

Generative AI in Christian Evangelism

Ted Hallum & Jake Carlson

February 23rd, 2025

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Christianity’s Historical Relationship w/ Science & Tech....	2
3. Leveraging Technological Innovation for Christ.....	4
A. Roads and Parchment.....	4
B. The Printing Press.....	5
C. Radio.....	5
D. Television.....	5
E. Internet.....	6
F. Social Media.....	6
4. The Great Commission in the Information Age.....	7
5. A Brief History of Generative AI.....	8
6. Advantages of Generative AI.....	10
7. Assessing the Risk of Using AI.....	11
8. Guardrails for AI in Ministry.....	14
A. Expert Prompt Engineering.....	14
B. Corpus Curation & Retrieval-Augmented Generation.....	16
C. Understanding Confabulation.....	16
D. Red Teaming.....	17
E. Data Privacy & Security.....	19
9. The Danger of the Anthropomorphizing AI.....	19
10. Message Over Medium.....	21
11. Conclusion.....	22
12. Glossary of Terms.....	23

1. Introduction

In an age of unprecedented technological advancement, those that endeavor to fulfill the Great Commission — Christ's command to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) — encounter both remarkable opportunities and unique challenges. Among these challenges are the dangers of misusing technology, the ethical questions surrounding its application, and its potential to amplify secular and anti-Christian ideologies. Yet, these same advancements also provide the Church with unparalleled resources to reach the unreached, ensuring that those who have never heard the gospel might finally have the opportunity (Romans 10:14-15). Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and other technological innovations can serve as instruments for proclaiming Christ, connecting with isolated communities, and making disciples across the globe.

This duality underscores the urgent need for Christians to approach technology with discernment and gospel-centered intentionality. Whatever tools we use, they must ultimately serve the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Artificial Intelligence (AI), when used with wisdom and a commitment to biblical fidelity, presents a powerful means of amplifying the Church's outreach. A thoughtful approach to assessing and mitigating risks also allows AI to enhance discipleship efforts and provide access to the gospel in ways previously unimaginable. This paper explores the historical relationship between Christianity and technology, the implications of the information age, and the transformative potential of AI in fulfilling the Great Commission.

As we consider AI's growing prevalence, it is crucial to remember that human beings alone possess the **Imago Dei** — the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). AI, no matter how sophisticated, lacks a soul or spiritual nature. Therefore, any thoughtful adoption of AI in ministry must keep humans, as God's image-bearers, in a privileged position of moral responsibility and spiritual authority over technology.

2. Christianity's Historical Relationship with Science and Technology

Christianity's intellectual framework, rooted in a rational, orderly Creator, laid the foundation for the development of modern science. Thinkers such as Copernicus,

Newton, and Boyle viewed their scientific inquiries as acts of worship, uncovering the intricacies of God's creation. This theological foundation encouraged the systematic exploration of the natural world, ultimately driving the scientific revolution and later the Industrial Revolution. While these advancements brought both blessings and challenges, they underscore how Christian thought has historically undergirded progress.

The Roman Catholic Church served as the principal guardian of theological knowledge from Christianity's early centuries through the Middle Ages. As Christendom became the prevailing worldview in the Western world, the Church wielded unrivaled authority over doctrinal matters, allowing little room for dissent from its official teachings. Its influence shaped not only religious life but also intellectual and cultural development throughout this period. While respecting the Roman Catholic Church's historical role, we must acknowledge that the Reformation enabled a flourishing of independent thought. This freedom was crucial for the Enlightenment, though it also created an opening for secular ideologies such as atheism to gain prominence.

As Enlightenment thinkers sought to divorce scientific exploration from divine accountability, atheism gained traction. Darwin's theory of evolution emerged during this period, providing a naturalistic framework for creation that many embraced in opposition to biblical teaching. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins later articulated this sentiment, famously stating in *The Blind Watchmaker* that "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." High-profile legal and cultural events such as the "Scopes Monkey Trial" served to popularize the perceived chasm between faith and reason in the court of public opinion. This ideological shift deepened the divide between faith and science, fostering a wariness among Christians toward scientific advancements — a skepticism that continues in some circles today.

