, it wasn't about any of these things themselves becoming the new agenda or the new way. It was about this deep desire to be formed to be like Jesus, and to have the life of God released in a human body for the sake of love for the world. And that Eugene said yes to that. And the more he said yes, the more he recognized how dangerous this path was.

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And this is interesting. I think that one that you were referring to Eric, I think it was Brazil, and I remember reading him in a letter that may have been to you. I can't remember, just the immense relief he felt. I think he had a car wreck or an accident of some sort or there was something that happened that meant he couldn't go. And he felt just this immense relief because he didn't want to let people down. And now I guess he felt like some people wouldn't just take the answer of, this is dangerous to my soul, as good enough, you know? And as Eric mentioned, this was after he left Regent and he also gave that in his diary as one of the reasons he needed to leave Regent is he said that he believed his soul was in mortal danger.

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Because he felt like he was being treated something like a guru and it wasn't just like, you know, I need to rethink things. It was like, my soul is in jeopardy here, and I don't know about y'all, but I want to say yes to Jesus like that. I want to be transformed in ways that my deep desire would be for something more than the things that I think are going to bring credit to my name, you know.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I remember when he was at Regent so I was at Seminary at University of Toronto in that same era where Eugene had gone to Regent, which was the mid-90s, wasn't it? Something like that. I think I started seminary in '93 and finished in '97.

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And he was at region at the time and it was a buzz in Toronto. I mean, Eugene Peterson is at Regent! And I thought about going there to study, but I was married and a kid on the way and the whole deal. So I didn't. But yeah, there was that buzz. He had enough prominence as an author, and we were all reading his books. And you know The Message came out. Was that '93? Was the first year The Message was published in the New Testament form?

ERIC PETERSON: I should remember this offhand. I don't.

WINN COLLIER: Right around there. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Right around there. So it was a big thing. But that's one of the things I really appreciated about A Burning in My Bones was it's not a hagiography. There was a lot got to appreciate about Eugene and yet you go into some of his struggles as well. And I wanna want to talk about that. Is there anything else on that before you know that deep peril to his soul? Maybe we should hang out in that space a little bit longer.

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WINN COLLIER: I don't know that there's more to add but I do think that's its significance important to know that in order to understand him and for anyone that has an admiration or is inclined to, in any way, emulate him, that needs to be a piece of it. There's the struggle in this Church culture, a tension, and just that kind of that resolve is what it comes down to, just that determination. And he was an enormously disciplined person. And that's where that shows up in some significant ways.

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Just the caution, the great care that he took with lifestyle and the things that he would do and would not do in order to participate in that process of sanctification, and he did it imperfectly. If you read the biography, you'll see he was very flawed but that was his heart's desire.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, I hadn't thought about this question until you guys started chatting a little bit, but, you know, Eugene was contemplative in the sense that, I'm guessing an introvert, you know, your mom, Eric, said, "wish the man talked more." He seemed to be quiet. Enjoy silence, voluminous reader, eschewed the spotlight, etc.

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But sometimes we believe our own press reports. I mean, he sold a lot of books. And The Message was an international phenomena. And he doesn't claim credit for writing The Message. He said, God wrote it, I just translated, that's all. But you know. And it's easy to get surrounded by people who tell you what you want to hear. So I'd like to know, how did he remind himself, or did he have people who reminded him that his soul could be in peril? Like how does this stay a constant narrative, even when you're 65 years old so that you haven't just morphed into some version of yourself you want to believe is true? You know what I mean? Like I need to go to these stages or need to get rid of... like how was that still a wrestling in his mind. Who or what were the influences, were there any outside influences that helped keep that front and center for him?

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ERIC PETERSON: Well, I think the external influences were to the contrary, I think he was hearing voices that were urging him to go big. And so that care that caution, if not the fear, about losing his soul or sabotaging something that was that God was trying to do, or just being the person that he believed he was made to be. Winn may have a different take on this, but my own sense is that that emerged from a deep life of prayer. He was just the holiest man I've ever known or read about.

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Known or known not. So, I think this comes out of a deep piety, and devotion, and attentiveness to himself. So that contemplative lifestyle lent itself toward being wary of the saboteurs.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Without naming names, for sure. If you've got publishers involved, I can only imagine, knowing that industry a little bit, they're gonna recommend you take all the top things that come along. And that's not saying anything against publishers, that's just the industry. That's the way it works. Interesting, Winn, what's your take on that, having poured over his papers, etc?

WINN COLLIER: Yeah, I mean prayer is absolutely at the heart of it and a life shaped by attentiveness to God and him seeking out voices that were other than the siren songs. So you know, for large sections of his life, he had a sister who is his spiritual director. And he resisted the pull to the large and magnanimous things. But he was he was in all kinds of small circles of friendship with, you know, pastors and farmers and writers and songwriters who were just doing good, faithful work. And I think he sought that out and wanted to be in those conversations because it felt true to him.

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And there was something that was really shared in a vocation even if they weren't doing exactly the same thing. So, I think the peak, the people, he listened to, and trusted the most, were the voices that most of us have never heard of.

Carey Nieuwhof: Eric, what happened to your dad and your mom's friendship circle as time went on?

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Did they stay grounded in relationships. That had been around for a long time. I mean, we'll get to it, he eventually ended up hanging out with Bono and that's a funny story in and of itself. But like when you look at the trajectory of their lives, did their friendship circles change? How did it change? Who did they keep close to them?

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ERIC PETERSON: Yeah, I think they changed with the geography. The geographical changes.

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I remember them talking about, you know, new friends that they made after leaving Bel Air in Pittsburgh when he spent a year as a writer in residence. And then the community that was rich that developed in and around the Regent community, and and some of those friendships transcended the miles, but it seemed like they were mostly local. And so, by the time they kind of retreated to Northwest Montana for

supposedly a final retirement, a lot of those folks would come and visit but they developed community there.

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They were right on Flathead Lake and they had neighbors that they knew they had meals with, a little Lutheran Church they attended five miles down the road that became a rich source of community for them.

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And I think part of what was important and valuable about that Montana community is they didn't think he was a big deal at all. They just thought, you know, Jan's delightful and Eugene is colorable. And you know no one read his books.

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They're just, you know, they're pleasant people and they make good dinner conversation.

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Carey Nieuwhof: That's a really interesting trend. You know, to cultivate friendships with people who aren't impressed by you or don't know who you are, because it would be easy to imagine people just jetting in and jetting out to Montana to visit with your parents. And I'm sure that happened from time to time. But with the kind of influence that your Dad had, to keep those local humble friendships.

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I think is is really instructive and so countercultural today. So countercultural for ambitious and driven leaders. Eric, I'd love to know, what were some of the earliest memories you have of your dad?

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ERIC PETERSON: I think Winn asked me that when he was interviewing me for the biography, and I don't know if this is the same answer that I gave him, but I loved being close to him physically. We had a physical kind of wrestling relationship when I was a kid. And he as an East Coast Presbyterian pastor, wore a Geneva gown, to Lead worship, know, the tabs and the collar.

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It's pretty formal. And after worship, I would climb under his gown, his robe, and just sort of hang onto his leg and, you know, pretend that I was in an invisible cloak, no one could see me. No one knew where I was, and it just felt like a secret hiding place, that allowed me to be close to him and no one else knew that I was there in my own pediatric mind, you know? So that's a memory, and I think part of that is I look back on that. I just think, gosh. He, you know, that was a season when it was still he was a young pastor at that point still, it was a young church and

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I think he got competitive. Spirit was a part of him. And he wanted to win and be successful and he tolerated this little five or six-year-old son of his getting tangled up in his Geneva gown. Not worried about his reputation or what people would think about that. And I just find that very like, oh, that's what dads do. So that's one of my favorite memories.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know, it's so telling is when I asked the question, your face lit up. So I know there are some people watching this on Youtube. But that's a tell for sure, for all of you who are listening. I asked the question, Eric, and you just like brighten up and you smile and you're like, ah, memories of Dad.

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That's great. What about your mom? Tell us about your mom. They were married for how many years before your dad passed, and your mom passed shortly after that.

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ERIC PETERSON: Oh gosh. Do you know, Winn? 59-60?

WINN COLLIER: I think 59 is right.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah a long time.

WINN COLLIER: I should have my timeline here in front of me and I don't.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's okay, let's call it six decades of marriage. That's a long relationship.

