

Review: Embodied

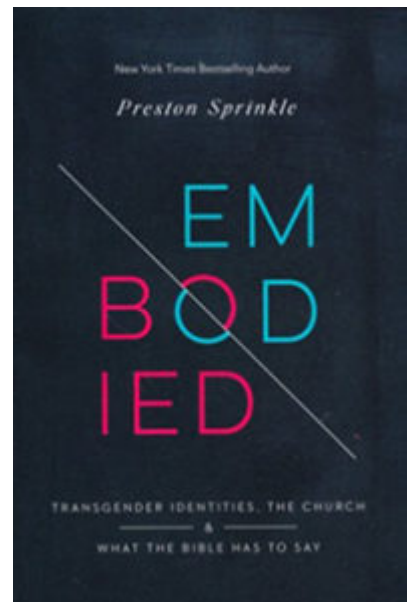
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Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church & What the Bible Has to Say

By Preston Sprinkle (David C. Cook)

If you are mystified by transgender, Preston Sprinkle assures you are not alone. Transgender is a contentious and sensitive subject, and Sprinkle addresses it and related topics directly, honestly and compassionately. He lays bare the complexity in the opening chapters of *Embodied*. Before wading into definitions and debates, though, he wants readers first to understand people are involved.

“If someone experiences incongruence between their gender and their biological sex, which one determines who they are—and why?” Sprinkle asks a version of this question throughout the first half of the book. In answer, he differentiates between biological sex and gender, returning throughout the book to the distinction. In response to the conflation of gender with male and female biology, Sprinkle asserts gender is culturally dependent; anatomy is not. He expresses particular concern for the weight given to a person’s degree of conformity to gender stereotypes as a measure of one’s maleness or femaleness.



Sprinkle summarizes a theology of the body built on Genesis 1:27 and

2:21-22, the incarnation and teachings of Jesus, and Paul's instruction regarding cross-sex behavior. He asserts our physical, biologically sexed bodies are a significant and indispensable part of our being human and of God's intent for humanity.

Intersex, brain sex, gender roles and gender dysphoria—all of which add complexity to the conversation around transgender—also are addressed. He points to debates within and without the transgender community about what qualifies a person to be transgender, and whether, when, how and to what extent a person should transition or detransition from one sex or gender to another.

Some readers will want to start with Chapter 12 on pronouns, bathrooms and sleeping arrangements, since these are points of concern for churches and youth groups. Sprinkle sees each as worthy of appropriate caution, and as opportunities to minister and draw people to Christ.

Readers are likely to disagree with some of Sprinkle's arguments or conclusions. Even so, churches need to have difficult conversations about how they will live out the gospel for all people as Jesus Christ commanded us to do. Books like *Embodied* provide a framework and a good starting place, and should be part of those conversations.

In addition, friends and family members of those identifying as transgender, who experience gender dysphoria, or who are intersex will find in Sprinkle someone with conviction and compassion.

*Eric Black, executive director, publisher, editor
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