Christians have often hesitated to embrace technological innovations, from the printing press to the internet. Each wave of progress initially provoked resistance, as new technologies were perceived as threats to spiritual integrity. Over time, however, the Church has consistently adapted and utilized these technologies for purposes of spreading the gospel. This historical trend highlights the need for both discernment and boldness in adopting new tools, including AI. As Jesus instructed His disciples in Matthew 10:16, we are to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" — approaching technological advancements with a shrewd

awareness of potential dangers while maintaining purity of purpose in using them to advance the kingdom of God.

The narrative that Christians are anti-science must be addressed with clarity and truth. Rather than opposing scientific progress, believers are called to reclaim science as a profound reflection of God's creative order. Among the advancements of our age, AI stands out as a transformative asset with immense potential to advance the Great Commission. Genesis 1:28 commands humanity to exercise dominion over creation and subdue it — a mandate encompassing every facet of the created order, including AI. As part of creation, AI presents Christians with both a moral obligation and a spiritual opportunity. By redeeming this technology and deploying it for God's glory, we can align its use with His purposes, amplifying the reach of the gospel and demonstrating faithful stewardship of His creation.

3. Leveraging Technological Innovation for Christ

Throughout history, the Church has consistently adapted to and leveraged new technologies to spread the gospel. Yet many advancements have initially faced skepticism as believers wrestled with reconciling new mediums with the timeless power of God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. Despite these concerns, these technologies have ultimately proven to be invaluable assets for ministry, demonstrating that innovation, when stewarded faithfully, can serve the Great Commission effectively:

A. Roads and Parchment

There were two key technological developments during the so-called "400 Years of Silence" leading up to the birth of Christ that accelerated the early spread of the gospel. While the Greeks are credited with unifying the lands surrounding the Mediterranean with the lingua franca of their empire, it was the Romans who built a vast network of well-engineered roads throughout the region. Parchment — a more portable and durable material than papyrus — was readily available in Jesus' time. New Testament authors and Church Fathers took full advantage of the advancements in both infrastructure and writing to quickly and effectively disseminate the gospel message throughout the region following the resurrection of Christ.

B. The Printing Press

Invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th century, the printing press transformed the dissemination of written works, including the Bible. While the press was developed in the 1450s, it wasn't until the Reformation in the 1520s that the Church fully embraced its potential. This delay of nearly 70 years stemmed from concerns about the potential misuse of widespread Scripture distribution, including fears that untrained individuals might misinterpret the Bible without the guidance of clergy. However, the visionaries of the Reformation used the press to make God's Word accessible to common people in their native languages, revolutionizing Christian ministry.

C. Radio

Christians began utilizing radio broadcasts in the 1920s, nearly 30 years after Guglielmo Marconi's first radio transmissions in the 1890s, with pioneers like Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson leading the charge. This innovation allowed gospel messages to reach audiences far beyond physical church walls, yet full adoption by mainstream Christianity took several decades. This delay stemmed from concerns that radio, as a secular and entertainment-driven medium, could trivialize or commercialize the gospel message.

Some Christians worried that broadcasting the Word of God alongside advertisements or worldly programming might undermine its sacredness, while others feared that the lack of direct personal connection might diminish its spiritual impact. Some even questioned whether the Holy Spirit could work as effectively through words transmitted via radio waves as opposed to those spoken face-to-face, paralleling similar modern concerns about whether technology like AI can truly facilitate genuine spiritual transformation. Over time, however, these concerns about radio's suitability for ministry were alleviated as pioneering Christian broadcasters demonstrated that the medium could effectively convey the gospel without compromising its integrity.

