

PROJECT IMAGO DEI

A Message from Mordecai

Session One

2026

"I have set thee a watchman… therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 33:7).

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Introduction

Welcome to A Message from Mordecai. We made this for you—individual Christians and church communities—because we believe that Artificial Intelligence is much more than a hot new tech trend.

As with anything, AI is much easier to point to than it is to define: think of ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Grok. These are all Large Language Models ("LLMs"), a specific kind of powerful AI that has rocked our world. Even if you know almost nothing about AI, you've almost certainly encountered it and been affected by it. AI has played a much bigger and broader role in human affairs than most of us likely realize (e.g., everything from social media algorithms to Face ID on an iPhone is AI-based). However, with the advent of LLMs (most famously ChatGPT), AI has really become a cultural force in our society. It's impossible to ignore, but how should we respond as followers of Jesus? AI may have the potential to massively accelerate human discovery, radically empower creativity, and beautifully enhance individual potential; but if it is developed and used irresponsibly, it may also present unprecedented threats to human life. AI also raises fascinating and ancient questions about God, justice, relationships, responsibility, and human identity. For too long, Christian voices have largely been missing from the critical conversations our society is having around AI. Our hope is that Christians will not only reflect biblically on how to use these technologies responsibly in their lives and work, but may also begin to participate in shaping how these technologies are (and are not) developed and deployed in the future.

We believe that our Christian faith gives us a unique perspective on what AI is, what healthy engagement with AI looks like, and how the future of AI should (and should not) move forward.

These materials are meant to provide a foundation for church small groups and workshops to explore AI and Christian faith together. Individuals can explore the material on their own as well, and we invite this; though, we recommend discussing the material with your pastor/priest and a safe community of faith whenever possible.

We always seek to root our thoughts and questions in what is unchanging and foundational: Scripture and sound, time-tested theology. From that framework, we then move to applying what we've learned to the AI conversations happening today, and this necessarily involves giving a sufficiently detailed picture of the landscape of AI and AI safety. Each session features Scripture, teaching, questions for reflection/discussion, and some suggested prayers. In the end, we don't claim to have all the answers, nor do we presume to speak for God. However, we hope this study gives you, our brother/sister in Christ, a solid starting place from which to develop your own thoughts—and then, in community, to take your next faithful step.

> James 1:22 (NIV)
> "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Running Sessions

We recommend that these materials form the basis of five group study sessions. The questions we outline in bold are meant to be discussed together. If you are a church using this material as the basis for a workshop, we recommend inviting people to periodically break into groups for discussion. Each session also includes A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) prayer prompts, which can be used to guide responsive prayers in a group or individually. *[When these are complete, insert here instructions for where to find the video materials and how to engage with them]*. If your group chooses to engage the written learning material directly, instead of using the

videos, we recommend having confident readers in your group read it aloud (e.g, each person takes a paragraph or two, then switch) until you hit a "Pause. Reflect together" or a Prayer Exercise. These are opportunities to stop and engage the material you've just read together. If you're exploring the material as an individual, consider reflecting on these questions by journaling and praying aloud, or by whatever means help you engage actively. However you use the material, we hope it proves helpful to you as you engage "Christian-ly" with AI and the questions it raises for God's church.

Before You Begin

Prior to studying this material together, we ask that you write down your personal scores for the following statements. We will revisit these at the end of our study. Share your answers with the group before you begin Session 1. There are no wrong answers, it is just an honest measurement of where you are as you begin. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-7. 7 = strongest agreement. 1 = strongest disagreement. 4 = complete indifference or uncertainty.

1. I feel very well-informed about AI.
2. Christian faith and Scripture are very relevant to conversations about AI.
3. I feel equipped to discern what healthy, Christ-honoring AI use looks like.
4. AI safety is a very important issue for Christians to engage with.
5. Christians have at least some responsibility to take action in shaping the future of AI.

Suggested Prayer

Father in heaven, thank you for your many blessings. You are holy, and your glory knows no rival. We humbly ask that your will be done in our lives, our families, and our church. Holy Spirit, grant us wisdom as we explore new ideas, encounter fearful or strange possibilities, and seek to stay rooted in faith, hope, and love. We are confident in you, Jesus, and in your grace. Help us love one another, our neighbors far and near, both now and into the future. Amen.

