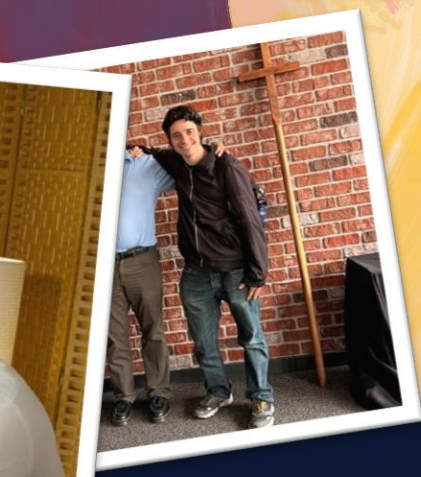
PROJECT IMAGO DEI







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Shepherd's Warning

Session 1 • Facilitator Guide

2026

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

Art by Eysteinn Thordarson

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Welcome

Artificial intelligence is coming. For some, this statment may evoke the same feeling as naming the Flood to Noah. For others, things might be less dramatic: more akin to the invention of the internet or the appearance of smartphones. But even in the least dramatic form, there is little doubt that AI has the chance to impact us significantly.

At the time of this writing, it is 2026. In a few short years (since 2022 with the release of ChatGPT), we have gone from having to painstakingly input precise data into a computer to literally just talking to a computer and having it write vast amounts of content for us. Many of the tasks that used to seem uniquely human, from creating images to composing music, are now done by machines at staggeringly high quality and speed. It seems quite reasonable to wonder whether remarks like these will seem unremarkable, even outdated, just a few more years down the line.

God created us, male and female, and in His own image. We bear the image of our Creator, and so we also create, cultivating beauty and reflecting God's glory back to Him through music, visual arts, writing, and many other forms of creative expression. So, what are we to think when machines can replicate that which was considered a hallmark of human uniqueness in the created order? What does it mean to be truly created in His Image? What risks does advanced AI raise for us? Who is creating this technology? And what is our opportunity, indeed our responsibility, in ensuring a future shaped by the principles of the Eternal Kingdom?

This discussion aims to serve the purpose of affirming what is uniquely ours as part of the Imago Dei (the image of God); and also to become wise to the potential impact of artificial intelligence, wise to its power and wise to its peril.

Our mission is to promote human dignity and human flourishing at this time, and to discover deliverance from perils in the only way that true deliverance can come: from God Himself. To that end, we intend to explore His revealed wisdom to gain insight for our times. Through our conversations, we pray that the Holy Spirit may show us faithful paths forward, paths to participate in God's work to bring about a good future.

Session Format

- **Total session length**: 90 mins
- **Group size**: 6-15 participants (small group)
- **Setup needs**: screen for video, ability to pause, seating in circle or U-shape, participant handouts
- **Written Support**: worksheets and future sessions handout
- **Primary audience**: broadly Evangelical

Session Structure at a Glance

- **Opening & Welcome Prayer** (10 min): facilitator-led
- **Invitation to discussion** (10 minutes): participation from audience
- **Video**: AI Landscape (40 min): play without narration
- **Discussion & Reflection** (20 min): facilitator-led with guide questions
- **Closing**: Call to Action & Parting Prayer (10 min): facilitator-led with a call to action

Ground Rules (brief mention)
• Questions welcome throughout
• Disagreement welcome but disrespect is not
• Confidentiality within the group
• No wrong questions; no dumb questions

Section 1

Opening & Welcome Prayer

Expected Time : 10 Minutes

Facilitator Prep Notes

- Read Project Imago Dei's mission statement and purpose
- Review the pre-session reflection prompts below first
- Elicit opinions: a large part of success will be engaging the audience and giving them a sense of agency.
- Have worksheets provided so participants can provide their own thoughts
- Have light snacks available(a large part of human bonding is food)
- This is an opportunity to bond with others and learn about how God works through us. So, before the meeting, try to get to know at least one or two individuals.

Pre-Session Facilitator Reflection Prompts

- What is human flourishing, in the specific context of my congregation?
- Where is my church already being shaped by AI without noticing?
- What am I most afraid to discuss regarding this topic?
- Who do I most admire in this?
- How do I think about the use of AI for sermons?
- What do I think about the use of AI for image generation?
- Who do I know that is currently using an AI companion?
- Where is there risk of centralization or power capture? Are there tradeoffs?
- What do I think about concerns of catastrophic or existential risk? Any examples?