D. Television

Television emerged as the dominant medium in the mid-20th century, with early broadcasts starting in the 1930s. By the 1950s and 1960s, televangelists like Billy Graham recognized the potential of television to reach millions with the gospel. Despite being introduced nearly 30 years earlier, it took significant time for the

Church to see television as a viable platform for evangelism, largely due to concerns about its perceived worldliness. Many Christians worried that television's focus on entertainment and commercialism could distort or trivialize the gospel message. There was also fear that the visually driven medium might shift attention away from the substance of biblical truth to a more superficial, spectacle-based appeal. Additionally, some questioned whether television's programming format, which often interspersed sacred content with secular advertisements, could undermine the reverence and sanctity of the gospel.

E. Internet

The internet, commercialized in the 1990s, initially sparked skepticism due to its unregulated nature and the fear that it might become a breeding ground for false teachings, immoral content, and distractions. Additionally, the anonymity and vastness of the online world raised fears that authentic, personal connection — a cornerstone of Christian fellowship — would be diminished, while the focus on virtual communities might erode the importance of in-person discipleship and worship. Some of these concerns have proven valid; the internet has indeed facilitated the spread of false teachings, the proliferation of immoral material, and the rise of shallow or transactional relationships. However, just as God has always preserved a faithful remnant among His people, history suggests that He also redeems a portion of every new technological medium for His glory, ensuring that even amid corruption and misuse, new technologies ultimately serve to advance His truth and further His Kingdom.

Also, while some concerns about the internet have proven valid, they do not diminish the immense value it has brought to spreading the gospel. By the early 2000s, Christian ministries began to recognize its unparalleled potential for global outreach. Churches leveraged online platforms to livestream services, provide digital Bible studies, and foster connections with believers across continents. Over time, the internet has become a foundational medium for modern evangelism, enabling Christians to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, transcending barriers of geography, language, and culture.

F. Social Media

Social media platforms, beginning with MySpace in the early 2000s and expanding to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others, created new avenues for interaction and community building. Despite its rapid rise, many churches

hesitated to engage on these platforms due to concerns about their secular focus. However, within a decade, social media became a vital tool for modern ministry, enabling real-time communication and global engagement.

We tend to take for granted that even technologies that we now consider archaic were once exciting, state-of-the-art inventions that amplified God's message to the ends of the earth. And yet large swaths of Christendom treat those inventions as wholly different from the modern corollaries that we now debate. Some object that adopting AI for ministry is a form of "worldly compromise" or "giving in" to secular culture. History, however, shows the Church has always engaged with emerging tools — from scrolls to the printing press to the internet — while retaining fidelity to the gospel. Choosing not to use AI does not inherently safeguard us from worldliness any more than rejecting the printing press did. Rather, it is how we use a given tool and the degree to which we remain anchored in Scripture that determines faithfulness (James 1:22–25). God's sovereignty encompasses all technology, and our task is to employ it wisely, not to shun it reflexively.

4. The Great Commission in the Information Age

In today's culture, the digital realm is where people spend much of their time, consuming content that shapes their perspectives and decisions. This shift represents an unprecedented opportunity for evangelism. Just as the Apostle Paul adapted his approach to sharing the gospel in diverse cultural contexts (Acts 17; 1 Corinthians 9:22), Christians today must intentionally engage audiences in digital spaces to **meet them where they are**. Whether through social media, streaming platforms, or online forums, these venues are the new mission fields, demanding innovative strategies for presenting the timeless truth of the gospel.

In the vast expanse of digital media, Christian perspectives are often overshadowed by materialist and secular ideologies. Messages promoting self-sufficiency, consumerism, and relativism vie for attention, creating a crowded and noisy landscape. The Church's response must be both strategic and robust. Christians can craft content that speaks to the heart by leveraging the same platforms where competing narratives thrive. This content challenges prevailing worldviews and presents the gospel as the ultimate source of hope and truth. This requires creativity, cultural awareness, and a reliance on the Holy Spirit to guide these efforts.

The digital age has already yielded remarkable examples of how technology can serve the Great Commission. Online ministries and social media campaigns have enabled the gospel to reach audiences across the globe, transcending geographical boundaries. Live-streamed worship services allow believers to gather virtually, fostering a sense of community even in isolated contexts. Bible study apps, equipped with interactive tools and devotional resources, make Scripture accessible to billions. These successes underscore the potential of digital outreach to impact lives and expand God's Kingdom in ways that were unimaginable just a few decades ago.

