

ARTIFICIAL INFLUENCE + + +

SETH FLICK

Good morning, everybody. Okay, so this is the last sermon in the guardrails sermon series. And today we are going to learn on all campuses about artificial intelligence. And I thought to myself, what better way to illustrate the capabilities of artificial intelligence like chat GPT than to do a live illustration. So let's queue up the chat GPT conversation. Getting ready to go here.

"Hey, chat GPT, it's the 250th anniversary of America. Give me an image, please, of the three campus directors of King of Kings celebrating this wonderful holiday. Let's see what chat GPT can do."

No problem, Seth. All right. Rendering. See what we got.

Hey, that looks pretty good, right? Thank you, chat GPT, for giving me some definition in my forearms. I really appreciate that. I could have used a little bit more hair on the top, but whatever, I'll take it.

But here's the deal, chat GPT, this is the 250th anniversary of America. You only got about 50% America right here.

"You're absolutely right, Seth. There's definitely not enough freedom in that picture. I'll add 200% more freedom to the next image."

See, 200% more. Let's see.

Oh, yeah, look at that. Look at the biceps they just gave Tyler. This looks great. And Peter, he's no slouch either.

All right, chat GPT, this is okay, but I need more America. This is 250th anniversary. We here at Northwest Fremont Millard, we need more, more America for 250. Give me all you got. Give me spangles. Give me stars.

"Yes, you want a full increase in all aspects of the image to reflect large scale symbolism. All right, let's see how we do."

Oh, yeah. Look at this. This is exactly what I was asking for, chat GPT. Thank you so much. I love the tats, and I'm going to assume that's root beer that we're all drinking around the grill. This is a wonderful image of us celebrating our country.

All right, chat GPT, thank you. Good job. I have one more task for you. I was on PTO last week, and I may or may not have adequately prepared for this message. So could you please create for me?

"Absolutely. Your sermon for today is on its way."

There it is. Let's see what we got.

Oh, that's, I don't know if that's enough. I need more. What do we get here?

Oh, there we go. I feel so much better about bringing the word now. Isn't that great? Isn't that wonderful? Like I don't have to pray or prep or study anymore.

No, not amen.

All right. So here's the thing. When we use AI and the rapid pace at which it's been adopted, we went very quickly from, oh, that's funny, to, oh, I don't know if this is the greatest idea in all circumstances, right?

All right. Well, here's the thing. We're living at this thing right now called a hinge moment, a hinge, like a hinge of a door or something like that. What it means by philosophers and scientists and theologians is that we are going to reconcile time as it was before artificial intelligence was integrated into our lives, and we'll measure it afterwards. And we're living right now in its adoption. So this is the hinge moment.

In the same way that people look before the industrial revolution and say, wow, life was really different before than after. In a similar way that people lived at the hinge moment and said, wow, life was really different before the Internet as it was after. This is that same concept on steroids. Because the breakneck pace at which AI has been integrated and adopted is far faster than any other technological or industrial advancement so far.

I want to give you just a little bit of a heads up because I know some of you are big stats people. When it comes to businesses, like the places where you work, a third of your lives is going to be at your work. How have businesses adopted it? AI use jumped from 55% to 78% of businesses in a 12-month period.

Now, you could say, like, I have no frame of reference for that. Is that fast or not? Think about it this way. Cloud-based computing. Like, you know, when you go to work and you spend hours and hours on a spreadsheet and you hit save, back in the day, you could hit save and your floppy disk could go unfloppy or get demagnetized and it's gone forever. Cloud-based computing says you save it and it's up in the cloud and whenever you need to, as long as you have connection, you can pull it back down again.

It took businesses 15 years to accomplish the same adoption rate as what AI had in a 12-month period. Okay, so that's businesses.

What about people? I want you to imagine the World Cup FIFA. It's going on right now where you kind of have this view of the world, which, by the way, foreigners coming to America and living the American life is my new favorite content on social media. I took Pastor Zach's, like, message about what that's supposed to be. It's in the right place, but it's amazing.

Think about all those people in the world represented. And one out of every six on the planet are utilizing Chat GPT, Grok, Cloud, whatever, even if you create it yourself, are using generative AI or at least AI.