Session 1: Beginning with God

"I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth." ~ The Apostles' Creed

Rather than start with AI, let us begin where all things began: with God. In order to answer the question "What is AI?" from a biblical framework, it seems appropriate first to ask: "What/Who is God?" and "What/who are we (human beings)?"

All the books in the world could not contain enough words to express the full majesty, glory, and nature of the Christian God. So, it would be a fool's errand to try and express everything about his nature in a subsection of our study! That said, a couple of minimal reflections will be important as a baseline.

What/Who is God?

The Christian God is the ultimate creator. He is the almighty God and the absolute foundation of all reality. Everything that exists either *is* God or *owes its existence to* God. Let's take a look at a few biblical passages that together beautifully express these core truths:

> Nehemiah 9:6 (NIV)
> "*You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*"

In its context, the people of God, the Israelites, are confessing their sins against God and worshiping him. Specifically, the Levites (one of the twelve tribes of Israel, which provided ancient Israel with its priests) begin a prayer of adoration, declaring God's power in creation. The passage makes clear that the biblical God stands *alone*. The LORD is in a class all by himself, and everything else that exists anywhere could be rightly labeled "made by God."

Lest we mistakenly think that perhaps God only made the *material* or *visible* world, the apostle Paul further clarifies that God the Father created all things, including invisible and spiritual realities, *through* God the Son, cementing the Triune God's absolute status as the one almighty creator of all things other than Godself.

> Colossians 1:15-17 (NIV)
> "*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*"

Finally, the author of Hebrews helps us see another uniquely creative power of God's: unlike humans, God can engage in *pure creation out of nothing*. He does not need pre-existing material with which to create. God simply spoke the universe into being *from nothing* by the might of his creative power.

> Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)
> "*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*"

What does any of this have to do with AI? Well, for starters, AI chatbots and LLMs today may seem to have a great many "godlike" features. AI seems always to be with us (omnipresent), so long as we have an internet connection (and increasingly, even if we don't!). We can speak with AI any time of the day or night. It always "hears" us, and it responds quickly to our every thought, feeling, and concern. Every day, chatbots and AI companions are "learning" vast information about individuals, and adapting their responses—enabling responses that feel very personal and even empathetic. Many of us may begin to feel we can have a "close personal relationship" with these "thinking machines." They make us feel "seen." As AI "knowledge" bases increase and become more personal, and as mistakes and errors decrease in number and severity, the perception that these machines are "omniscient" (or nearly so) will inevitably grow in the popular imagination.

Chatbots increasingly help people feel less alone, always there to talk, understand, or advise when human companions and advocates are lacking. AI can, does, and likely will play the role, for increasing numbers of people, of an ever-present guide, advisor, counselor, advocate, helper, and even friend—all roles traditionally played by humans, and above all, God.

But AI is not a god. It is certainly not *the* one true God. AI (present and future) can only ever be a created thing. God is the only *uncreated* thing, and he has no rival and no equal. He never could. AI's powers and its value, however high they may climb, inevitably pale in comparison to the one to whom all things (including AI) owe our very existence. If Christians are not deeply thoughtful, rooted in worship, prayer, and community, the daily rhythms of using AI for things that used to require personal, effortful relationships with God and our neighbors will surely shape our imaginations in ways we neither expect nor foresee.

As Romans reminds us:

> Romans 12:2 (NIV)
> *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

Pause. Reflect together:

1. In what ways is AI like God? In what ways is it unlike God?
2. How might the differences between Creator and creation be important to keep firmly in mind as the presence of advanced AI grows in our daily rhythms of life and work?
3. How might worship and spiritual disciplines play a key role in guarding our hearts and imaginations against potential malformation from frequent AI use?
4. What role is AI playing in your life? In the lives of your kids? In our society? How might those roles be subtly replacing or competing with the Holy Spirit's role? What is one concrete thing you can do this week to keep God in his proper place in your heart, mind, and imagination?

What/Who are We (Human Beings)?

"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary … He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead." ~ The Apostles' Creed

God is the protagonist of the biblical story, not humans. That said, humans play an important and central role in that narrative from the very beginning.

