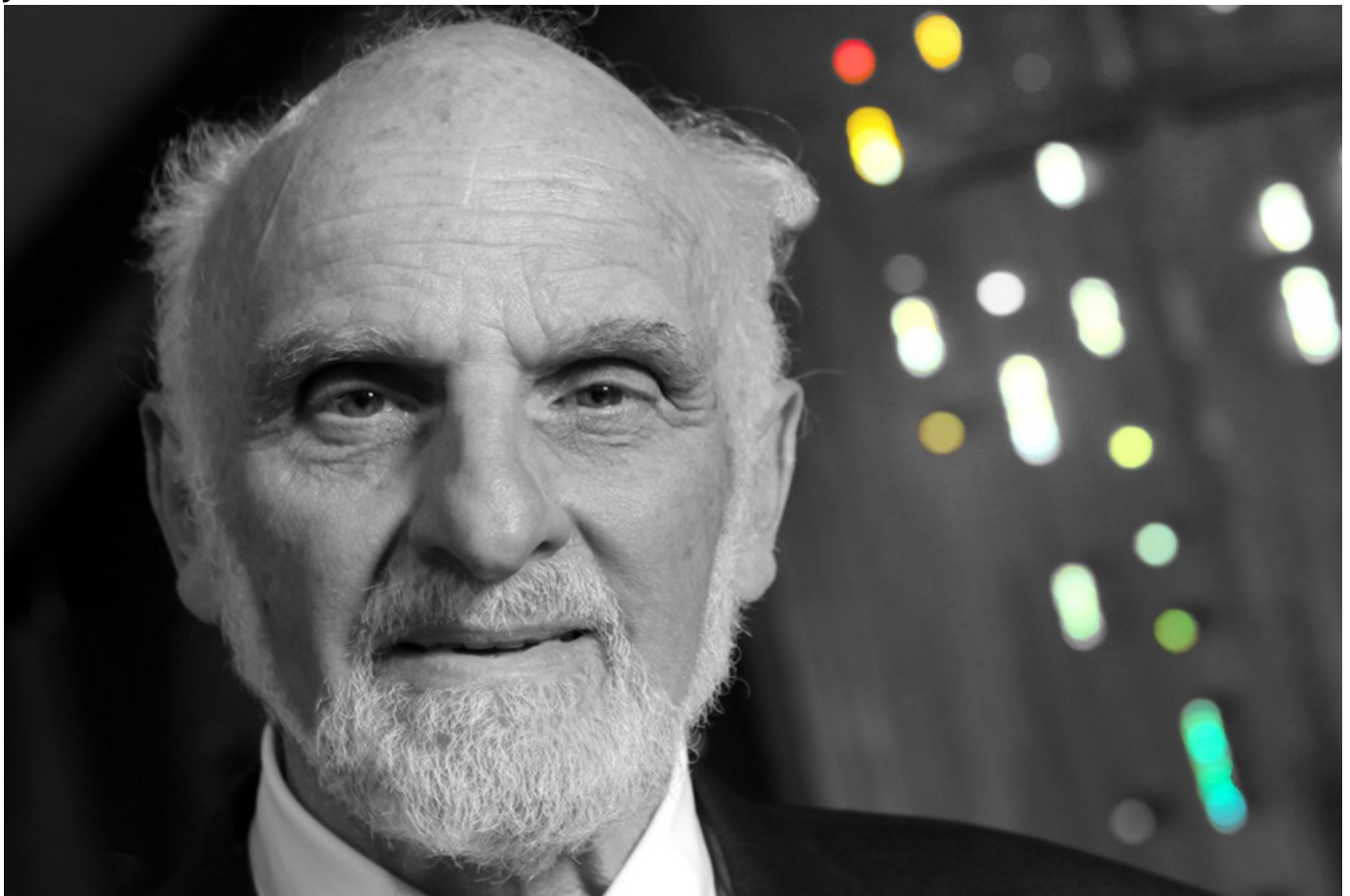


# Walter Brueggemann's gift of disruption

**In his hands, the Bible was a living, aching, burning thing.**

by [Jason G. Edwards](#)

June 6, 2025



Theologian Walter Brueggemann (Courtesy of Westminster John Knox)

Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann died yesterday at age 92, and I can already feel the silence he leaves behind. Not the peaceful kind of silence, but the kind that follows a thunderclap—or the pop and sizzle of a transformer blowing out in the dark. The kind that rings in your ears.

He may not have been a household name—depending, of course, on the household. But he was a seismic force beneath the surface of American Protestant Christianity—especially for preachers, prophets, and weary truth-tellers who found in his words a kind of permission. Permission to speak harder truths. Permission to leave space for lament. Permission to read the Bible like it was still breathing.

Brueggemann didn't give us easy answers. He gave us tension. He gave us poetry. He gave us language when our own ran dry.

In his hands, the Bible was never a museum piece or a proof-texting tool, it was a living, aching, burning thing—capable of unsettling us, reorienting us, and sometimes saving us. He reminded us that the Psalms know how to wail. That prophets don't predict so much as provoke. That Pharaoh still builds store cities and God still hears the cries from the brickyards.

What Eugene Peterson did for the pastoral imagination, Brueggemann did for the prophetic one. He made scripture strange again—dislodging it from our political idols and sentimental reductions. He called us back to a God who disrupts as much as delivers. A God who gives us the gift—and burden—of hope.

For pastors, Brueggemann was both companion and challenger. For students, a guide through the unsteady terrain of exodus and exile. For the church, a kind of sacred irritant—reminding us that faith is not about maintaining control, but about yielding to the wild and generative work of God.

He once wrote that the role of the prophet is to “nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness of the dominant culture.” That line alone could be carved on his gravestone, and it would be enough.

Brueggemann is gone now. But the disruption remains. And maybe that's the point. Maybe prophets never really leave. Their words live on, waiting to be heard again by those with ears to hear—and hearts brave enough to act.

It's our turn now.