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ERIC PETERSON: It was long. Yeah, so I've been through a ton of therapy, we'll start there, and a lot of that, not all of it, but a lot of it had to do with an overachieving,

sort of workaholic dad. So I experienced his absence and came to a point in my life where I realize I was really missing something.

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And that's no small part.

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I believe in my psychological motivation for becoming a pastor and entering into his world and orbit. And in order to get some attention. That doesn't discount, I believe, the actual spiritual motivation and the call that God has placed in my life, but I think that's a big piece of it.

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And it's not a mistake that the point at which I expressed interest in ministry is when our relationship really took off in a significant way and we became quite close.

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I asked him once, who's your best friend? And he said, you are. And I thought, you should be able to do better than that.

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I think I lost my train of thought. I think it's by way of, my mother really raised the three kids. I'm a middle child and so my memory of bedtime is always Jan reading a Bible storybook. You know, one of those arch books? That was the bedtime routine. My brother and I shared bunk beds, so she would read these stories, listen to our prayers, kiss us goodnight. And I just have no memory of my Dad at that time. Because he was out at a meeting or visiting people, you know, doing something outside the house. So she really just took care of us. She raised us and fed us, and did all the things in terms of nurturing.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Can we talk a little bit more about the workaholic side of your dad story? Because that's not an it's sad. It's not uncommon in Ministry and that's one of my great regrets about me as a young dad in my 30s, you know, when our church was small, I was out four nights a week. And when I got bigger, it was one night a month, but my kids were teenagers by then and it's one of the great sadnesses of my life. With your dad, what do you think drove that that workaholism in him?

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ERIC PETERSON: Well again, Winn might have another take on this.

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I think at some level, primitively, it's repeating a family pattern. This is what his dad did.

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His dad had a business, he was the local butcher and just worked really hard, including parts of Sundays.

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And so I think that's the model, partly. It's just a generational model that he probably adopted without a lot of scrutiny. I think he just kind of fell into it, and my mother did a great job of raising the kids and attending to all things domestic and didn't complain about it, apparently.

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Enough at least that that changed any behavior.

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I think I learned this in the biography, actually, my sister's the one that...

Carey Nieuwhof: Called him out.

ERIC PETERSON: Yeah, pretty much. And I think that did shake him out of it a little bit, at least alerted him to the fact that he needed to be more present to the family, attentive to the kids.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was the number like 27 days in a row or 24 days in a row like turn your sister said to your Dad, you've been gone one that long? And it was a bit of a wake-up call for him.

ERIC PETERSON: Yeah. She was keeping track.

Carey Nieuwhof: Winn, what's your take on that? What do you see?

WINN COLLIER: Yeah. I mean, I think Eugene named it himself that he was living out his dad's story in some ways. I think there was some self-reflection in his diary at some point where he said, "I do think I'm a better Dad than what I received. But I'm not as good a Dad as I'd hoped I'd been."

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And I think for me, one of the most moving moments in this storyline was when Eric had the courage to write out the letter to his dad to explain these wounds and how that had played into his story. And how when he shared it Eugene's response wasn't defensiveness but was regret, and sorrow, and love, and how that was a healing balm to Eric, and that was a healing thing to me as a dad to think. I mean, I know I've screwed up so many times and there are so many things I would do differently, but I don't think if we genuinely love our children, I don't think our children looking much more for us than a genuine, "I'm sorry" and "I wish I'd been better."

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I think they're so quick to forgive because their love is strong too. And that's just really, really hopeful to me. But I also think it's no small thing that we started our conversation maybe a half hour ago, talking about this poison and this ambition that was rooted in Eugene and his struggling with this. Well, this is the same time frame where he's not being the father that he actually wanted to be. And so, I think that was part of the un-layering of how profound this danger is, and how it affects the things we love most dearly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Eric, What was the letter you wrote to your dad? Do you mind talking about that?

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ERIC PETERSON: The backstory to it is about a year after I was ordained, he resigned from the church that he founded after serving for 29 years. And in that resignation letter, he described the experience he had on the night of my ordination when I was kneeling before this congregation, this is my childhood church, and that's where I grew up and it was a powerful experience for me. You know, to have all these elders laying their hands on me. Some of them had changed my diapers. And in this letter that he writes to explain what's going on with the congregation, he said, on the night on which my son Eric was ordained, I was offering this ordination prayer and had the sense, simultaneously, that I was not to be here much longer.

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And so that's when he was first alerted to that called kind of shifting and being led out. But my response when I read the letter was, "what, that was my night." And it's like, the Holy Spirit is doing something with you also? And it just felt like, dang it, one more time the church cuts to the front of the line for my dad's affection. And I mean, it just raised all kinds of stuff for me, and it just sent me into my journal and I

spent, I don't know how many hours, just reflecting and that's where I really started to access the honesty, finally accessing the father wounds of absenteeism.

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And just feeling like, what do I need to do to get your attention? You know, what do I what do I need to do for you to just linger over me and not rush on to your next thing? And so that propelled me into some good therapy. And that resulted in this letter that Winn's referring to. So, I called him up and asked him, next time I come to visit, can we spend some time together? Got some things I want to share with you. We went for a hike, we climbed Mount. St. John's in Montana and found the foundation of an old cabin, sat on this broken-down foundation, and I just read this out loud to him. It was maybe three pages of me just reflecting on memories, and just the things that kind of point to, you just weren't there for me, I mean, you weren't the Dad I needed, you didn't show up. And I was just terrified of doing this. I just thought it felt really consequential, like this could go really badly. And as Winn said, he was altogether non-defensive. He just listened and he wept. He was altogether contrite, and I remember him saying, "I didn't realize the extent to which I repeated what my dad did. I'm so sorry."

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So that really was a turning point in our relationship, and it was it was deeply healing, but it could have been otherwise. He could have just dug in his heels and called me an ingrate, you know, something like that, but that I think is emblematic of his character. He didn't make a single excuse. And I think part of what I learned in that is, you know, that as the Bible talks about the sins of the fathers being passed down generationally, as well as the blessings. It was just helpful for me to kind of pay attention to that. Like, I'm an heir to some generational curses, some of that's addiction, some of that's workaholism.

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But my goodness, there are also these generational blessings as well that don't diminish. I mean, they're real. But I also think he's right in his own self-assessment that he was a better dad to me in my sibs, then his dad was to Eugene and his two sibs. And I'd like to think that I was a better dad to my three children. And I'm watching my children with their kids now.

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I'm a three-time grandfather and they're magnificent. Like, that seems to be getting better.

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The Peterson's parenting pattern is healing.

[00:40:05.800]

And that's a really gratifying thing to see.

[00:40:09.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: What did you change in your parenting, intentionally or unintentionally with your kids? Because you're doing the same job your dad did. You're pastoring a local Presbyterian church. You've got all the pressures to be out 20 out of 30 times a month. You've got all the pressures to be on-call and interrupt dinner with phone calls. Which you write about, Winn, in the biography, right? Like the phone would ring, and Eugene would pick it up. Oh. I remember those days, back when we had home phones. What have you done in your own parenting, Eric, for boundary setting and plotting a new generational course?

[00:40:46.000]

ERIC PETERSON: Well I just made a decision pretty early on that my kids would never feel like they came in second. When they call, I answer the phone. When they ask for help, I'm there, and I'll cancel pretty much anything in order to be available to them.

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So I'm sure I've done that imperfectly, but I think they grew up knowing that I was all about them, and the church wasn't more important than them. And I think I got a little better at that as I got older and more confident. You know, I was running scared for a while. I didn't know what I was doing as a young pastor. But I'm actually looking toward retirement at this point. And so I kind of feel like I don't have anything more to prove and if there's a legacy in my life, I want it to be about my kids, and my grandkids, and my marriage. I want it to be about relationships.

[00:41:49.200]

I just don't want to be another statistic in terms of Pastor kids who want nothing to do with their parents, or God, or the church. So I think it was just, it was in reaction. It was mostly a conscious reaction to my own experience and like, I want to be a different dad. Not that I love my kids more than my dad did, I just think I'm more attentive. And I use that word, linger, earlier. I feel like I never want them to feel rushed around me. I'm just relishing the time I get to spend with you.

[00:42:34.300]

Carey Nieuwhof: You know, this isn't defending workaholicism by any stretch, but it does help explain it. One of the things that you talk about in the biography and has shown up in other places in Eugene's work is, if I'm not mistaken, he never intended to plant a church, his denomination asked him to. It was kind of foisted on him. He didn't know how to do it. And I remember that as a young pastor, there are just sort of expectations, unspoken, that get thrust upon you. You will do all the visitation, you will be at all the meetings, you will conduct the Bible study, you will preach at least once a week. Maybe more. If you're really faithful and we do a second service, etc. And I remember, sort of accepting that invisible script.