Do you know how long it took Coca-Cola, the biggest brand in the world, to get the same adoption rate? It took Coca-Cola 75 years to do what AI has done in three years. And just think about how life looks like if you don't have your Diet Coke. You had 75 years to be able to acclimate to not having Diet Coke and it ruins your day.

Not mine. I hate soda, but still.

All right. So we talked about businesses. We talked about, you know, just like people and expansion. Do you want to know how many students use artificial intelligence on their formal assessments? 92% have at least admitted that they're using it in their formal assessments.

But do you know what that also means? My last church was a church that had a school with it. And we were also connected to a high school. Do you want to know how the teachers could find out that the students were using AI? They put it through AI.

So it's not just implementation by students. It's also by educational professionals as well.

But before you write it all off as in like, oh, AI is the boogeyman. It's all terrible. It's not all terrible. Terrible. Think about grocery stores that are utilizing artificial intelligence right now. And they're able to keep their stock of their perishable food items, the ones that wilt and decay very easily.

They can actually time their deliveries so they have less food waste on the back end because AI is helping to control their inventory.

Now, I know that there are some concerns about the ecological use of AI. And that's a valid concern. We're not going to address it in this sermon. But there are also some ecological benefits in that the trucking industry is utilizing AI to provide the most efficient routes to get from all of their delivery points.

So that means that there are presumably less emissions from less trucks and also not messing with the distribution chain at all. So there are some ecological positives that happen because of AI's use as well.

In the theological realm, we're utilizing AI for very good and positive things. I just talked about Acts 1, verse 8 in an earlier part of our worship service in going to Jerusalem, Judea, and the ends of the earth.

The ends of the earth have a ton of different languages. Languages that we have not discerned yet with our human minds. But there's a group that we're connected with called Lutheran Bible Translators that has as a goal to identify every single human language on the planet and get the word translated into that language by 2033.

And if you don't know what the significance of that date, if Jesus was 33 when he died, and he died at approximately 33 AD, and before he ascends to the right hand of God, he gives the Great Commission, 2033 is the 2000th anniversary of the Great Commission.

And so what would that be like if by the 2000th anniversary of the Great Commission, every single language on this planet could have God's word? Because God's faithful people were utilizing a tool like AI.

So clearly, not everything of artificial intelligence is going to be bad. But maybe we just need to take a little bit of a step back, because it's being adopted so quickly, and review where we're going to use it.

How we're going to use it. Do we use it in certain areas of our life and not in others? Do we use it to create? Do we work it to play? Do we use it to pray? Do we use it to communicate with our families, to parent, to disciple, to lead?

How are we supposed to have time when everyone else around us is using it? Or maybe even a more important question.

How do we live faithfully with powerful tools like this, while keeping our hearts anchored in Jesus alone?

It's a similar question to what we've been talking about throughout the whole guardrails series. If you remember right, as we've gone through it, we started with how do we use godly, divine wisdom for engaging in entertainment, politics, hobbies, social media.

And we're going to use the same kind of filter for how to utilize artificial intelligence.

Because all of those things, frankly, are tools. But are those tools going to be in the right place in our lives and in our hearts?

That is an important question for us to approach.

Because what we find in the scriptures is that the tools we create quickly become the gods that we serve.

Now, I love getting into the Word. And that's where we're going to get our frames of reference, our guardrails from.

I want to give you two examples.

One example, we're going to learn, a guardrail is a negative one. This is the bad one. You want to avoid going over that guardrail and causing difficulty for you and your life and your family.

The other is a positive guardrail that says, hey, it looks pretty good on this side of it.

Here's a positive example of someone who used a tool that was very similar in a way that's pleasing to the Lord.

So we'll start with the kind of negative example.

Landscape of what's going on here.

Moses and Aaron have been leading the people through the wilderness of Sinai. Moses has been very faithful to this point so far. He's been faithful.

When God's people look to him, they know that he's always pointing to the Lord. And the Lord is often speaking through Moses and his leadership.