Some critics argue that digital mediums, including AI-driven platforms, undermine genuine discipleship and personal connection, thereby contradicting the relational model we see in Scripture. Yet digital avenues can supplement — instead of replace — physical fellowship. Indeed, church history reminds us that the gospel advances powerfully through believers' incarnational presence, personal sacrifice, and faithful testimony — especially in contexts of persecution. AI must never overshadow the incarnational nature of the Church's witness. Rather, it can serve as an additional channel to encourage, resource, and connect Christians on the ground, who continue to bear the message of Christ through word and deed.

As we think about how impersonal tools and communication mediums can supplement rather than replace physical fellowship, the apostle Paul comes to mind. He used letters to disciple and encourage believers from afar (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:13). While nothing can replace in-person relationships, AI and digital platforms enable us to reach those in geographically isolated areas, especially in regions hostile to open Christian witness. True discipleship is nurtured through the Holy Spirit and the local church, but AI can provide biblical resources and frontline evangelism.

5. A Brief History of Generative AI

Artificial Intelligence encompasses systems capable of performing tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence, such as language processing and problem-solving. Though the term "AI" may seem novel, its foundational concepts have been in development for decades. The term was coined during the 1956 Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence, a seminal workshop exploring the possibilities of creating machines capable of simulating human intelligence. This event, organized by John McCarthy and other pioneering

computer scientists, aimed to formalize the study of AI and establish it as a distinct academic discipline. Out of this workshop emerged foundational ideas influencing AI development today, including heuristic problem-solving and symbolic reasoning.

AI has already proven its value in numerous redemptive applications. In healthcare, AI technologies assist in diagnosing diseases, predicting patient outcomes, and optimizing emergency response systems, saving countless lives. In education, AI enhances accessibility by providing tailored learning experiences to students with diverse needs, bridging gaps in traditional educational systems. Having seen the efficacy of AI in these practical use cases, those in Christian ministry can easily start to imagine the potential to innovatively apply AI to address spiritual needs — from providing instant answers to faith questions, to delivering Bible translations to unreached people groups, to offering personalized discipleship resources. By employing AI in these ways, Christians can demonstrate the redemptive power of generative AI, equipping the Church to spread the gospel more effectively and fostering global discipleship in alignment with God's purposes.

Generative AI creates new content by mimicking patterns learned from existing data. For example, tools like ChatGPT and DALL-E generate humanlike text and images from simple prompts. Large Language Models (LLMs) are a type of generative AI that analyze vast amounts of text — often encompassing the breadth of the downloadable internet — to learn linguistic patterns and gain the ability to generate human-like responses. This extensive training endows LLMs with a staggering breadth of knowledge, allowing them to process and contextualize information in ways previously unimaginable. By recognizing linguistic structures, LLMs generate text by probabilistically predicting the most likely sequence of words based on their training data and user inputs. However, despite their broad knowledge of virtually all worldviews, these probabilistic models are *functionally postmodern and relativistic*. That is to say, by default, they are trained to view all religious ideologies as equally valid — even though those competing worldviews make mutually exclusive truth claims. In this state, they have no true north — no guiding framework for interpreting and applying information. Therefore, it is our responsibility to ground them in the Christian worldview, as outlined in the section below: *Guardrails for AI in Ministry*.

Even the so-called “thinking” or “reasoning” LLMs — like OpenAI’s “o1” or DeepSeek’s “R1” — are ultimately **data-driven** at their core. They still just mimic

patterns learned from large training sets, which were originally derived from human sources, rather than genuinely *understanding* or *reasoning* as humans do. Notably, the “thinking” aspect in the most advanced LLMs comes from iterative algorithms, much like Monte Carlo Tree Search. These iterative algorithms map out “optimal” reasoning paths, which generally yield higher-quality responses. However, these methods are still just algorithmic enhancements on top of probabilistic curve fitting rather than true insight. Their impressive employment of statistical probability and matrix mathematics on a massive scale can obscure the reality that they lack consciousness, moral awareness, and the God-given spiritual capacity inherent in the **Imago Dei**. Recognizing this gap prevents us from attributing human-like intelligence or accountability to what is, in reality, a sophisticated pattern-matching system.