[00:43:19.700]

For a number of years until I rejected it and wrote a new one. Was that a factor in Eugene's ministry, like this is the template of how to do ministry and he just kind of embraced it because he didn't have an alternative? Or do you have any thoughts on that, Winn?

WINN COLLIER: I don't think I have any original thoughts, but I think what you laid out as true. I think he was working within a system that he was welcomed into and he was always a team player. He did want to do what was expected of him and do a good job. And so you give his personality and the way he'd been brought up and then you throw that in, and this is what you got.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any thought, Eric on the pressures of the system? Because there is a system. And there are invisible scraps that, you know, depending on your denomination, your background, like, you're a pastor, that's basically what you're going to do.

[00:44:17.900]

ERIC PETERSON: I mean, to some extent, although I feel sort of gratefully and blessedly free of a lot of that. Partly, that's the gift of a new church development. So I also organized the church that I now serve. And so when you're the founding influence, you kind of get to set the expectations. And when I came to start this church, I had been ordained for 7 years already, and so I had a pretty good sense of the contours of my vocation, what was important, kind of had my voice as a preacher and so I think I was less susceptible to persuasive voices that would have sort of called me to do something different that wasn't true to my own self and how God was going to use me. So you know, here I am twenty-six years later, and I'm the only pastor some of these folks have known. And that might be a little frightening in

terms of my successor because she's been named. And that's probably part of what we're talking about. There are other ways to do this. And so we're gonna overlap for a couple of years just to try to help ease that transition. But I think I've just been mostly free from those pressures and expectations.

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And I know that that's unusual. I feel like that's somewhat unique. So I'm grateful for that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that's a really good place to be, and experience is a great teacher as well. My reset came firmly when we amalgamated the three churches and we built something new that I felt like I could reset the die. I want to talk about, and this is a bit of a hypothetical, but one thing that's clear in the writing, is that Eugene felt an ambivalence about pastoring. There were parts of it he absolutely loved. He loved the sacraments. He seemed to really enjoy preaching.

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And yet, not every Elder was deeply enamored of him, the congregation sometimes thought he wrote too much, or was away too much. If you were a parishioner, an attender, at Christ Our King in the 70s or 80s when Eugene was there, what would your experience of him as a local pastor have been like? Because most of us have only had access to him through his books.

[00:47:02.000]

ERIC PETERSON: Well, I was a prisoner in the 70s and 80s. And the 60s, I mean, he was my pastor for the first 19 years of my life. And I think when I witnessed, both in the public and the private. I mean, when you live with someone, you kind of hear some things. And oh, my goodness. I just never once heard him speak disparagingly about a parishioner. He just honored them. I know he got frustrated at times, and there were difficult people, but he never spoke in a belittling way, that I overheard. So I saw him and experienced him as a pastor who was steady, faithful, showed up week after week, day after day.

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He was a faithful expositor of the scriptures, he was a good preacher, not a phenomenal preacher, but he was good and solid. I found it really meaningful, learned a lot from him. He was a kind of old-fashioned pastor in the sense that he was very attentive to pastoral care issues. He was in the hospitals a lot, homes, nursing homes, did spiritual direction with people in his study and had this

company of pastors that attended, mostly lectionary texts, every Tuesday for the first half of the day.

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And so those were the rhythm, and somehow part of that rhythm, in my mind, is that he walked from our house to the church back and forth, only drove when he had to be in town for a meeting or to visit someone, otherwise, he's just walking. That was just an exact half-a-mile pilgrimage each way, and that just seemed to be part of his rhythm, and I think that became sort of emblematic of sort of this pedestrian pastoral piece. It was just slow, leisurely, unhurried.

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And contemplative, you know, I'm sure he was praying as he was walking, and the times I got to walk with him, if I just lingered long enough after worship, I would walk home with him. And that always felt like a gift that he invited me in or allowed me to be in on his solitude.

[00:49:52.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: So that part is warmly reassuring. I'm like, OK, that's what I imagined it would be like to be part of his church. And yet, when the journals and the private writings you had access to seem to portray more of a struggle that Eugene felt internally with local pastoral ministry. What did you see in his internal struggle with it?

[00:50:19.200]

WINN COLLIER: Yeah, I was so glad that I found the journals because I feel like they gave an insight to Eugene. But I'm not even sure a decade or two later he would have quite remembered. Because what he allowed himself in those journals, I think you're exactly what you heard from Eric is what I heard from parishioners when I interviewed them.

[00:50:48.500]

They perceived him as immensely encouraging, deeply present, but all of us have to have a place where we can process the things that aren't that, right?

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And I think it was actually a very mature act of spiritual discipline and love for the people, that he did process it with God. I'm assuming he also process it with his

spiritual director, but he processed it with God and His journals. But it was, it was an act of honoring that he wasn't going to burden other people with that, and it wasn't dishonest. I mean, I don't think you ever got the sense that he thought everything was ice cream and cherries, but his deeper conviction was what God was doing with the congregation. So even amid a personality conflict or, you know, some trouble that he might have with someone on the session or something, was this deep abiding conviction that God was up to something.

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And that while his human emotions were part of the stories he had to work through, those things left unchecked could actually get in the way of what God was up to. One of the things I heard in various ways, from several parishioners, and I would say, that was probably a place where I had a little fear and trepidation because I was committed to telling an honest story. I mean, I think that's required of me as a biographer and it wouldn't be an honoring of Eugene's own way and posture to not be truthful. But I just wondered, like, what am I going to discover when I start going back decades and talking with parishioners? What am I going to hear? And again, I don't think anybody thought Eugene was perfect. But what I heard over and over again was. I can't necessarily point to a moment, but over the years, I started to realize that I was seeing myself the way God saw me. Or, I was all of a sudden understanding my life, as part of God's story. My story and my life was small. And then years later after being in Eugene's circle, hearing him tell the stories of scripture, hearing him pray, hearing him teach me how to pray, having conversations going on walks. I recognized later that I was in a much larger story and it was God's.

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It was that vision that was constantly moving Eugene. Yes. There were things that were really difficult and reading his journals you get more of the flavor that you wouldn't have gotten from a Sunday morning because it wasn't about Eugene. He was absolutely committed to the fact that what he was doing was not about him. And so while he needed to be honest with himself, what was more important was to point people to God.

[00:54:09.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: So I love that framework. Because you know, I always think it's helpful to lead publicly and process privately, right? But I do remember at several points in the biography, and maybe from some of his own writings as well, that he was really, and maybe this was in the last decade of his time at Christ Our King,

debating with how much longer can I do this. How much more energy do I have in my tank?

[00:54:31.500]

I'm tired of the elder meetings. Tired of this, like all the normal stuff that a leader would go through. To what extent was that a factor in his leadership, Winn? And feel free to fill it in with other things.

WINN COLLIER: Yeah. So he went on the sabbatical that your sabbatical. Which he had never had a sabbatical before. So he had a year and he came back and that first six to nine months, he was riding high. I mean, he said something like, I could've gone forever, you know. But that lasted about eighteen months.

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I think one thing that's actually quite beautiful about this is one of the things a lot of pastors remember about Eugene is his encouragement to stay as long as you possibly can. To not constantly be moving around. But again for Eugene, that was tied to ambition. It was leaving for reasons of ambition but one of the reasons he thought was a good reason to leave a church was if you just began to discern that you didn't have the energy or the capacity to guide the church in the next season of whatever you sense God was doing with the church. But the real difference there, again, is God. Before, you know, if I'm sort of living out the idea that the next larger church that asked me to come be their Pastor is obviously what I should do, that's not really about God, that's about me. And so I think with Eugene it was just constantly coming back to this question of, what is God doing? And it wasn't like, what is God doing broadly in some nebulous way with this church, it was specific people, specific stories. What is God up to with them and what is my role in that? And so that was a much more profound guiding light for him.

[00:56:30.200]

ERIC PETERSON: I think this represents a season where the evolution of his vocation is shifting. And during that year-long sabbatical, he wrote three books. And that became increasingly part of his vocation of identity. I'm a writer. Pastor-writer writer-pastor, and so I think part of what's going on during this season, the latter years of Christ Our King is sensing and discerning that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'd love to talk about, because we hinted at this already a little bit, but his relationship with fame. So one of the people who did seek him out was Bono, from U2. And the video shot at the house, the cottage, whatever you want to call it at Flathead Lake in Montana was just, watched again yesterday. Watched it when it

first came out. Watch it again prepping, just so emotional. See Bano and your parents and your mom making cookies, Eric, and then greeting him and just sitting down and the unhurried pace in the discussion of the Psalms, I think, Fuller put that on. And then some other videos shot up at the lake.