At this point in the story, Moses has gone up onto Mount Sinai to get God's guardrails, the Ten Commandments. The Ten Words.

But he's been up there longer than what most people are comfortable with that were used to following him and hearing the word of the Lord and the Lord's wisdom through his voice.

He's up there. They're down here. That vacuum causes the difficulty in their hearts.

So they go to Aaron, who's left down at the base of the mountain. And they say, hey, come make us gods who will go before us.

"As for this fellow Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't even know what happened to him."

So we're kind of painting this picture already of the environment that's created.

It's one of anxiety. Uncertainty.

And whenever that occurs, people want answers. And they don't like sitting in the impatience of an answer from the Lord.

So they're demanding that Aaron resolves this problem for them.

And so in Exodus 32, 4, he asks for their gold.

Now, for those of you who are listening at a campus, for those of you here, where did the Israelites get that gold?

From the Egyptians. When the Lord went through all of the plagues and orchestrated their delivery from slavery, it was the Egyptians that gave them gold.

They're like, get out of here. Here, take this. Take it and go.

It was actually a gifting from the Lord so that they could have the ability to purchase wares and whatever they would need as the Lord would provide for them in some ways as well.

So they take this gift from the Lord, this gold, and they give it to Aaron.

And they say, hey, use a graving tool.

And he makes a golden calf.

And then the people look at the tool that Aaron had made and they say, these are your gods, oh Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

Aaron's job was to lead faithfully.

They tasked him with creating objects of worship covered in gold that he would make for them.

And it's really easy, I believe, to look at these Old Testament people and say, what a bunch of morons. Come on, didn't you know, you just saw the Lord working in your life.

You have a bit of impatience and you're willing to take a tool and object and put it in the place of the Lord?

Here's where I want this to kind of connect with artificial intelligence.

I believe that we're doing the exact same thing.

But rather than being a glowing calf, we're following a glowing screen.

And so the temptation to put something in God's place hasn't gone away. It's just changed shape.

No horns.

But here it is nonetheless, still idolatry.

And this is the same thing for us, right?

So like we look at artificial intelligence and we're going to fall into the same side of the guardrail.

So we're just going to like tiptoe over the side with Aaron because he needed to appease the people.

He's just as much a failure, by the way, at upholding this guardrail as they are.

He was just as nervous about Moses not coming back and him having to step into that role as the people are.

But you want to know how people are using AI now?

For markers of their identity.

For therapy.

For connection.

For relationships.

For their path in the future.

For how they're going to follow the Lord.

And they ask ChatGPT to divine the way forward.

People now, rather than taking their options for a future spouse in prayer, they'll go on to Tinder.

They'll get all the dating profiles that are there.

They'll put into AI all of the desired outcomes they would love to have into a relationship.

And rather than praying to Jesus for wisdom, they give it to ChatGPT or Claude to sort out for them the best possible mate for themselves.

Rather than saying, Jesus, make me a better mate. Make me a better person. Use time to mold me.

Use prayer time to shape me.

To be a better person to connect.

No, instead, I get to use AI to all of the ends that I wanted to accomplish.

And what I've done is the exact same thing.

But again, it might not be a golden calf.

It's just a golden screen.

And I've placed it right up here.

Which is really interesting because when Moses comes back down the Mount of Sinai, and he gives the guardrails of the Lord, the very first one that he gives to them.

And I'm going to ask all of our campuses and our campus here to help me out here.

You shall have no other gods before me.

That's the number one guardrail.

And that's why our topic today is more about a heart issue than it is a tech issue.

It's a much broader danger when we're putting our trust and our hope in tech rather than in the Lord.

And it really shows.

False gods reveal a false people.

False gods reveal a false heart.

So here's the deal.

I have created a hook.

And I'm going to give you half of it right now for this message.

You'll get the other half after we go through the positive example.

And the idea is you take this hook with you.

And when you're thinking and praying about how you're going to adopt AI into your life, if you are in specific areas, I want you to remember this hook and take it with you.

But first, you have to have the first point because it goes along with Aaron and his adoption of a different false god.

Cheap shortcuts do something.

And you're going to say in response at all campuses, cheap shortcuts forge a fraud.