> Genesis 1:26-28 (NIV)
> "*Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'*"

Humans are God's crowning achievement in his creation. To this point, God has seen that everything he has made is "good." Only after both man and woman come on the scene does God see that his work is "very good." Humankind alone, male and female, is said to be made "in the image of God." This phrase has been much discussed in the history of Christian theology, but no consensus has emerged about the precise meaning of the phrase. Much is unclear, for the text does not explicitly define the meaning, nor does the Christian tradition speak with one voice on the subject.

However, some things are clear enough in Scripture, and have thus been affirmed in unity by all Christians across times and cultures. The theologian and eminent historian of Christian thought, Roger E. Olson, puts it like this:

> "*We need to distinguish between the* ***basics*** *that bond Christians together over centuries in terms of their beliefs and perspectives and the* ***details*** *that arise as certain Christians speculate about the meanings and implications of the basics. Christians have always believed that* ***humans are possessed of special dignity and value above all other creatures because they are created in God's image and likeness****. Some Christians have identified that belief with some particular interpretation of what the* ***imago Dei*** *(image of God) means. This is something to avoid.*" ~ Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 2nd Edition, p. 204.

In other words, without wandering into the deep jungles of Christian theological disagreement, Christians can say this much confidently and with the full support of both Scripture and traditional Christian thought: human beings have a unique and special status in creation. We can say even more: as suggested in Gen 1:28, 2:15, and 2:23, we are blessed and commissioned by God to *rule* or *have dominion* over the creation, but also to *cultivate*, *care for*, and *work* the ground as stewards of the earth and all its inhabitants. We are royal creatures given a task of responsibility for God's world, made in the image and likeness of our creator God, the king of the universe.

The "rabbit hole" goes deeper still. All humans possess the *image of God* and are collectively given the charge of dominion and responsibility for creation; but the Bible teaches that God himself took on flesh and became an embodied, bona fide human being in the person of Jesus the Messiah (Phil 2:5-11). After his faithful life, atoning death on the cross, and bodily resurrection from the dead, he was given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18-20) and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11) to sit enthroned over the entire cosmos at the right hand of his Father (Eph 1:20-23). To state it plainly: *the enthroned and eternally reigning* ***divine*** *king is no mere animal, nor a disembodied spirit, nor any machine—but an embodied, glorified* ***human*** *being.* The forever-reigning divine king is *one of us*. How could there be any greater establishment of the unique status of humanity in God's creation?

The Bible has much more to say about the nature of humanity. For instance, we are physical and yet spiritual beings. We are essentially good and yet sinful and fallen.[1] However, the discussion so far should suffice to help us begin to "think Christian-ly" about a couple of crucial AI questions:

Pause. Reflect together:

1. Could an AI ever share in the image of God? Why or why not?
2. Is it permissible for human beings to outsource our "rule" or "dominion" to machines? What if the machines can "think," in some sense? What if they're "smarter" than us? Ground your thoughts in what you've learned.
3. Suppose humans cannot guarantee that we will remain in control of ("rule over") AI. What do you think our status as God's image-bearers would require of us?
4. Given everything you've learned, share some initial thoughts: what unique things might a Christian worldview say about building and deploying AI responsibly?

Session 1 Prayer Exercise:

As a group, select someone to "open" and "close" your prayer time together. Begin with a moment of silence. After a minute or so, have the designated person open in prayer. Invite God to speak to you as you speak to him. Here are some ideas about ways to pray:

Adoration: Praise God for his glorious, holy, and uniquely creative nature. Thank him that he stands utterly unrivaled in power, knowledge, goodness, majesty, wisdom, and creativity.

Confession: Is God convicting you or challenging you to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" through this study so far? As you feel led, confess and ask forgiveness for ways you may have fallen short. God is merciful and loving beyond words.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for his gift of the *imago Dei* in you. Reflect on God's goodness and generosity, and for the ways he is teaching, growing, or encouraging you through this study.

Supplication: Ask God for what you need. When you reflect on AI, maybe you are afraid: ask Jesus for courage. Maybe you are confused: ask the Father for clarity and wisdom. Maybe you feel tempted: ask the Spirit for power to stay faithful. Maybe you feel powerless: ask God to show you one way you can use your agency this week as a royal, divine image-bearer.

[1] For more on human nature in Scripture, see e.g., Gen 2:7; Psa 51:5; Psa 14:1-3; Matt 10:28; John 8:34; Rom 3:23, 6:16-23; 2 Cor 5:8; and James 2:26