



## Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians

*Eugene H. Peterson*

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*Leap Over a Wall* is Eugene H. Peterson's vibrant, insightful, and heartfelt exploration of one of the Bible's most controversial figures: King David. Peterson beautifully elucidates the Old Testament's rich depictions of David's failures and victories, recapturing their excitement and immediacy to reveal David himself as a crucially human example of how we relate to God. A vision brought to life by one of the world's most respected and influential theologians, the author of *The Pastor*, *The Jesus Way*, *Practice Resurrection*, and *The Message*—a bestselling contemporary translation of the Bible—*Leap Over a Wall* is a unique opportunity to reconnect with David, a man simultaneously admirable, soulful, and dark, and one of the most complex and vital characters of the greatest story ever written.

## Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians Details

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## **From Reader Review Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians for online ebook**

### **Wendy says**

We used this book, based on the life of David, to structure our discussions for the college ministry I worked with this spring. Each week we focused on a section of David's story and were often able to use Peterson's book to get ideas and identify the main thrust of the passage.

It was a quick read, once I sat down and decided to finish it, and Peterson has some great insights about some of the lesser-known parts of David's story. He does a great job of connecting it with the larger story of the Bible, and the ways that David's story in some way foreshadows Jesus' redemption in the New Testament. The accompanying study guide was helpful to spark ideas for our weekly discussions, and would also work well in a small-group setting.

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### **Jim Cooper says**

I love books that help illuminate scripture and make me see it in a new way. Peterson has done that by following the life of David through 1st and 2nd Samuel.

Did you know that in all of David's life - from his boyhood to his death - the Bible never records any miracles? That's what makes his life so interesting for us - how do we interact with God as normal human beings? What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be "spiritual"? God gave us the story of David to answer some of these questions, and Peterson is a fantastic guide.

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### **Cynthia says**

The story of David is so captivating because he is a model for us and a metaphor for human life: at times passionately grateful to God and spiritually alive, at other times hunted and desperately seeking God. Peterson does a good job bringing David to life and showing us how we can use his life as a model for our own lives and can learn lessons from his life to enrich our own lives. My only complaint is the use of The Message version because I think some of the beauty gets lost in that version. But still, this is a great book.

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### **Lady says**

I've studied and read this book completely for school and it was such an engaging and marvelous read. The chapters helped to jumpstart wonderful conversations and provided thought-provoking ideas to consider. I enjoyed this book immensely and have included a few of the concepts and reflection in an upcoming publication.

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### **Jon Anderson says**

This is Peterson's take on the life of David. All that you expect from Peterson - beautiful writing, thoughtful meditations, deep application. The main thrust here is that spirituality does not diminish our humanity but actually enlivens it. That to be fully human is to be fully centered on God. Peterson does believe in a sanctified use of the imagination, so some of his speculations which fill the gaps in the biblical narrative may seem farfetched. However, more often than not, they bring out the depth and nuances of what is in the text. Food for the soul that has been well-prepared and tastes great.

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### **Walthea says**

I read this book (non-fiction) by a Christian Man along with The Secret Chord (fiction) by a Jewish Woman. Both about the Life of David

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### **Jennifer says**

I love Eugene Peterson's books and I love to hear him speak. He's gentle and pastoral and REFRESHING. This book was SO GOOD... but I had to get about halfway through it before I started to get a good feel for the way it all hangs together. The last few chapters alone are worth the price of the book. I finished it, but I'm going back over several chapters because I want to remember these things. My copy is now marked up and heavily dog-eared. That's the sign of a great book! If the Bible is feeling stale to you or you're looking for a way to read it with new eyes, Peterson is very helpful. Highly recommend.

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### **Dottie Parish says**

Leap Over A Wall is a unique and fascinating study on the life of David. Throughout the book - from David and Goliath to David and Bathsheba to the death of Absalom- we learn of the humanity of David. He began as a shepherd boy, was "a man after God's own heart," a fugitive, a poetic writer of seventy-three Psalms, a mighty warrior, a king and a murderer. Peterson, the translator of the Message Bible, writes beautifully, even eloquently, of the many dimensions of David's life, fleshing them out and bringing him to life. In addition he shows us that our lives are like David's. In telling of David's decade in a real wilderness he compares this to circumstantial wildernesses we face when our lives are out of control. He says:

"This circumstantial wilderness is a terribly frightening and dangerous place; but I also believe it's a place of beauty. There are things to be seen, heard and experienced in the wilderness that can be seen, heard and experienced nowhere else. When we find ourselves in the wilderness we do well to be frightened; we also do well to be alert, open-eyed. In the wilderness we're plunged into danger and death; at the very same moment we're plunged, if we let ourselves be, into an awareness of the great mystery of God and the extraordinary preciousness of life." Pg.74

Toward the end of the book Peterson says:

"David's morals and manners left a lot to be desired....These are narrated as conditions that we share. They

aren't narrated to legitimize bad behavior but are set down as proof that we don't first become good and then get God. first we get God-and then, over a patient lifetime, we're trained in God's ways." Pg 216

Though this book was published in 1997 it is a timeless and excellent book for studying and learning from the life of David. I found this book in my church library.