Cheap shortcuts forge a fraud.

False gods illustrate a false heart.

And false gods illustrate a false people.

All right, that's the negative example.

That's this side of the guardrail.

This is the side we don't want to be on.

This is the side of the guardrail.

This is the side we don't want to be on.

We want to be in the middle of the guardrail, shaped by a positive example.

And I do have one for you.

And he's also in the book of Exodus.

And he's also tasked with creating an object of worship for God's people that's covered in gold.

And I bet you that more than half of this sanctuary here and on our campuses have never heard of this guy.

He is the first one in the entire Bible that it says that he was filled with God's spirit.

And most people have never heard of him.

Exodus 31 highlights one man.

His name is Bezalel.

And the Lord says, I have filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

You remember that from the first sermon of guardrails?

Where we were looking at Solomon and all of the instruction he had for God's people?

He said, if you want wisdom, you have to have understanding in Proverbs 14.

And from that, you need knowledge from God's word.

Knowledge, understanding, wisdom.

That's all in the person of Bezalel.

And he's tasked as a craftsman, as a work of his worship skilled labor, to create the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which is an object that would be utilized and worshipped that was covered in gold.

But the big difference is this.

Aaron created a tool that was covered in gold that would become God.

Bezalel, filled with the spirit, exercising godly wisdom, created a tool that would help God's people focus on God.

Because in between the two cherubim that he made, that he made of hammered work in 37-7, at the two ends of the mercy seat, in between those is where God promised to be present for all of his people.

This guardrail was a guy who had everything in its proper place, even though it was a very similar request.

One made God, the other one made everyone focus on God in their lives.

But here's the thing.

It took a lot longer for Bezalel to craft what he crafted.

And maybe that's the key that we need to be thinking about.

And so here's the rest of the hook.

You guys get to participate.

Everybody participates.

Cheap shortcuts forge a fraud, but the spirit uses patient pressure to shape the children of God.

Patient pressure over time is what's going to help you know whether a thing is useful and good for you.

Asking questions, being deliberate about where you integrate and what your focus is.

Do you want to know one of the biggest ways you can tell if AI is in the wrong spot?

Like if you're putting it before God or not?

Take it out for a while and see what happens.

Think about it this way.

In the Old Testament with Aaron and God's people, when they put the calves there, they were immediately rebuked by Moses in the guardrails God gave.

No other gods before me.

Those idols were removed and it was able to illustrate the heart of God's people.

They were a false people.

They were fraudulent.

Remove the temple.

Remove everything from inside the temple.

Remove the cherubim.

Remove the ark.

The object always stayed.

This actually happens with Jesus and the disciples in the New Testament.

In Luke 21 verse 6, they're walking past the second temple.

That first one was destroyed.

The second one nowhere near as big, nowhere near as beautiful, but it was still a sight to behold.

And the disciples and Jesus are walking next to this temple.

And he points to this in Luke 21 6.

He says, as for what you see here, there's going to become a time that will come when no stone will be left on top of another one.

Every one of them will be thrown down.

So he's letting them see, look, here's the test.

If we remove this, the faithful people who follow Yahweh aren't going to need it to be faithful in their hearts anymore because they were always looking at the right spot.

They're always looking to be faithful to God.

And so in John chapter 2, we actually hear Jesus say, destroy this temple.

And in three days, I'm going to raise it up again.

Why?

Because people didn't need that temple anymore when they had the real thing right in front of them.

So here's the warning for us.

Here's what I'd love for you to take with you.

If the tools are ready, if the tools are removed, if the faithful tools are removed and Christ still remains, then you likely have whatever tool that is in the right position.

But if you remove that tool and all you have left is emptiness, you've just revealed your heart's idol.

Think about like the point why we're here.

There are limitations to what artificial intelligence can provide for you.

Surely they could give you a quick answer.

Surely it can illustrate you in a way that you truly aren't wired to be illustrated.

You could look like a musician and create music and just do it through a slop app.

You could create an image and not be a graphic designer and just make it through artificial intelligence.

But can you say, hey, ChatGPT, I really screwed up.