Session Arc Preview (~2 minutes)

Tell participants what's about to happen

- Intro
- 40-min video
- Group discussion
- Close
- Call to action

Invite active watching:
Try to engage the audience with activity when watching. Watching otherwise can be a passive activity.

"When watching, please write down any thoughts or challenges. We will discuss together afterward and discover what God shall reveal to us."

Prayer (~2 minutes)

(This prayer template is optional. Please use as needed or present your own prayer)

My Lord in Heaven, thank You for bringing us together in this time and for honoring us to have a chance to serve You in this time. Thank You also for Your unfailing Love and for the knowledge that as we remain in Your Will, there is *ultimately* only life and victory. Truly, God, You are good. Yours is the name that shall shatter mountains and bring kings unto their knees. Yours is the name that lifts the humble and preserves the children and shatters the arrogant.

Now, I pray that, in learning of the knowledge of this age, we will learn from You to welcome that which is good, to shepherd that which needs to be guided and to struggle against that which is evil.

Amen.

Section 2

Invitation to Discussion

Expected Time : 10 Minutes

Facilitator Prep Notes

- Share your own experience with using (or not using) AI first, then invite participants to comment
- Try to balance participation. Encouraging those who are quiet to speak more
- Distribute branded worksheets for people to write their thoughts
- Ask for predictions before the video from the audience

Time Management

- Keep individual shares to 30-60 seconds each
- If group is large, ask for 3-4 volunteers rather than going around individually
- Distribute the paper worksheet as an opportunity for engagement

Why Predictions?

One way to provide a form of "personal stakes" in the participation is to allow the individual to have some reputation wagered. By providing predictions before watching the video, which will indicate actual capabilities, this allows a person to indicate his or her own expectations of AI capabilities and then be recalibrated against data.

Signal Categories to Listen For

- Enthusiasm signals may indicate how pro-AI the person may be
- Dismissiveness signals suggest the individual may think of AI as fake or "faddish."
- Fear signals indicate that a person is worried about AI's impact.
- Confusion may indicate that the person isn't clear on what AI actually is.
- Curiosity is great! Does the person want to learn more? This is a sign of significant engagement.
- Personal stories are always welcome as they demonstrate real experience or opinions on this. Balance drawing them out without allowing anyone to dominate the conversation.

Examples for Audience Prediction Questions

01	"Within 5 years, will AI be able to do the job of a doctor, lawyer, or pastor?"
02	"Within the next 5 years, will an AI system hack a major company or system? More than one?"
03	"Within 5 years, will an AI entity kill someone? Ten people? A thousand?"

Section 3

Video of AI Landscape

Expected Time : 40 Minutes

Facilitator Prep Notes

- Play the video without interrupting
- Note the segments and their timing so you can reference in discussion:
    - Intro, Story of Nehemiah, & Framework
    - AI's Power, indicating upside
    - Live Demos & research, debunking "AI is just a search engine"
    - The Risk Landscape, indicating the anti-human actors but also the positive ones
    - The opportunity for a Christian response as our calling
- Additional facilitator materials
    - "Video Timing Reference" card that facilitators can hold during discussion for easy reference
    - “A Guide to Anti-Humanity” card that facilitators can hold to indicate specific individuals, their positions and quotes



Section 4

Discussion & Reflection

Expected Time : 20 Minutes

Facilitator Prep Notes

- Discussion & participation is key!
- Try to keep your participation time around 30%
- If you find yourself talking often, check to see how you can engage others
- If there is quiet, count to 10 first before engaging again. Often this is the time it takes for someone to elicit their own thoughts
- Draw quieter participants in gently: "[Name], what are your thoughts?"
- Redirect technical questions if they take too long by acknowledging them and then by indicating they will be discussed more in future sessions.
- Encourage prayer AND action, not just prayer INSTEAD of action. Avoid the risk of prayer becoming a form of avoidance from action
- Additional facilitator materials include *Project Imago Dei's* Red Lines document and Summary of Magnifica Humanitas

Observation Question (3 minutes)

"What surprised you the most?"

Explore Answers

- Expect skepticism at specific capabilities: "AI can do this, but…"
- Note if there is surprise at specific quotes: "Did xyz say this?"
- Disbelief in general at ongoing improvement: "Yes, but AI has plateau'ed.."

Facilitator Follow-Up Questions for Depth

- "Did it surprise you that the people building this have such opinions about humanity? "
- "How do you think that this technology would manifest differently if it was built by faithful Christians?"