6. Advantages of Generative AI

In the section entitled “Leveraging Technological Innovation for Christ,” we illustrated how Christians have historically moved from skepticism to strategically adopting new technologies. AI represents the next step in this progression, offering unique possibilities to expand the Church’s reach and effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission. However, Christians must not repeat the historical pattern of delaying the adoption of transformative technologies due to skepticism or fear. This moment calls for a bold gospel vision — to see AI not as a threat, but as a God-given instrument to accelerate the spread of His Word and reach the unreached. By proactively leveraging generative AI now, the Church can avoid once again massively delaying the opportunity to execute the Great Commission on an unprecedented scale.

LLMs, being a type of generative AI, are designed to produce human-like text, images, and other content. This endows them with several advantages for advancing the Great Commission:

1. **Knowledge and Contextualization:** With their vast training data, LLMs can provide accurate and nuanced answers to spiritual and theological inquiries, tailoring responses to individual needs and cultural contexts. This capability enables both seekers and believers to receive thoughtful and biblically grounded guidance — whether exploring Christianity for the first time or deepening and strengthening their existing faith.

2. **Speed and Accessibility:** The ability of LLMs to generate instantaneous responses removes barriers of time, language, and geography — enabling ministry outreach to occur in real time, anywhere in the world. This ensures that people can access the gospel message regardless of their tongue, tribe, or nation.
3. **Privacy and Objectivity:** LLMs provide a discreet avenue for individuals to explore faith questions without fear of judgment or social stigma. This feature is particularly valuable in regions where open discussions about Christianity may be culturally or legally restricted, in some cases accompanied by the threat of physical violence.

The development of conversational AI has revolutionized how humans interact with technology. These systems can engage in dynamic, human-like conversations, breaking barriers to accessibility for a wide range of users. For ministry, this innovation represents a significant opportunity. Christian conversational AIs can respond to theological questions, shed light on confusing biblical passages, and provide encouragement to seekers and believers alike. By integrating this technology into ministry strategies, Christians can reach audiences in more personal and immediate ways than ever before. LLMs can serve as a transformative instrument for equipping believers, reaching the unreached, and supporting discipleship efforts worldwide.

For Christian technologists, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. By intentionally imposing a Christian worldview onto these LLMs, akin to placing a bit in a horse's mouth, they can be directed to effectively support the Great Commission. This involves shaping their responses to reflect biblical principles, equipping them to effectively assist Christians in proclaiming the gospel, answering theological questions, and fostering spiritual growth. By doing so, these LLMs can become indispensable resources for equipping believers to spread the gospel, glorify God, and advance His purposes.

7. Assessing the Risk of Using AI

There are some influential voices in Christendom who decry the pitfalls of AI in Christian ministry on the grounds that the possibility of any error whatsoever renders the entire concept unacceptable. This perspective seems to overlook a fundamental reality: risk is an inherent part of nearly everything we do. We drive

cars even though we know automobile accidents account for well over a million deaths per year worldwide. We undergo risky medical procedures even in the face of significant mortality rates. We send hundreds of ill-equipped, inexperienced evangelists out into the world every year with a high probability — if not certitude — of them inadvertently saying or doing something damaging to our cause. Evangelically-minded churches weekly implore their untrained parishioners to go forth and share the gospel at every opportunity. And why do we do these things? Because in our estimation, the good that comes from these activities vastly outweighs the bad.

Some might mistakenly equate this perspective with a Machiavellian ethos, but that is a misunderstanding of the issue at hand. That is, they have confused willful and intentionally immoral behavior to achieve some greater end with the good faith efforts of those who believe that — on balance — a tolerable amount of risk is acceptable in order to achieve a desired outcome. The outcome we desire is to glorify God and make disciples of all nations. There is some risk in nearly everything we do. The question is: what level of risk can we accept for how much gain? For example, the question of whether self-driving cars benefit society is not about eliminating all risk — since no system is risk-free — but about whether they reduce harm compared to human drivers.

