

THE 2022 SIDNEY B. SPERRY SYMPOSIUM

Of the Household of God: Families, Belonging, and the Social World of the New Testament

Call for Proposals

The related themes of households and families figure prominently in the New Testament. On various occasions Jesus taught about marriage, divorce, and more general familial relations. Paul likewise preached about families, extended families, figurative families, and codes of conduct for those inhabiting the same household. Peter provided direction to the church regarding relations between husbands and wives and parents and children. James counseled church membership to treat one another as “brothers” and “sisters.” Jesus, Peter, and Paul also taught about the important contributions single members and widows make in the kingdom, and such household complexities as mixed-faith marriages or relationships between slaves and masters. Thus, the New Testament contains much counsel for household conduct, familial relationships, and belonging to “the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

With this in mind, the 2022 Sperry Symposium, which will be held at Brigham Young University in October 2022, will focus on households, families, belonging, and the social world of the New Testament. We invite papers that address New Testament topics related to these issues, whether they represent a thematic approach to a topic or provide a careful reading of a particular block of text. Additionally, we welcome papers that deal with relevant topics from the New Testament where counsel appears rather foreign and may not easily fit with current practice (e.g., NT teachings regarding master and slave relations) as they seek to contextualize and elucidate such issues. For a list of potential topics see below.

Proposals should take the form of an abstract of the paper of no more than 300 words containing all of the following: (1) the main thesis of your paper/presentation, (2) a brief outline of the components supporting your main thesis, (3) a summary of your methodology as well as the primary and secondary sources you will consult as evidence and support, and (4) a brief statement concerning how your study will make a significant contribution to previous scholarship (academic, Latter-day Saint, or both) on a topic related to families, households, belonging, and the social world of the New Testament.

Following the abstract, please include a short separate statement (25–50 words) outlining your background, qualifications, or preparation so far to address this subject (you should already have completed some research in preparation for writing the proposal). Please include the following information in the heading of your proposal: name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and a working title for your paper. Proposals must be submitted electronically, as an attached Word or PDF document, to Beverly Yellowhorse at beverly_yellowhorse@byu.edu on or before **February 1, 2021**.

Each submitter will be notified of his or her proposal’s status by **March 1, 2021**. Those whose proposals are accepted for presentation at the symposium must submit final papers, ranging between 15 to 25 pages in length (double-spaced) by **September 1, 2021**. All papers will receive blind peer review by two external reviewers and will be read by the Sperry Symposium Committee. Based upon review, papers will be accepted, accepted with revisions, or rejected. Some of the selected papers will also be featured in the symposium publication, to be released prior to the

conference. Proposals and papers must be consistent with the doctrines and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Questions can be addressed to members of the 2022 Sperry Symposium Committee:

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Please note that bibliographies (“Non-Latter-day Saint Resources” and “Latter-day Saint Resources”) relating to various themes of the 2022 Sperry Symposium have been compiled to aid potential contributors by familiarizing them with some of the foundational literature. These bibliographies can be accessed at <http://www.lincolnhblumell.com/sperry-symposium-2022/>. For the convenience of contributors, digital copies of articles and encyclopedia entries are posted with the bibliographies whenever possible.

While papers need to be rooted in the text of the New Testament, insights drawn from both the Old Testament and Restoration scripture are encouraged. Potential paper topics could include but are not limited to:

Husbands, Wives, and Marriage

- Husband-wife relations in the NT
- Jesus’s teaching on marriage and divorce/modern teaching on marriage and divorce
- Were Jesus or Paul married? NT evidence or lack of. History of Latter-day Saint thought on the subject.
- Implications of a single Jesus or Paul for the Latter-day Saint emphasis on marriage and family and also for those who remain single in mortality.
- Families and marriages with both believers and unbelievers in the NT
- Widowhood in the NT, and the contributions of widows in the ministry of Jesus and the early church
- Single parents in the NT
- Male and Female in the NT
- Views on Polygamy in Second Temple Judaism and early Rabbinic Judaism
- Weddings in the Jewish world, Greco-Roman world, and NT
- Sexuality in the NT world

Parents, Children, and the Extended Family

- The *paterfamilias* and father figures in the NT
- Maternity in the NT world
- Slavery, slaves, and “servants” in the New Testament
- Children in the New Testament

- Children, education, and literacy in the NT world
- Diversity of families, family types, and life circumstances in the NT
- Fictive kinship and the church as a “family”
- Parent-child, master-slave, and other household relationships as social reality and metaphor in the NT
- Singleness and the contributions of single members of the church in the NT
- Adoption in the Greco-Roman world and the NT

Households in the NT

- The household in the New Testament
- House churches
- Domestic architecture and how the physical setting of house churches influenced congregations, families, and worship
- Women’s roles and contributions in house churches
- Women’s patronage and ministry in the life of Jesus and the early church
- Food, meals, and table-fellowship in the NT
- The “household codes” in the NT
- Post-NT trajectories related to families and household members in 2nd-4th century Christianity

Moral/Family Codes in the NT

- Chastity and the NT
- Sexual conduct and the NT
- Jewish Morals and the NT
- Greek and Roman Morals and the NT
- Adultery/Fornication and the NT
- Asceticism in the ancient world and its manifestations in the NT
- Kinship networks and the spread of early Christianity
- Transcending traditional ethnic, status, and gender boundaries in the NT (Gal. 3:28, etc.)
- Group identity vs. individual identity in the NT
- What does it mean to be “of the household of God” vs. any other familial, ethnic, or cultural group identity?