

Pastor Stef's Book Review – March 2017

The church has struggled with its theology of the body. The scriptures clearly teach us that the physical realm was created by God and declared good, as well as redeemed by God in Christ's incarnation. It is going to be restored by God when he resurrects our bodies and establishes a new heaven and earth. Yet, somehow we still treat the body and the physical world as less important than the spiritual world or as something bad from that we should escape from.

At many funerals (*not* the ones I perform) Christians treat the Christian faith as if it is all about saving our "soul" (and by this they mean the "true" self that lives "inside" the body) from this world for a home in heaven. As if, once dead, we've arrived at our final destination. Sometimes resurrection is not even mentioned. No matter what you believe about the intermediate state (the time between your death and Jesus' Second Coming), our hope is in the resurrection of the body at Christ's Second Coming. Even the "souls" of the dead martyrs under the altar in Revelation don't appear at their final destination. Instead, they're longing for it and asking the Lord how much longer they will need to wait. (see Rev. 6:9-11). Our incorrect view of the body has distorted both our reading of scripture and the way we live out our Christian faith in the world.

In addition to correcting these distorted Christian views, Tara Owen's book ***Embracing the Body: Finding God in our Flesh and Bone (2015)*** sets out to be a voice to a secular society also losing touch with physical reality. Technology has increasingly disembodied us through virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Face to face conversations are being reduced to texting, meeting people has turned into meeting digitized Pokémon, and instead of making love we've become zombies who look at pornography. More books like Owens are needed to return the church to correct teaching in order to reach out to a confused world. From God's creation, incarnation and restoration he made bodies to matter!

Owens book is not merely theoretical, but is also intensely practical. In fact, each chapter ends with an exercise you can do with your body in a section entitled "Touch Point." She also shares personal stories of experiencing rape and dealing with the bad habits of picking her skin and scabs to learning to become more comfortable with her body. *Embracing the Body* calls Christians to become more in tune with themselves by realising that we *are* bodies and that we live as bodied persons with God given desires and needs for things like sleep, sex and food. Owen teaches us how to embrace our bodies the way God intended and therefore, to be part of God's process of redeeming creation. Owen's book is calling Christians to move their understanding of their faith out of their heads and into the real world. In other words, to make it less spiritual and more physical, as God created us to be.