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Just really was powerful. He seemed very unaffected by Bono didn't even know who he was. Can you take us through that story for people who may not know the backstory behind Bono and your dad and your mom, and what the significance of that was to your dad and eventually to Bono?

ERIC PETERSON: Well, I'm not sure. I know there were some people that kind of gave some words of appreciation when the message was completed, set some nice words, you know, thank you and appreciation and Bono was one of those. He sent a kind of a video message on behalf of the band and kind of explained about how much he appreciated the translation, and YouTube used it.

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They would often read a song backstage prior to going out and performing in concert, and so, Winn might remember the details better. I think my folks went to a concert, they were invited and spent so they went to a concert and then spent several hours together just in conversation. I think that was kind of the initial kind of meet and get acquainted and that's what preceded this conversation at the lake plays that David Taylor curated around the songs.

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And I think it was a bigger deal for my mother. Silvano kissed her on the cheek and I don't think she washed her face for like two weeks. But I think the takeaway from me. I mean, it really wasn't that big a deal to Eugene. It was a big deal to students and others of us. But I think the thing that I remember most from that time was Eugene came to recognize that Bano is a brother in the faith. And what he's doing as a musician is ministry, he's pointing to the kingdom of God.

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And so, I think for people that may have been suspicious about that, he was maybe something about the Irish style language or whatever.

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There may have been a validation for some folks, in some people's minds, like oh Eugene thinks he's a legitimate partner in the gospel.

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But yeah, it's kind of funny. I mean, I knew this was coming. I knew the appointment was happening. And then the next time we got together, they talked about it, but it was not a big deal to them at all.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Winn, what's your assessment of that? Because I think the part that got me and even the way they tell the story on the Fuller documentary, and we can, we can post to that in the show notes to if you want to watch it, it's just very, very heartwarming. Actually, it made me tear up watching it again. Was just, you know, that Eugene was the first to go. Yeah, I didn't really know who Bono was and, seems like a good lad and we'll have them in, but there was that un-affectedness that I thought was very endearing and rare.

WINN COLLIER: Yeah, well it was because he had work to do, you know? So part of the backstory is that they had asked if there would be a way to arrange for Eugene and Bono to meet up and Eugene said, no. There's a Youtube video of a writer's conference where he's being interviewed by someone at Point Loma. So he's kind of narrating this and any note in it he said, you said no to Bano and everyone starts laughing. And then Dean says, but Eugene, it was Bono. And what Eugene had already described was that he was in the tail end of finishing up the Old Testament in the message translation. And so Dean says, Eugene, it was Bono! And everybody, laughs and sort of pauses when it dies down.

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And then, and then Eugene says, "but Dean, it was Isaiah" or Jeremiah, I can't remember.

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It was Isaiah, I think. And, I mean, it's funny now and it is, you know, it's a little quirky, but I think the deeper truth is, it wasn't, you know, some kind of weird asceticism, it wasn't him trying to be the guy who doesn't care about Bono. It was like, he had work to do. God had called him to do this, and that was what was essential.

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And he did arrive at a place where it, you know, someone who had a big celebrity that just wasn't, that was of zero concern to him. It was like, what is God up to and that connects very much with what Eric just said, which was his deep love and admiration for what Bono was doing, had nothing to do with Bono. Celebrity had everything to do with the fact that Bono was being true to a God had called him to do. And Eugene could see that. And because of Bono's fame, it made him all the more careful about ever referring to Bono.

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Using Bono in any way. So when I was gathering names and information from Eugene and Jan about people to interview, etc. They were so generous with everything. They opened up their lives and their resources and everything to me with no questions about how it was going to use it or anything. The one place that was different was Bono. Eugene was very skittish about, in any way, asking Bono to do something that felt like he was appealing to him because of his celebrity. That's who he was to his core.

[01:04:46.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm so glad you told that because that is so countercultural in this moment. Most of us, if we got a minute with Bono, it wouldn't last 30 seconds without being on TikTok or Instagram or you know, whatever. And I think that's very endearing and all too rare in our generation. Eric, I got a few more questions. Such a rich conversation, by the way. Thank you both so much. Eric, your parents again, I watch the number of videos, read the biography, read your dad's books, etc, etc. And you wrote a great book with your dad called, Letters to a Young Pastor where you share letters over a number of years, which is so powerful. But I want to talk about the relationship between your mom and your dad. It seems like there were definitely differences but they made it work in a beloved way over six decades. What were some of the strengths of that marriage? And then what were some of the tension points that you saw between your mom and your dad in their relationship and how they made it work over the years?

[01:05:45.300]

ERIC PETERSON: Yeah. I think they were just deeply devoted to each other and so they were committed to making whatever happened work. I think I remember one time hearing my dad raise his voice at my mother and it was at the dinner table when he actually slammed his fist on the table and said "Cool it Jan," and everyone just got quiet. But, they just adored each other and Jan loved her role as pastor's spouse.

[01:06:25.100]

I think the tension I'd probably most witness was later when I think Jan had this expectation that his work would tail off a little bit. The intensity, the hours, and was sort of jealous for his time and just found, I remember one time, they were in our house and he had a legal pad and he's just jotting some stuff down. He and I were talking. He had some idea for a book. I said, what are you doing dad? He said, well, I just have this idea. Always got an idea for the next book, and Jan walked into the room.

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You know, figured out what he was doing and she just about, you know, like her mouth opened up, and she's like, what are you doing?

[01:07:16.300]

Be done with this.

[01:07:19.800]

So that was certainly a point of tension. Just feeling like he worked really hard up to the end, and he felt I think maybe the way I felt as a child of, a bit neglected, and he worked at that, that is, he when he really did give up the writing pen. He took over some domestic responsibilities. He had a laundry day each week, and that was just something that he kind of took on almost like a monastic discipline. Like that's part of my contemplative, doing the laundry.

[01:08:00.800]

But I think the other thing I would point to, in terms of marital rhythm, is their Sabbath-keeping practices. Monday was his day off. And at some point, this became kind of sacrosanct discipline for them. I remember, you know, getting ready taking off going to school, junior high high school and they were packing their lunches. They were getting ready to hit the trail. And hike, spending the day just being in quiet and conversation and prayer. That was their Sabbath rhythm and I expect that that was an unimportant sustaining practice it. It was adapted over the years but they were pretty diligent about Sabbath keeping together.

[01:08:55.200]

Carey Nieuwhof: You know, I don't think this made it into the book. But you mentioned, you know, the rhythm of life. The videos give you a view into their home, their retirement home. And it had been an obviously it's waterfront property but

had been in the family since the nineteen forties. But you know your Dad published 35 books, sold a lot of copies. I'm sure they didn't have financial considerations. But if you're walking into the home, it looks like a very normal, middle-class family home. You know, you've got a white Mr. Coffee from the 90s that's about twenty years old on the cabinet. There's nothing affected about the environment. And I wanna know, that humility that your parents seem to have, that Eugene and Jan seem to have, how did they handle that financially in their lifestyle and things like that? What did you see?

[01:09:51.400]

ERIC PETERSON: I think what I saw is that it did not affect them in any significant way in terms of their own lifestyle. And I think part of that is that they always struggled financially. He was not a well-paid pastor. And so you learn how to live on a budget and you learn how to live simply, and they had adopted the values of simplicity, so they didn't accumulate stuff, didn't value stuff, unless it had an aesthetic quality about it.

[01:10:32.200]

I remember trying to buy him a tool and he's like no, I've got this. I've got this other way of doing that and that works just fine. I think it was a steam mop. Like a Shark steam mop or something. No, this mop works just fine. Don't need another thing to plug in or another motor. You know, something that's going to break. So I think it was just a lifestyle of simplicity that they had already grooved their way into so that at the point at which they had discretionary money, my mother was still clipping coupons from Costco and still saving a tablespoon of tomato paste. So it wouldn't go to waste. They just were frugal that way.