I put so much ahead of the Lord.

Could you please come and die for my sins?

That's silly.

That's stupid, right?

But functionally, that's what happens when we place artificial intelligence in a place where it was never meant to be.

But we can say that to Jesus.

We can come to the Lord and we can say, Jesus, I put some things above you and I know they weren't supposed to be there, but I still did it.

I'm sorry.

And I've sinned.

And I was looking in all the wrong places for answers.

And I was looking in all the wrong places because I was anxious and I was uncertain.

But Jesus is coming to you today to say, I am the true God.

I am the true man.

I have truly died for your sins.

I have died for your idolatry.

I've even covered over that.

When you've jumped over the guardrail, I have snatched you, lying dead on the side of the road and created new life in you so that you could now live a full life in me.

That's the true gospel.

And that's where we need Jesus to be.

Not down here.

Not down here.

But way up here.

So then we can make sure that we're living between the guardrails right here.

And you can apply that same thing to politics, that same ideology to technology, entertainment, social media, everything else we covered in guardrails.

Because that's who Jesus truly is for us.

The one who not only died for us, but also sets us back on a path to follow him.

I want to give you four questions that you can ask if you still are concerned about, are you using AI in the right way?

Number one question.

Am I hiding behind something to make me look more artificial?

Look, don't be a poser.

Nobody likes that.

Everyone will know that you are the Milli Vanilli of musicians.

I know that's a throwback reference, but there were artists who made it look like they could sing back in the 80s and the 90s, and it was shown that they couldn't, and they really haven't done anything since.

People will find out.

If you're not musical, if you're not artistically talented, lean in to who God has created you to be.

So am I hiding behind something artificial?

Number two.

Am I escaping the patient pressure of formation?

Back in the day, the early church fathers and reformation teachers of theology said that there were three qualities of a good Christ follower.

The one was prayer, and it wasn't just one time prayer.

It wasn't just desperation prayer, although those are fine.

It was all the time prayer, patient pressure in prayer with the Lord.

The number two thing was meditation, and that's not just like some weird old Eastern mystical thing where you just sit down and hope you get some revelation.

I'm talking meditation with God's word opened up on your lap, with your eyes consuming divine wisdom, not artificial intelligence.

So it's prayer, it's meditation, but it's also the third mark of a solid follower of Jesus is struggle.

Are you trying to get out from underneath that because it's uncomfortable?

Well, sit in it.

I know that sounds hard, but sit in it.

Jesus will sit right next to you in that.

He will not abandon you.

He will not leave you.

He will not forsake you.

Question number three, am I trusting this too much?

Am I giving way too much power to something that doesn't care about who I am and for me to be a better person, a better human, which leads me to question number four.

Everybody says, AI is going to give me back so much time.

That's wonderful, but what are you going to do with your extra time now?

Are you going to use that time to become more and more like Jesus?

Are you going to use that time to serve and compassion all of your neighbors who need to hear that gospel and all of your neighbors who need the compassion of the Lord?

Is that what you're going to do with your time?

Because if that's the case, awesome.

If it's not, and you're just going to use that to absorb more for yourself, you've just illustrated another idol.

So use those four questions as you're thinking about artificial intelligence and the guardrails in your life.

And say with me one more time, the hook for today, because hopefully it'll bless you as you're thinking about this later.

Here in all campuses, cheap shortcuts forge a fraud, but the spirit uses patient pressure to shape you.

Let's pray.

Savior Jesus, your word is one that sometimes has a lot of laughter and sometimes it has a lot of conviction.

And thank you for bringing both of those elements to us today because we're your people.

We live in gravity.

We live in levity.

We would just ask, Lord, that as we live our days intentionally, trying to follow after you, that your spirit would work in us such divine wisdom that we can know how to use artificial intelligence so that everything that we do always comes from a use of wisdom pointing to you.

We ask for this blessing in your name, Jesus.

And all God's people said, Amen.

Hey, God's people, I'd ask that you please stand now so that we can sing a song that lets all of us enjoy the humanity that Jesus has redeemed us to be able to have.

One that allows us to sing in praise with all of creation that he is God and we're not.