

THE 2026 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM
IN HONOR OF SIDNEY B. SPERRY

Tender Mercies and Lovingkindness
The Goodness of God in the Old Testament

Call for Proposals

*Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses;
for they have been ever of old. (Psalm 25:6)*

The nature of God in the Old Testament has been uniquely characterized by the tender mercies and lovingkindness that he bestows upon his children. This topic is focused on the goodness of God and invites a wide spectrum of proposals focused on the mercy, compassion, grace, and love of God for his people as revealed in the narratives, prophecies, and passages of the Old Testament.

With this in mind, the 2026 Religious Education Symposium, which will be held at Brigham Young University in January 2026, will focus on the exploration of these characteristics of God illustrated in the Old Testament in the interactions with his people, embodied in his covenants and laws, in the revelation given to his prophets, found in the lives of his servants who imitate these character traits, and particularly in the love and redemption offered to his children here in mortality. The theme is intended to bring to light the love and compassion of God and the uplifting examples of his tender mercies recorded in the Old Testament for inspiration in teaching and at home. This theme offers a broad range of possible presentations (see below for a list of suggested topics). Also, as you plan your proposal please read and consider the purposes of the Religious Education Symposium as described on the final page of this document.

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 Old Testament gospel scholarship on this theme and/or how these teachings can impact Latter-day Saints.

Following the abstract, please include a short separate statement (50–75 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, 2024**.

Each submitter will be notified of his or her proposal's status by **April 15, 2024**. Those whose proposals are accepted for possible presentation at the symposium and consideration for inclusion in the symposium publication (released prior to the conference) must submit final papers, ranging between 15 and 20 pages in length (double-spaced) by **August 31, 2024**. All papers will be reviewed by the Religious Education Symposium Committee and those being considered for inclusion in the volume will receive additional blind peer review by two reviewers. Based upon review, papers will be (1) accepted for publication, (2) accepted with revisions, or (3) rejected. 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 2026 Religious Education Symposium Committee:

David Rolph Seely, chair 303G JSB, BYU (801) 422-3350 david_seely@byu.edu	Joshua M. Sears 270C JSB, BYU (801) 422-7207 josh_sears@byu.edu	Joshua M. Matson 316P JSB, BYU (801) 422-0378 joshua_matson@byu.edu	Jo Ann H. Seely 303G JSB, BYU (801) 422-3350 jhseely@gmail.com
	Beverly Yellowhorse Religious Ed. Faculty Support 271 JSB, BYU (801) 422-3611 beverly_yellowhorse@byu.edu		Brent Nordgren BYU Religious Studies Center 167C HGB (801) 422-3293 brent_nordgren@byu.edu

While papers need to be centered in the text of the Old Testament, insights drawn from both the New Testament and Restoration scripture are encouraged. Papers demonstrating the relationship of these Old Testament themes throughout the Standard Works are also welcome. Possible presentation/article topics could include but are not limited to:

- Exploration of the character traits that embody the *goodness of God* illustrated in the Old Testament.
- How is the concept of *mercy* depicted in the Old Testament?
- What is *lovingkindness* and how does this define God in the Old Testament?
- How is the *grace of God* presented in the Old Testament?
- Why is God described as *compassionate* in the Old Testament?
- Demonstration of the *love of God* through examples in the Old Testament.
- What is a *tender mercy* and how are they presented in the Old Testament?
- How does the Abrahamic covenant manifest the *tender mercy and lovingkindness* of God?
- Are their specific laws in the Mosaic Covenant that manifest the *mercy and lovingkindness* of God?
- What covenantal injunctions are given in the Old Testament for us to embody these traits of God?
- The manifestation of the love of God for his people in the Old Testament narrative.
- Examples of an individual or family in the Old Testament that receives God's tender mercies, grace, love, or compassion.
- Demonstration of these characteristics of God in the lives of his Old Testament servants who imitate these character traits.
- How are these character traits of God found in the revelations given to his prophets in the Old Testament?
- How is the love of God demonstrated through the concept of redemption in the Old Testament?
- Examples of the love of God demonstrated by redemption in the lives of individuals in the Old Testament.
- Examples of the *tender mercies* and *lovingkindness* of God from the Book of Abraham or the Book of Moses that enlighten our study of the Old Testament.
- How does the New Testament reflect the Old Testament concepts of the *tender mercies* and *lovingkindness* of God?
- How is the concept of the *tender mercies* of God depicted in the Book of Mormon?
- How does the Doctrine and Covenants draw upon Old Testament passages and themes regarding *tender mercies* and *lovingkindness* of God?
- How have modern Church leaders built on a foundation of Old Testament teachings concerning the *tender mercies* and *lovingkindness* of God?
- How is an understanding of the *tender mercies* and *lovingkindness* of God as demonstrated in the Old Testament relevant and vital to members of the Church in the 21st Century?

Re-statement of Purpose
Religious Education Symposium in honor of Sidney B. Sperry
Religious Education, Brigham Young University

The purpose of the annual Religious Education Symposium is to generate presentations and published papers that increase the scriptural and gospel understanding of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other people who wish to access them. Our target audience is students, Latter-day Saint Gospel Doctrine teachers, and other lay members who are nonspecialists in the formal study of the scriptures, but who we hope will better understand and thus better teach the scriptures after viewing the presentations and reading the publications from the Religious Education Symposium.

Whatever the portion of the standard works being emphasized in a particular Religious Education Symposium, and whatever the particular topic of an individual paper, all Religious Education symposia papers are expected to be academically sound and methodologically well grounded. At the same time, they are expected to be accessible to and faith-affirming for a nonspecialist Latter-day Saint audience.

Papers for the Religious Education Symposium, including those that are published, are generally encyclopedic or summative with a believing, faith-affirming dimension to them. They do not typically present new research that would otherwise appear in print in discipline-specific journals.

Nothing about the purpose or the intended audience of the Religious Education symposia lessens the need for papers to be historically accurate, up-to-date, fresh, insightful, and meaningful. Such papers will represent well what we term “gospel scholarship,” as they draw upon the scriptures and the best methods and findings of scholarship in the service of educating Saints in a faithful framework.

While the modeling of proper methodologies for studying the scriptures is expected in Religious Education Symposium papers, such papers are not the place for promoting academic issues in order to further academic conversations. These papers are expected to educate by explaining and contextualizing issues, but are not the place to present theory as fact.

Authors of papers for the Religious Education Symposium are encouraged to find the appropriate balance between responsible scholarship and the interests of nonspecialists who are looking for accessible and engaging substance with a believing dimension. Likewise, committee members, individually and collectively, are asked to make judgments based on the considerations presented above. While recognizing this balance can be somewhat subjective, committees for the Religious Education Symposium are to ensure that all presentations and publications fall within these broad parameters.

We trust this restatement of the purpose of our Religious Education symposia will ensure consistency in the quality and orientation of the presentations as well as the papers that are selected for publication in the annual conference volume. Failure to meet this purpose and to exhibit this balance understandably raises questions for those who view the presentations and read the papers.