[01:11:20.500]

But not miserly. The generosity that they expressed was toward others. I was a recipient of that generosity. I don't know how many students have their tuition paid for. Sabbaticals, retreats, therapy, that my folks covered. I would have received a much bigger inheritance had they not been so generous. Let's put it that way. But I think that was the other things. I don't know if it was a fear, exactly. But kind of a cautious, maybe a cautious respect. The love of money really is the root of all evil.

Carey Nieuwhof: Back to losing your soul, where we started.

[01:12:14.300]

ERIC PETERSON: Precisely. I think it's very connected to that. So they were weary of it. Generous with other people. I think on their 50th Anniversary, they uncorked one. We went to a Vancouver Island to a kind of a bed-and-breakfast type place, Sooke Harbor and there was a big bill at the end of that. But, but you should uncork one when you make it 50 years. But they drove modest cars.

[01:12:55.300]

The house, I would say that house that they lived in at the end there was a little more than middle-class. They did some nice things, but I think that was largely motivated out of knowing that they would be entertaining people, welcoming people into that space.

[01:13:10.000]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's what they said, we expanded it knowing that there would be many overnight guests. Yeah, Winn what did you see in terms of financial integrity with Eugene and Jan?

WINN COLLIER: I saw everything that The Eric described, I mean, when I was going through their files, I mean, I ran into their financial statements, you know, from their money given away. And the number of students he mentioned like PhD students, who Jan and Eugene just wrote the checks to pay their tuition for multiple years. I remember one friend told me years later. He was good friends with Jan and Eugene and Eugene asked him, why didn't you ever ask us to pay your PhD Bill, and he said, I didn't know it was an option. But um, I mean, one time when I was there, there was a story in the local paper of I think it was a young girl who needed a kidney. And, was just a story in the paper. And the next morning, Jan was on the phone, calling the editor, tracking down who this family was so that they could pay whatever was left than needed for her to have the operation. So this was just the way they lived.

[01:14:36.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's impressive.

ERIC PETERSON: Darning their socks, you know, when there's a hole, right? She was mending them. I think I had to force him one time to actually go to Nordstrom's and get a real suit.

[01:14:50.000]

You know, that the stuff he was wearing was so shabby, they just did not indulge themselves, they didn't indulge others, but they cared for others. They made life possible for some people.

Carey Nieuwhof: See, and this is what is so beautiful about the story. And what I appreciated about *A Burning in My Bones*, is it wasn't a hagiography. And yet, there is so much to admire and there's so much to ascribe to. And I sent my wife one of the videos yesterday, and I said, I hope in 25 years we're somewhat similar to this like, that would be great, wouldn't it be great to finish with that kind of open door and open heart, and willingness to help others.

[01:15:33.400]

Maybe just think of others more than you think of yourself. And just that, that friendship, you can see that very deep friendship and fondness that Eugene and Jan shared, but it wasn't all perfect in paradise either, we've talked about a lot of that but there are two areas I want to talk about before we wrap up. One is the bourbon.

[01:15:59.500]

You know that shows up, that Eugene seemed to really enjoy his bourbon or his double every night, and that seemed to be a little bit of a struggle for him in some respects.

[01:16:09.800]

Not that he was drunk or anything, but Winn, why did you include that in the book? What did you see there and tell us that part of the story?

[01:16:19.500]

WINN COLLIER: I think the main reason I included it just because at some point it felt dishonest not to because he mentioned it so often in his journals. I think it was very much tied to his longing to be transformed by Christ. And I think he felt that there were times where, this is just something that had more of a hold on him than he wanted, and he wanted to be shed of things that had to hold on them. So yeah, I mean it was something he referenced over a couple decades. I think if I remember Right, Eric? You mentioned that that wasn't something you were really familiar with? Is that right? Or am I wrong about that?

ERIC PETERSON: Yeah. I guess I didn't come to think of it as being inappropriate. So I didn't know that he wrestled with it, because it didn't affect the relationships. And that's sort of the litmus test for me. It didn't seem to compromise him but I think he felt it like the next day, just didn't feel like he was clear-headed to do the work, he was called to do and just kind of separating himself. And this is me just learning from Winn after reading the journals that he came to kind of regret. I think Winn says it really well in the biography. You know, in every other aspect of his life he is a

highly disciplined person. And this was an area that he just didn't feel like he's in control of all together, you know? Again none not like he's an alcoholic or know how to control but just didn't have that same applied discipline. So yeah I felt like it was important. I was glad it came out. I think it's important, mostly encouraging for the rest of us mortals to kind of see someone that we admired, his like, oh, he struggled with that too? Glad to know that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and I think that's what makes the story even more compelling, is that it is a journey, and you see the wrestling with ministry. You see the wrestling with us, should I just stop drinking, you know, and again, as you said it's not like he was an alcoholic, he was abusive or he got drunk every night, that's not it, it's just that we all have one or two areas of our life that I think we all struggle. And I think realizing that some of the people that really have left a great legacy, we're not that much different than we are.

I got the opportunity to interview Eugene in the summer of 2017. I remember when the email came in from the publisher. Would you like thirty minutes with Eugene Peterson? I'm like, you name it. I'll be there. And I talked with them over the phone. There was none of this. There was no video. There was like I called the landline at the place in Kalispell. And in Montana, we had a conversation. And it was just thirty minutes, but their thirty minutes said, I'll always treasure. Unfortunately there was an interview that kind of went South on Eugene that final summer when he was talking about his book, what would become his last book. While he was alive, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*.

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It was a journalist who asked him a question about same-sex marriage and whether he would be affirming and do the wedding of a same-sex couple and Eugene said which this didn't come out, came out in the book after a long pause said yes. And that kind of lit up the headlines for a few weeks and you want to pick up the story from there? Because it just crushed me to see what happened to Eugene and those last month's, and you want to frame it for us Winn? And I'd like to hear your take on it too, Eric.

WINN COLLIER: Yeah. And mainly would like to hear Eric, he was a little more on the inside with this, with his parents, as it was happening. I arrived maybe three weeks back to their house after that, it was the first thing Eugene wanted to talk about. I think he was devastated. I mean, part of it is just to say, I think the whole you're talking about the landline, a call.

[01:20:52.200]

There would be times with Eugene where it was very very obvious that he was struggling.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was clear to me in my interview that his memory wasn't what it was.

WINN COLLIER: Yeah. And there are other times where you'd be talking to him and he would just be sharp as a tack. So depending on the moment and I just think the honest reality is he shouldn't have been doing, he was at a time in his life where he was past doing interviews.

[01:21:19.400]

Certainly past doing phone interviews without someone being there in conversation and Eugene his entire life, some people called him coy. I don't personally think that's fair. I think he was up to something else than the agendas of the time. Or just the fact that he didn't sort of trust the energies and often the arguments as presented. It was about being a pastor to people. And you don't do that over social media. You do that in conversation. And so I think, you know, at his best Eugene would have offered more clarity or reframed the question.

[01:22:17.200]

Not because he was afraid to say what he believed, but because he thought that these were relational things. I'd like Eric to step in because Eric was more on the inside of what was happening there.

ERIC PETERSON: Well that's really well said, all that right there. I think it's important to just affirm that he was not at his cognitive best. I don't think that we realized just how compromised he was at that time. And I've learned subsequently to this incident is oftentimes the case. people that are exceptionally bright have a way of sort of masking their cognitive decline or dementia. And so it was worse than we realized and he should not have been doing that interview but we didn't realize it at the time. It was clearly an interview intended to be around that book.

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And so, as you said, it was unfortunate that the interviewer went off-script, you know, entered into a topic that he wasn't prepared to address, caught off guard.

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But I believe he answered it the way that he would answer today.

[01:23:34.200]

And so when that sort of news hit and the kerfuffle ensued, a variety of publishing houses got their heads together along with an agent and brought this retraction that he agreed to.

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And when I saw that come out a day or two later, I was just incensed because I just felt like, again, he's being taken advantage of, putting words in his mouth.

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So I wrote a clarifying letter and sent it to this agent as a courtesy just saying, this is coming out tomorrow. Just want you to know. And he objected, of course. And so it turned out that the three of us, the agent, myself, and Eugene got on a three-way conference call from three different states. And I think the first thirty minutes was just this other person and me arguing about why or why this should not be, you know, put out there. And then Eugene was quiet. And I finally asked, dad, what do you think about all this?

[01:24:55.300]

What do you want to do? And I thought he'd fallen asleep in Montana. He was quiet for the longest time. And he finally, this is kind of embedded in my memory. I'm pretty sure I've got this exactly right. He goes, I just feel so incompetent. And, because of that moment I came to this real clarity like, my job here is not to speak for him anymore, and my job is not to defend him. My job is to protect him. And so we just make sure that that would never happen again, and his his world got smaller his life got quieter.