Watch For

- Participants passively giving the "neutral right answer" without specificity (well, we should build with safeguards but also we need to go as fast as possible.)
- Passion is great! It's better to have someone passionately engaged even if he or she is not fully correct on the details

Interpretation Question (7-10 min)

"The video showed both what AI can do and some of the beliefs of the people building it. What do you think underlies their beliefs? Do you think it is compatible with your vision of human flourishing? Do you think it is compatible with Christian beliefs?"

Additional Follow-Up

"Even if these companies solve the technical alignment problems, for example, even if AI does exactly what its makers intend, do you think this will impact our culture or way of life greatly? How would this matter for human meaning and the Christian calling? How should we, then, engage both with this technology and how to guide it in a way that is Kingdom-honoring?"

Explore Answers

- Recognition that the current leaders have, at best, seemingly mixed intentions
- Concern about what may happen to human meaning and vocation
- Recognition that technical alignment may not lead to good human futures or flourishing
- Explore framing that even a "perfectly aligned" AI raises theological questions about human purpose

Theological Considerations

- Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical on safeguarding the human person in the age of artificial intelligence, is a public warning about these same concerns. For example, it discusses the replacement of labor, post-humanism, and fully automated decision-making in warfare. Although it is a Catholic document, this should still work via ecumenical convergence as the concerns raised are broader than any one tradition.
    - Consider discussing this as a form of Holy Envy, and how evangelicals need to have our own structured defense of human flourishing.
- The Project Imago Dei Red Lines document can serve as a concrete articulation of what needs protecting if specificity is asked for.

Application Question (5-7 min)

"How does what we just saw change how you think about your role as a Christian in this moment?"

Guidance Toward Call to Action

- Ideal responses include engagement and willingness to connect to others and engage in actions to learn or participate more.
- Ironically, enthusiastic but vague commitment is great insofar as it needs to be channeled into action. The facilitator will be provided with information on concrete opportunities to provide the participants.
- Some other responses, including pushbacks, are addressed in the "Common Derailments" section on page 9.

Common Derailments

Common challenges and derailments addressed below.

"This is just fearmongering!"

e.g. participant is uncomfortable with alarm and rejects the framing of risk, e.g. could be rejection of existential or extreme risks.

Response:

"We do not know what the technology is ultimately capable of – but as we can see, it has been very capable. Perhaps more concerning, it is worth considering what the CEOs of these companies say publicly about their own work. Sam Altman said years ago that AI would probably lead to the end of the world. Perhaps he didn't mean it, or he's changed his mind. Regardless, perhaps you'd agree it seems worrying. Mark Zuckerberg has publicly stated that AI could fill the "connection gap" between how many close friends most people have and how many they want to have. Even if they are not successful, they nonetheless indicate a concerning perspective by very powerful people who are spending the capital and labor to bring about this future."

"AI is just a tool like any other technology."

e.g. participant is normalizing the concept or genuinely holds techno-optimistic perspectives.

Response:

"Even if that is the case, it is a general technology and historically, general technologies like nuclear energy, fire or electricity all required control for us to do good with them. Fires destroyed entire cities until fire codes were created to address it.

And yet AI seems different. All other technologies expanded what humans could do, while AI is functionally designed as a replacement. And when it can do so many things that were traditionally uniquely human, should we not pause and think biblically about what really is uniquely human, and how we protect that?"

"The church shouldn't get political."

e.g. some evangelical concern about political entanglement.

Response:

"Ultimately, it isn't about politics but what is right. And part of bringing in what is right and good for our future involves making policy. And Christians have always had the courage to speak for good, whether John the Baptist speaking to Herod and losing his head for it, or the early church demonstrating their faith in God even at the martyrdom of their flesh, until even the Romans were astonished and found faith in God as well. And so we are asked to do God's will, in great and in small and even in things that involve influencing public life for the common good."

"I don't understand the technology, how does any of this work? I'm too behind"

e.g. fear of looking stupid.

Response:

"You don't need to understand this – the engineers building it don't understand it either. There is something truly mysterious about it, we often just don't know how or why it does what it does. The fact that the engineers don't understand it is more reason for concer, and indeed is why some of them are seeking for wisdom from ancient sources, indeed from Christians."

"What can we actually do about any of this?"

e.g. often this is fatalism dressed as practicality. This is the most important question to address.