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### **Andrew Murch says**

This is one of my final reads of the year, and I think perhaps the best. The insight Peterson brings into the David story is remarkable. It felt like each chapter was a beautifully crafted narrative sermon on the different scenes in David's life. Highly devotional, challenging, and ripe. He breaks down David's life scene by scene, and as a reader you travel from the fields of sheep in 1 Samuel 16 to the great king's deathbed in 1 Kings 2. On the way you get acquainted with (outside of Jesus) the preeminent character in all of Scripture. David is not a model. He is a human being, most fully human in his relationship with God. David does not show us how to live, he shows us how we live. Peterson's study of David is a great book study for a discipleship group, a challenging personal devotional, or a good read for a doctoral class on Old Testament narrative preaching (my purpose for reading it). Highly recommended.

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### **Demetrius Rogers says**

Peterson does it again. This guy is one of my favorite authors. His style can be a bit slow, but highly rewarding. It's like following a leisurely driver. The impatient reader can get a little antsy, but if you hang in there this guy can lead ya to some of the greatest sights. I'll go 10 pages and nothing pops. Just gentle and relatively uneventful (yet beautiful) prose. And then Peterson takes a turn, and, all of a sudden, you're traveling down one of the most breathtaking roads you've ever seen. And he never seems to get too excited about it, but you can see a gleam in his eye all the while. He knows he has important things to say. He just never gets too hasty about it. And true to his philosophy, he assures his reader the journey is just as important as the destination. A true prophet for those who will have ears to hear.

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### **Pete says**

It's been a while since I've read a "Christian" book, but this was fantastic. Definitely the best book on David I've ever read. "Earthy Spirituality" is the perfect subtitle for it. Peterson shows how David is made fully human by both his spiritual walk with God and his failings. Although, on the note of failings, the one area I wished he'd have addressed more was in David's decision to take multiple wives. It was, of course, just a part of the culture then--especially expected of a king; but I do believe this was part of David's life unraveling a bit towards the end (e.g.--problems with Absalom). But I digress. The book is brilliant, in my humble opinion.

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### **Mindi says**

This is a great book for normal people facing life, working and living without reality tv coverage of their every decision. David was a man who killed people for a living, but he wrote great psalms and walked with God. Peterson translates David's life into an encouraging litany for everyday people, complete with ups and downs. Peterson also clarifies why the absence of lament from American society has led to increased depression and addiction. Quite an interesting read for a psych nurse. Thank you, Pastor P.

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### **Richard Piet says**

Recalling the magic of listening to the narratives from his story telling mother, Peterson gives us permission to tell our story and weave our life-tale into the chronicle of God's work. The David story is the basis for connecting the Most High God to our human and earthy lives in this book of identification and encouragement. The David story provides us with a context to understand our own lives, our humanity and how God shapes us. The license of Peterson's mother in embellishing and bringing to life the account of David is sanctioned by identifying David's own narrative license in describing how God created the world in the Psalms of the poet. We are encouraged to enter the story ourselves.

Twenty David stories are used by Peterson to show how the Holy Spirit keeps us aware and responsive to the hand of God in our lives. The humanness of David heightens our attentiveness to the evil that weakens and destroys us. By entering these stories and finding ourselves in them, we gain understanding on our own human condition and God's hand in shaping us.

The story of David and Goliath is identified by Peterson a pivotal point in human history. It is a point of choosing between two human ways or God's way. It is about embracing the salvation of God in the midst of our human condition. This well known tale is a reminder to us of the ever pervading God ready to intervene and save us from our own destruction. The story is indicative of the lessons that Peterson provides as he invites us to write our own mark in the chronicle of God and His creation.

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### **Courtney says**

Pastor and author Eugene Peterson offers a series of reflections on the life of David, structured around narrative episodes found in 1 and 2 Samuel. His thesis is that David's life was characterized by an earthy spirituality: David was a real person with very human (often even less than moral) problems but who was also grounded in his faith in and praise to God. Each chapter comprises a sort of written sermon - spiritual observations and applications based on that piece of the David story. I wish I had read it concurrent with 1 and 2 Samuel (I read it after completion of the biblical saga), but I enjoyed Peterson's insights and exhortations nonetheless.