[01:25:48.000]

And I consulted with a couple of people and Winn was one of them, and I just said, I don't know what to do here. But because Winn said, if you put this down, that is put this letter down. I'll pick it up and I'll redress it in the biography. And because of my clarity, that this wasn't my fight to fight, and there may be some wisdom in a couple of years' distance, and just kind of letting things quiet down and not adding more fuel to this fire, and just because of my great respect and trust of Winn, I felt like, well that's I think that's the way to do this. So as you saw, he picked it up and addressed it, I thought beautifully and honestly.

[01:26:38.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: And with details that never made the story back in 2017, too.

ERIC PETERSON: Right. And for the most part people gave Eugene the benefit of the doubt. But it was a very unfortunate way to end a public career. And that's why he continued to talk about it. He brought it up, kept talking about this person. You know, you name the person and it was clear that there was a devastating experience

Carey Nieuwhof: I felt so terrible and angry. And as I said, your dad and mom wrote me a beautiful handwritten note, just thanking me for the conversation and sticking to the questions. And I think there's a lot to be learned for those of us who do what I do, what we do, about questions to ask and questions not to ask, particularly of conditions. And I think, at the end of the day, it's a tiny little footnote on an incredible life.

[01:27:49.400]

But it's a shame that there's that footnote at all.

ERIC PETERSON: It's not the last footnote. It's one that's gets remembered.

[01:28:02.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: Eric, you built the casket for your dad. Very simple pine box casket. I don't know it was pine or not but wood casket that you milled, and shortly after your dad died, within a year, you were burying your mom as well. I want you to talk about what it was like losing both of your parents so quickly. Coming to terms with that loss and the legacy that you will remember, the enduring legacy that you remember as their son.

ERIC PETERSON: There's a whole lot there.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it's a whole other interview.

ERIC PETERSON: When we saw the decline beginning to happen, I called a family meeting. Got my sibs together, and we spent two days in Montana.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it Alzheimer's or dementia with your dad?

ERIC PETERSON: It was a vascular-related dementia. There were a few other things going on, but that's really ultimately what compromised him, it was an infection that eventually shut his body down.

[01:29:11.600]

That he just couldn't fight. And for my mother, it was a glioblastoma brain tumor. So for both of them, they had these end of life conditions that compromised them. They they were dying and before our eyes, and it's always a mix, right? It's on the one hand, it's a gift to have the heads up and to be able to take care of them and to say goodbye, and to be there. I was privileged to be with them at their bedside at the moment they died. And that's a rare and holy gift.

[01:29:58.000]

On the other hand, the sudden death is sometimes simpler. But because of their condition, I think we were, I was at least, prepared to let them go. They were clearly, their bodies were clearly saying, I'm giving up the ghost. And that longest goodbye in my estimation, it's a gift fruit in terms of closure. So it was a relief at the moment when they gave their last breath, and building his casket building her urn, she was cremated and I built the urn for her remains. That was I kind of felt like one of the final gifts to be able to give them, like, I'm gonna hold you.

[01:30:55.600]

When I'm going to bury you, you know, and do this last thing. It's not a stranger that does this intimate detail part of your life, it's your son, because you asked me to do it.

[01:31:11.100]

Yeah. When we had that family meeting and I asked him some of those details like how do you want this part to go?

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And then, that was one of the questions is it a memorial service or funeral? Is it body or cremation? And he said, he said, funeral, I want the full meal deal.

[01:31:33.100]

So just to be able to honor their wishes like that at the end to conduct their services.

[01:31:43.200]

And it was at that family meeting, this was a couple of years before they died. I had my legal pad and was asking all the questions and taking notes. And one of the questions I asked was, how do you want us to be thinking about your legacy? And he after his pause, which was customary, he said, you know, until you asked the question, I don't know what I've ever thought about that. And so we just went onto

the next topic. But the next morning, as we were sort of shuffling around the kitchen getting breakfast, he said, you know, I've been thinking about that question about legacy. And I think I've got an answer. And so I went over to the table and I grabbed my legal pad. I was gonna write this down, and he said, you're my legacy.

[01:32:32.700]

And I think that's right. At first, it felt heavy.

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Like, oh no, I don't want to do that. I'm not. You know, my middle name is Eugene but I'm not Eugene Peterson. I'm Eric Eugene but to be to be a part of his legacy.

[01:32:52.000]

I mean everyone can do this, because you just have to live your own life with authenticity, have to be yourself. That's what it means to live a Eugene Peterson legacy is you you follow your identity as a beloved child of God and you live into that purpose as you fumble and struggle your way through in discerning what that means, what that unique call and claim on your life is. That's what it means to live his legacy. and I think I guess one of the things that sort of surprised me, is I learned that I can honor my parents no less in death than I can in life.

[01:33:41.900]

And part of that is just living my life, you know, generously and loving people well, and trying to be a person of grace and truth, is the things that they were. It was a part of them. So I think about them every single day.

[01:34:01.300]

I have a little ritual when I get dressed in the morning. When I get my car keys and things. I've got this little pocket knife that I gave him on Father's Day, 100 years ago and I jacked it after he died, with my sibling's permission. I put that in my pocket, every morning, and I just say it out loud, I'm carrying you with me, Dad.

[01:34:25.200]

And it's just this little physical, tangible reminder of, ah, I'm carrying Eugene with me. He's with me. And I think he and my mother are praying for me.

[01:34:37.300]

I feel like he is sort of my Bishop. He's still overseeing my life and ministry.

[01:34:45.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's really powerful, really profound in a different way of thinking about legacy. You know, my Dad's eighty-three. He just had his birthday this week. And when my oldest son was in town last he said, you know, I think our family has a legacy of love and it started with Grandpa Nieuwhof. And I'm like, oh, wow, like that is a legacy that transcends generations in life and death. And Winn, when you think about legacy for Eugene and Jan, what metaphor image teaching truth comes to life for you?

[01:35:20.500]

WINN COLLIER: I think of the people, I've got to know. One of my very favorite joys, unexpected in writing get a chance to write Eugene's story, was the vast array of wonderful people I got to meet, and I remember thinking about halfway through like wow, no wonder their life was so rich. I mean this is just such good people and I have deep genuine friends now that I didn't have before. And Eric is like a brother to me now and I'd never met Eric. And so I think of all of these people who, in each of their own ways, would say, I knew Eugene and Jan, and they knew me, and there's something about that depth of offering your life to another person, caring for another person, which I think transcends a lot of the things you write. A lot of the things you say. And I think the other thing is I keep thinking I should be able to articulate this in a more interesting way or something. But it's this very simple thing that God is at the true center of all that is good and beautiful, and I feel like Eugene just stood in the middle of this world over and over again in the midst of pastoral chaos and cultural demise, and immense questions, and the befuddlement of so many of us, and just stood there with joy and that radiant smile and that raspy voice and was not very clever and just spoke God's name into the middle of this world. And I think that's his true legacy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well that is beautiful, beautiful place to close this. I want to thank you. You've been so generous with your insights and your time. The authorized biography is *A Burning in My Bones*. And Eric, so appreciated your book, *Letter to a Young Pastor*. And obviously, Eugene thirty-five books, I think. It was a lot, and in *The Message* translation, of course, we'll link to everything in the show notes, if people want to follow either of you online, is there an easy place to connect with what you're doing these days social or otherwise?

ERIC PETERSON: Not for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Keeping on the, you are his legacy. There you go. Eric. Yeah, that's beautiful. Yeah, how about you Winn?

WINN COLLIER: petersoncenter.org

[01:38:12.100]

If people want to know more about The Peterson Center and how we're trying to continue the conversation that Eugene was having.

[01:38:20.200]

Carey Nieuwhof: I want to thank you so so much for this.

[01:38:22.200]

WINN COLLIER: Thank you for having us.

ERIC PETERSON: You're welcome. Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I so appreciate the nuance in that conversation and we're not done yet on this episode. So some of you who have been longtime listeners may remember that back in 2017, I interviewed Eugene Peterson, it was such a privilege, one of the highlights of being able to do this podcast, and it was by phone from his cabin in Montana. And it was 30 minutes, I had 30 minutes with him and I was fortunate enough to be able to do this interview moments before he retired from public life. There was that unfortunate incident, we talked about with Winn and Eric, and that was heartbreaking on a number of different levels. And it's talked about in the biography as well, but I got a beautiful letter from Eugene after this, and I want to play that for you. And so, here's the original interview I did with Eugene Peterson back in 2017. And I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it is an unbelievable thrill to have Eugene Peterson with me today. Eugene, welcome to the podcast.