Response:

"Everything. God's calling upon his church is to be a faithful witness and a prophetic voice in and to a lost world. This can come in many forms – from connecting to work on the technology, to building spaces where humanity can thrive, to imagining good futures. Rather than surrender to a fatalistic attitude, we can walk in faith and hope because Christ is a solid foundation from which we can live faithfully no matter what the odds may seem. How we do this is a very valid question, and Project Imago Dei exists to help guide us into ways so that we can act effectively."

"What about China?"

e.g genuine geopolitical concern, or often deflection ("we can't slow down because China won't").

Response:

"China's participation in the AGI race is a very reasonable concern. This does seem to be driving a lot of the "rush" in American frontier labs. AGI could be catastrophically dangerous if anyone builds it, even if it's not the US, and we can't hand-wave away a concern like this. However, there are at least three things we can say in reply. First, Christians cannot use the harmful or unwise decisions of others as an excuse to be unwise ourselves. We are ultimately accountable to God, not to winning an international contest. Second, there are real technical and practical considerations that may work to our advantage: the US has the potential to control access to compute, which is the key to how AI is built. This means we have at least some leverage over how quickly China is able to accelerate their own AI development, if we choose to slow down. Finally, and arguably most importantly, we share a common humanity with the Chinese. Our enemy is not flesh and blood (Eph 6). That's not where the real fight ultimately lies. Many of the reasons we might want to slow down and build "brakes" for AI also apply for the Chinese. And there are many Christian brothers and sisters in China who may be able to make a difference in ways we cannot foresee. If God is calling us to reject a new Tower of Babel project, then we should act in faith and hope. We can explore solutions together, even if we can't see the whole picture just yet. And the power of prayer cannot be overestimated. The goal should be faithfulness to what God is calling us to do. This isn't an easy problem to solve, but by God's grace, it's not impossible. Christianity leaves no room for cynicism and hopelessness in the face of great challenges. Our God is bigger than that."

"What about [flat earth / vaccines / other conspiracy topics]?"

e.g. some evangelical concern about implausible conspiracy-adjacent theories.

Response:

"There are indeed many complexities here, and as we have seen, there are people with a lot of money and power necessarily wish humanity well. Our focus today is on AI, which is likely the largest vector of change facing us right now. We are not seeking to solve every problem or end every disagreement in Christ's body. Rather, we are seeking to help the church find unity on how we can be responsible stewards of this particular technology. Scripture tells us that there are spiritual forces of evil at work in our world. We are confident that those forces do not wish good things for us with respect to AI, and so we simply invite everyone to join us in putting on the full armor of God as we seek to examine these matters prayerfully and with wisdom."

Section 5

Call to Action & Parting Prayer

Expected Time : 10 Minutes

Facilitator Prep Notes

- Bring the session to a real close, but stay for more questions.
- Give participants something concrete to take away and possibly do
- Newsletter sign-up, WhatsApp group, next session preview, etc.
- Preview Session 2 so they know what's coming

Example of Call to Action

"Before we close, if you found this valuable, we want to talk about next steps for the upcoming session."
"This week, notice one place where AI is showing up in your life and bring some examples or write down a sentence or two to discuss on it."
"But I want to also offer some thoughts on action, as acting as Nehemiah did."

"As in the video, we learn that he was serving as a cupbearer in Persia when word came that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the people were suffering. And then he was able to improve the situation, to the salvation of many. How do we envision the parallels here?"

"That can serve as inspiration for us. Most of our actions may seem individually small, but collectively, our joint efforts can be impressive or even miraculous."

"You can also learn more about Project Imago Dei and the team by filling out the "Contact Us" form on their website. They are happy to answer any questions and listen to your thoughts! Here is their website: https://projectimagodei.org/"

"Now, let us pray."

Preview of Session 2

- We will focus more on AI as it is used in areas previously considered uniquely human
- We will focus on AI where it is used in persuasion, for example as marketing
- We will explore some more of the acceleration of AI progress, and also examples of family and Christian victories in legislation

Handouts to Distribute (before the closing prayer)

- Future Sessions handout: helps people attend additional sessions
- Contact/newsletter/WhatsApp sign-up sheet: capture people while they're engaged

Prayer (~1 minute)
(This prayer template is optional. Please use as needed or present your own prayer)

Lord, thank you for this time shared with others, and we continue to pray for both wisdom and hope. As you grant us wisdom, give us grace to share it gently and effectively with others. Allow us to serve and to know how we might glorify you and further your good plans by our faithful action. Though we walk in the shadows of this world of sin and even we ourselves are sinful people, we will fear no evil, for You are with us. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.