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### **Ryan says**

I've read 100% of the book *Leap Over a Wall* by Eugene Peterson. Eugene Peterson is best known for his work in translating the complete Bible into a contemporary message called *The Message*. The book was a reflection on the life of David, specifically in the texts of 1st and 2nd Samuel in the Bible. Each chapter of

the book was named a specific topic, followed by a subtitle describing a specific story of David. For example, the first chapter was named “Stories – David and Jesus”. The second chapter was named “Names – David and Samuel”, and the third chapter was named “Work – David and Saul.” Each chapter we learn about a specific characteristic of David and then a person that David interacted with somehow. Eugene takes the story and applies it to principles about every day life. The book is not a systematic exegesis of these books of the Bible but rather interpretations of them used for inspiring Christians into better living. The author is attempting to outline the life of David and show that he was a man worth imitating because of his realness. He wasn't a perfect man which was outlined in the book but he was a man who was after God's heart (the only man in the Bible who was said to do that). But the way he treated God was something that we should look up to and do as well. God was treated as God by David, not as some object or something that he compartmentalizes into his life. Overall, the book was a way to teach people spiritual qualities that David exemplified in concrete biblical examples followed by insights from daily living of Eugene Peterson.

There were many things that stood out to me in this book, but a few of them were life-changing and worth mentioning and focusing on. Firstly, God loves when we treat him like God. The story of Uzziah who died because he was so 'religious' but never really thought much of God. He was the man who was transferring the Ark of the Covenant to its new location, when the box almost fell as a donkey stumbled into a hole, he grabbed it with his hands and immediately was struck down by God. Some people misinterpret this as God being overly angry and quick to punish which is inconsistent with the rest of his nature, but what Eugene Peterson says, and what probably is the truth, is that, along with the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who thought they could treat God in their own manner, that we do not treat God in a way that is overpowering of him. We do not control him, but he controls us. God does not want to be treated like that. He does not want to be grasped. He is the Almighty God. He is above all of that. So, do not take care of God. God takes care of you.

Secondly, a topic that David was a real dude with real sin and real problems--we can learn more about human nature and connect with him and learn about ourselves and how to accept ourselves. David wasn't some perfected saint that was all holy and something out of grasp of our imagination. David was just like you or me, not original in any of his sin. He had lust problems, he actually committed adultery and that was the downfall of his kingship. He experienced loneliness. Actually, most of his life (or a large portion of it) he spent alone in the wilderness, where he wrote the majority of his Psalms. David had anger problems, he actually killed many people! And David went through cycles of spirituality and worldliness. His downfall was when he started having pride in himself and ordering people around, directing them instead of being intimately involved in their lives, and even after that season of his life he returned back to the woods and was again humbled in the state of naturalness before God.

Another topic that I found to be beneficial was the theology about lamenting. David expressed Lamentation for his friend Jonathan when he died, as well for his King Saul, who was actually out to persecute David. Lamenting, as David expressed in the Psalm for Jonathan, was something that expressed his true heart feelings to God. Nowadays, we have a lot of psychology and secular ideas about how to deal with our emotions. We're told by psychologists to write them down and express them. We are told to think of them as apart from us and not really a part of our person, also known as separating ourselves from our emotions. There are a lot of methods to dealing with our emotions. David, on the other hand, felt like he could express his emotions truly and completely to God without holding back. He was able to feel his emotions about God completely. After writing his Psalm, he ordered other people to memorize the psalm in order to learn from the example. He expressed healthy emotions of lamenting.

Lastly, I learned that God takes time to build up his people. We hear of David learning about community in the wilderness when he is all alone. David is out in the wilderness for years at a time and he is being built up in the way that God needs him to be in order to be a good king. It is like the same thing when Moses is being built up in the desert, preparing himself by being with God before he leads people to the promise land. This gave me an understanding that God may want me to be in a powerful position for his purpose, but at the same time there is no rushing God. He might take time, as many years as he desires and thinks is right,

before he sees me as ready. He could be preparing my mind, my heart, or my character, or a combination of all, before I am ready to do what he calls me to be or do. It is a similar principle that God uses the weak to display his glory and to humble the strong. He used Moses who was a stutterer in speech and built him up to be a preacher and a leader of many men. He also used David who was just a loyal humble, no-body shepherd boy and built him up to be a king. God uses the weak and takes his time to build them up to God-strengthened men.

Overall, I liked this book a lot. I am fascinated with the story of David and I want to learn more about him. This book was a great introduction and not only talked about David but introduced spiritual principles and helped me grow as a Christian. I would recommend this book to anybody who is a Christian.

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