Eugene Peterson: Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's great to be able to interview you, as I shared with you. And with listeners, you have been leaving incredibly rich deposits in my life for decades now, and what a thrill to be able to do this. So you've got a brand new book out it's called *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*.

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And you start in the introduction by saying that when you are a young church planting pastor and 1962, you've found a growing dissonance in your ministry. And so you labored to find what you called congruence. Tell us about what you were experiencing in the early days of year leadership and how you moved through it.

[01:39:59.300]

Eugene Peterson: Well I think what I was experiencing is kind of an innocence, which was kind of getting me spoiled. My presbytery asked me to start a new church. And I'd never been a pastor before. But it was a small little town and Baltimore, Bel Air, it was kind of a suburb of Baltimore.

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And I had many people in my congregation that was a small congregation just 50, 60 or so. And then there were riots through were starting and it was a lot of violence and going on in Baltimore. And my parishioners were just getting all upset about everything. They were buying guns. And I had one man, who is a very mild man, and he bought a 14 inch wrench had it beside himself as he went into town to make sure you he had something protecting him. And so my congregation they were getting all, you know, mad about all this.

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And so I got mad. I said, you know you're Presbyterians, have you never read anything in Galatians? Galatians was Paul's angry letter. I was getting angry, so I just told them, No, we can't do it as we're free. We can't just hem ourselves in by other people's bad attitudes. And so it didn't make any difference.

[01:41:50.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: It didn't, it felt like failure?

[01:41:52.900]

Eugene Peterson: So I thought, well, I'll get together a bunch of men mostly the men who work in Baltimore, and we'll just study Galatians.

[01:42:04.600]

And find out what Paul said about this. You're free and you can't do this. And I had about 16 men in that room. I always fixed a pot of coffee for them before they came in, and you've got to realize that I mean, I was emotionally distraught. Yeah. They were just afraid of what was going on in Baltimore. And I was afraid of what was going on in their lives. And so I started on creationism and just, you know, I could tell it didn't make any difference. They were just stirring sugar in their coffee and that kind of thing. So I went back home after church, told my wife they weren't paying any attention. And then I said, I think I'll teach them Greek. If I taught them Greek, they'll get it. That would really empty the place out fast. so instead of

teaching them Greek, I thought, well, I'd been studying Semitic and Greek for a PhD, and so I had these other biblical languages I was pretty conversant with them. So I thought, well, I'll take, I'll take these languages and I'll translate them into the Baltimore vernacular, and see what happens.

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So I took a sheet of paper every week and translated what I would think of his American vernacular in their language and the week after I did that because I was cleaning up afterwards and all the coffee cups were cold. They were just infatuated by this new language that they'd never heard before. And so that's what started it. And so I just kept doing that and kept doing that. And finally, riots stopped, but I didn't stop, because I've got a whole congregation of people who didn't know the biblical language and so that's how it started.

[01:44:27.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's amazing. So that was the origin of The Message.

Eugene Peterson: That was the origin of The Message.

Carey Nieuwhof: In the middle of the turmoil of the 1960s as a young church planting pastor in Bel Air, Maryland. That is amazing. And I think I read in an interview you did with someone else that it was like twenty years, over twenty years to write The Message maybe longer than that?

Eugene Peterson: That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Wow. What a labor of love. And thirty-five books. PS as well, which is exceptional on that note, you see things so differently than so many writers, thinkers and theologians. And that's one of the things that's always been a gift to me. What are some of the habits and the disciplines and the rhythms that you have practiced over the course of your life and ministry that you think helped you hone the perspective that God has given you on life?

[01:45:19.200]

Eugene Peterson: It's a complex question, really. Books have always been important to me and I and I sought for books that gave me some inspiration or some guidance. And you know, I never read the newspaper. Very situationally. the newspaper wasn't a very big help and understanding God and Jesus.

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But also I schooled myself and some who I realized were the great preachers and pastors in the past.

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Alexander White was the first one that I'd discovered. He was a pastor in Scotland 150 years ago, maybe more, and he was a great storyteller and had a wonderful way of using words and the gospel.

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Carey Nieuwhof: How did you find him? That's a name I'm not even familiar with, I'm not sure a lot of people would be, why Alexander White?

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Eugene Peterson: I was reading in a library and I found him, and he was the most popular preacher and in Scotland for a number of years. And so, I just, well, let me find out what he's doing, and he's a with a great storyteller.

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But his students, they just flight to his church. The ones in the seminary and one of them one day, I think this is a wonderful story, said, Dr. White, was the most important thing for our pastor to do? And he paused and said, take a long vacation and relieve yourself as often as possible.

[01:47:19.200]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's pretty good.

Eugene Peterson: As the leading pastor in Scotland.

Carey Nieuwhof: Take a long vacation and relieve yourself as often as possible. That's great advice. Okay. So you love to read. That's one of the habits and disciplines. You've been a lifelong reader any other. I mean, you talk about Paul Tournier and others that really influenced you, who are a few of the others that you would say, they're on the top shelf of my library?

[01:47:50.200]

Eugene Peterson: Tournier was one of them. He wasn't a pastor but I think ,in my mind, who is a contemporary of mine was George Buttrick.

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Yeah, when I went to Seminary I wasn't planning on being a pastor, but seminary forced me to work in the church, so I just had to do it.

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Carey Nieuwhof: What were you planning on being? If you were going to be a pastor?

Eugene Peterson: A professor of languages.

[01:48:19.200]

And so I was assigned to a church. Well his church, a Presbyterian Church in the center of the city. And I'd never heard preaching like that before.

[01:48:41.900]

I wasn't intending to attend church. They made me the coach of the basketball team and so I thought I would take care of my obligations. The first Sunday I was there, I heard him preach, and nothing dramatic about him, but he is so clear and so kind of matter of fact. I later found out that who's the guy who he writes novels, Frederick Buechner.

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I knew about him and had read most of his books and but he was there in church every Sunday.

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I let Buechner be, I didn't know him. I never met him, but I kind of let him guide me in terms of writers that are worth reading for people who are interested in life and just using the truth of life. And so he became an important part of my reading life. And so I just kind of went from one person to another. I never went to good schools to tell you the truth. You might cut that out of the interview.

Carey Nieuwhof: So it wasn't the school so much. It was self-learning.

Eugene Peterson: It was self-learning. Yeah. And along the way, I picked up people who knew a lot more than I did. Yeah. And I thrived. I just kind of picked them from my faculty.

[01:50:17.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: And that's great. So was it like this big program or anything? It was just one led to another led to another led to another and you never stopped.

[01:50:25.600]

Eugene Peterson: That's right.

[01:50:26.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: One of the things I've heard you write about in the past. I've read from you in the past is your sabbath rhythm. Has been really important for you and your wife Janice, and can you tell us a little bit about your Sabbath rhythm? What you've done with it over the years, how you practiced it in ministry and what it looks like these days?

[01:50:46.700]

Eugene Peterson: Now I can I think of his name, he was a Quaker. And Jan and I, I'll think of it hopefully as I talk. Jan and I, we were pretty new in this new church. And we went to a retreat in the Poconos and this man was there leading the retreat.

[01:51:13.400]

Maybe you'll think of it. Anyway, there were about 25 of us there. 30, maybe. And he told us that this was going to be a silent retreat.

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Well, that just about destroyed my wife. I have to be silent for two days, three days?

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And so we started out I mean I think I was fortunate getting in finding people I didn't know anything about. He had a friend when he was growing up who specialized in men's retreat,s and when he got people together at their retreat place made them open up their suitcases.

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And they confiscated all the whiskey. And said you can have it back when you leave if you still want it.

Carey Nieuwhof: So silence and no whiskey.

Eugene Peterson: So anyway, he called into the silence of the retreat and so for a couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours in the afternoon, we were just

in silence, and we weren't permitted to talk to anybody. And what surprised me is how good the food was. You began to see the food as beautiful and the robes were perfect, and so it was kind of an introduction to a way of life, which was not supported by reason.

[01:52:52.000]

Except to empty your suitcases before you went on retreat.

[01:52:57.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes. So it was just a different pace and a different rhythm

Eugene Peterson: Different pace and different trusting to silence.

