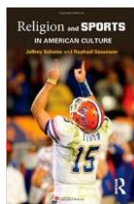


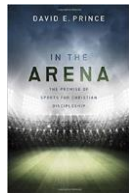
SPORTS AND CHRISTIAN MINISTRY: FOUR BOOKS TO CONSIDER



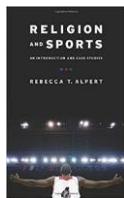
Sports is an integral part of culture that also, to a notable extent, impacts education including Christian education. Christians, especially Christian coaches, athletic directors, and policy makers, will inescapably work with some theology of athletics, however superficial or well-informed. Educators need more than a thin pietism or subjective emotivism to direct their dedication, communication, and decisions as effective ministry. Here are four books, not for endorsement but for background, that can deepen our understanding and reflection on ways that the culture of athletics intersects with ministry—sometime for better, sometimes for worse. (Consider the theological tradition or assumptions of the authors.)



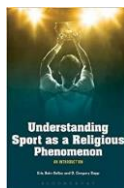
[Religion and Sports in American Culture](#) by Jeffrey Scholes and Raphael Sassower (Routledge, 2013), 168 pages, explores the relationship between religion and modern sports in America. The authors use a post-secular perspective to examine the relationship between sports and religion as parts of the same cultural web. Themes that intersect both religion and sports illuminate the complex and often publicly contentious relationship between the two.



[In the Arena: The Promise of Sports for Christian Discipleship](#) by David E. Prince (B&H Publishing, 2016), 118 pages. This Baptist pastor and coach maintains that our culture's obsession with sports must prompt critical reflection: How should the Christian think about sports? What does Christ have to do with athletic competition? Can sports be redeemed? Prince addresses how the gospel of Christ shapes our understanding and enjoyment of sports.



[Religion and Sports: An Introduction and Case Studies](#) by Rebecca T. Alpert (Columbia University Press, 2015), 224 pages, uses a case study approach to develop and apply a theoretically grounded study of sports and its relationship to issues of belonging, difference, violence, and social protest. Alpert covers football, baseball, and basketball but also archery, soccer, bullfighting, judo, and track across cultures as disparate as Germany and Japan, Spain and Saudi Arabia.



[Understanding Sport as a Religious Phenomenon: An Introduction](#) by E. Bain-Selbo and D. Sapp (Bloomsbury, 2016), 184 pages, includes a range of approaches—sociology, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology—to examine sport as a religious phenomenon. Topics include community, the fan, myth, symbols and rituals and the secular sacredness of sport from cases around the world including the ancient Olympics.