[01:53:07.800]

And I'd never, I grew up Pentecostal and silence was not one of their big things.

[01:53:15.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: So Pentecostal and became a presbyterian, almost monastic. I heard you say at one point that you are a monk in your head in some ways?

[01:53:23.800]

Eugene Peterson: That's right. Yeah. So anyway that started it. Yeah, and we were there for three days and we left different. And when we got home we decided we would keep a Monday Sabbath. Every Monday would be Sabbath, and so all our kids at that point were in school and so after we fix their lunches, sent them off on the bus. This was in Baltimore now and just beautiful rivers and brooks and meadows.

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So we had plenty of room to walk in. And so we'd go to some creeks, river, and already packed our lunches, and whatever, and just walkd for three hours.

[01:54:14.900]

Sometimes it was hard to not say something, but we did pretty well. And then we stop and have lunch. Pray. And then talk. Talk about the birds we've seen. We were very avid birders.

[01:54:34.700]

And just talk about Sunday just passed. And we did that for years and years and years, while the kids were still in school. And they grew to appreciate it themselves. They didn't have to do anything on Mondays, right? Didn't have to make their bed. That was the biggest thing right there.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm sure that's pretty exciting to an eight year old. Yeah.

Eugene Peterson: And we did that for a long time. And then now when the kids left we revised that a little bit because our congregation had been growing and we kind of rearranged our silence thing.

[01:55:20.400]

But anyway, that's how it started. And it was kind of a habitual thing to it. We didn't have to sit down and figure out what we were gonna do. It's become kind of the habits of our life by that time. And so it really did something to our whole lives. Our married life, our pastoral life, and people in the congregation started noticing, I never preached sermons on sabbath-keeping. But they were observing and doing things and wasn't long before, I don't want to exaggerate but maybe a tenth of the congregation was keep with keeping the Sabbath also. And, it picked up, people watch what other people were doing. And so I think it really changed my pastoral life and my congregation. Because one of the things I think I just picked up from my Quaker friend was, you don't push the gospel down anybody's throat. You act it out yourself. Sometimes they take it. Sometimes they don't. And so there was kind of a reversal of technique instead of, as a preacher, telling people what to do and letting them watch what you're doing. And so that's just changed the whole tenor of my pastoral life.

[01:56:53.300]

Carey Nieuwhof: I can sense that. I sense that even in your voice and you're in your rhythm can ask you as a as a very prolific writer, did that impact or influence your writing at all? That kind of rhythm, that space in your life. Do you think that your ability to write that often and that well was somehow related to your Sabbath rhythm?

[01:57:15.700]

Eugene Peterson: Yes it was. But it was not conscious. I was reading people who I admired or respected. Maybe I should say respected. And so I don't think I changed. Well I changed because I was reading people that I admired. But I didn't copy them.

[01:57:38.700]

You can't copy somebody when you're being creative, and so that just kept things going for me.

[01:57:46.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: So it was more reading other writers that got your pen moving. Is that it?

[01:57:52.300]

Eugene Peterson: That's right. And picking the right writers. The megachurch people didn't phase me, so I just ignored them.

Carey Nieuwhof: And did the slow work of writing and thinking and praying. Speaking of leaders, I can't believe we're coming to the homestretch already. And I'm so grateful for the time you made available. We've got tens of thousands of leaders listening, and thousands of young pastors. So I've seen interviews that were shot on video at your place in Montana. Do you still have that place? It's absolutely gorgeous from what I've seen.

[01:58:29.600]

Eugene Peterson: Oh yes, we do. We're retired now. I don't have a congregation.

[01:58:36.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. Yeah. 25-26 years retired? Yeah, so I want you to imagine that you're sitting down with young Pastor, Young Senior Pastor, Young Senior leader, he or she is with you at your kitchen table at your place in Montana, and you're going to give them two or three nuggets of, here's what you need to keep in mind as a young leader in the church today. What would you tell them?

[01:59:02.400]

Eugene Peterson: I don't give nuggets. I have a lot of young pastors who come and stay here. We used to have them stay overnight, but it got too much, but we have some great bed and breakfast, you're here. And so I just sent them down there. But no, I think I start by asking questions.

[01:59:27.700]

Why do like what you're doing, and what disappoints you? And people are smart. It's not covered up by other stuff. And if you're mimicking somebody else, then you're not a writer or not a priest. So I think the years now that I've not had a

congregation, I've been doing as much pastoral work as I ever did. But it wasn't obvious thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you'd start by asking questions.

Eugene Peterson: Yeah. Just asking questions and commenting on their answers. The way I learned, I learned from Butterick, who didn't tell me what to do. I learned from the guy in Scotland who did tell me what to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Andrew White, is that it?

[02:00:18.400]

Eugene Peterson: Yeah. I was never a copier. I met people I'd watch what they were doing. Listen to them. It's hard to know. I think I was pretty self-taught in many ways.

[02:00:36.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good to know, and well, you've literally taught millions through what you've done. I've got to just once again personally, say thank you and I think I can be so bold on behalf of all the leaders, listening, church leaders listening. Thanks so much for an unbelievably rich heritage and legacy. Your new book is, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, a collection of 49 of your sermons, well worth reading. And I think there's a devotional coming out next year. Is that right? One more thing?

Eugene Peterson: There is.

[02:01:06.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, well Eugene Peterson, thank you so much for being with us today.

[02:01:11.000]

Eugene Peterson: You're welcome. You made it very easy for me.

[02:01:14.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: It's so good to hear from Eugene again I'm so grateful for his legacy and I'm going to treasure the letter that he and Jan wrote to me forever. I've got it. And I'm so, so grateful. And I'm so thankful we have the opportunity to do this, my goodness. I'm going to tell you about some of the guests that we've got coming up. We're going to continue this Integrity Series. I want to thank our partners before

I give you what's coming up. The Preaching Workshop that I'm doing. Registration closes July 10th, go check it out, at preachingworkshop.com, it's absolutely free.

I want to help you preach better sermons and forget TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram, texting is the number one way to communicate.

[02:01:52.400]

Church leaders, go to gloo.us/texting and you can get started for free today. It's absolutely free. Well, next episode we continue the integrity series and I'm talking to Chuck DeGroat about narcissism in the church, including signs you work for a narcissist. How to tell if you're a narcissist, why church planters are prime candidates for narcissistic leadership. Are you kidding me? Yeah. That's a thing and the problem with hyper-therapeutic culture. Here's an excerpt.

Carey Nieuwhof: Are there some signs that would indicate that your boss is a narcissist?

[02:02:25.000]

Chuck DeGroat: Yeah. So the characteristics that you named earlier signs to look for whenever you see the manipulation of of power, the misuse of power, that's a sign.

[02:02:37.300]

Whenever you're you experience in an organization is such that there's not space for your full person to show up for your voice to show up. That may be a sign that you're working under someone who's trying to squelch your voice and is potentially narcissistic. Whenever you sense that there's an entitlement to success to being right to being respected to some kind of knowledge, that may be a sign that you're working with a narcissist. Whenever you see that there are different standards for him than there are for you. And I realized that there are different expectations and within hierarchical organizations, but radically different standards, you might be working with a narcissist.

[02:03:17.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: I felt like Chuck and I could have talked for five hours. That's next time. It's extremely illuminating and I hope you get a sense by now, this little series is not a hit piece on the church. I'm here to build a better future and I would love for you to be a part of that. So if you enjoyed this episode, please share it with a friend, please leave us a rating and review, and we want the church to get healthier. I want to get healthier. I want you to get healthier. Coming up, we've got a couple more episodes in this mini Integrity series, Colin Hanson, Tim Keller's biographer, and

then I've got a Tim Keller, special coming up. Also coming up, Paula Faris on the podcast, Kevin Kelly, Kenny Jang, who else would we got? We got Richard Foster, John Acuff, John Maxwell is coming back on the show. Dave Ramsey, John Crist for the first time, Judah and Chelsea Smith, Mike Todd, and a lot more so that's coming up. And hey before we go have you signed up for my newsletter yet? I have so much fun writing it. We share some really curious helpful relevant things, everything about the church but also some really interesting stuff.

[02:04:19.800]

That I just find fascinating. And I find I learn best when I learned from a variety of sources. And that's what we bring you every single Friday for free. It is super easy to subscribe and unsubscribe. So it's not for you. I get that, but if it is, you'll want to check it out. Go to ontherisenewsletter.com and get started for free. Thank you so much for listening to this. I say so enjoy doing this with you. And I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.