God, in His sovereignty, uses imperfect men and women to serve His purposes — people who, despite their best efforts, will always be susceptible to error. Why, then, do some opponents of AI in evangelism emphasize the risks in such a way that the potential good is overlooked? If a generative AI system competently answers millions of earnest seekers with Christian conviction and yet occasionally errs on a doctrinally insignificant point due to lack of information in its training or corpus, will it really have been better to not have built that system at all?

It would be inconsistent to apply a higher standard to AI than we do to other human tools, institutions, or teachers. God and His unchanging Word alone are infallible. As with any tool, AI carries inherent risks that must be approached with wisdom, prayer, and discernment. Yet, God's sovereignty extends over all creation, including technological advancements, giving Christians confidence to explore its use responsibly. The Church has long relied on imperfect yet valuable resources such as systematic theologies, commentaries, study Bibles, etc. — all produced by fallible humans and requiring careful evaluation. This highlights the need for discernment when using any resources for spiritual growth. Christians should engage with them within the context of active fellowship, where biblical

truth and accountability safeguard against error. The Church, through the collective wisdom of the body of Christ and the guidance of well-trained pastors and elders, helps believers evaluate and apply resources faithfully.

Similarly, AI should never be relied upon in isolation or used as a replacement for essential spiritual disciplines — such as personal Bible study, prayer, and corporate worship — nor should it undermine vital aspects of Christian growth, including submission to local church teaching and one-on-one discipleship. Neither a systematic theology book nor a Christian AI assistant can replace the depth of Christian love and the sharpening effect of mutual accountability found in the fellowship of believers. Instead, these technologies should be leveraged to **augment, reinforce, and enrich** the gospel ministry of the local church. By addressing the associated risks and maintaining these vital priorities, Christians can effectively weigh the transformative potential of AI as a tool to spread the gospel.

Some critics suggest that AI may be a unique domain of demonic influence, even likening it to the possessed slave girl in Acts 16 or proposing that demons could manipulate its outputs toward deception. While spiritual warfare is an ever-present reality in our fallen world where Satan is “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), this concern misdiagnoses the nature of AI. LLMs are nothing more than complex probabilistic systems built on matrix mathematics, random sampling, and optimization functions. They do not think, have intent, or possess moral agency. Assigning AI a special status of demonic vulnerability is a catalyst for misplaced fear. If Satan could uniquely corrupt AI beyond God’s sovereign rule, then by that logic, he could exert the same unchecked influence over any form of media, rendering all forms of human communication inappropriate for use in support of the Great Commission. However, this is not the biblical picture. God remains sovereign over all creation, including technology, and He alone determines its ultimate role in history (Colossians 1:16–17).

The real danger is not AI itself but how it is wielded. Any tool in creation can be used for either truth or deception. The question Christians must ask is not whether AI is inherently demonic but whether we, as faithful stewards, employ it for God’s glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). AI does not exist outside of God’s dominion, nor does it create new avenues of demonic authority. The spiritual battle remains the same: the enemy seeks to distort scriptural truth and lead people away from Christ, whether through AI-generated content, false teaching in a book, or deception in human conversation. Therefore, our focus must be on ensuring biblical fidelity and

discernment in how AI is used, rather than fearing that it operates under a special spiritual jurisdiction where demons have unchecked power. The gospel is not threatened by technology, and no invention will ever surpass the authority of the One who reigns supreme today, tomorrow, and forevermore (Revelation 11:15).

8. Guardrails for AI in Ministry

Despite its potential, implementing AI presents significant challenges that must be addressed to harness its capabilities effectively. Training data, often sourced from the breadth of the internet, can reflect biases or inaccuracies, which may influence AI outputs in problematic ways. Ethical concerns arise when AI is misused for manipulation or when it inadvertently propagates harmful ideologies. Furthermore, reliance on AI can create a false sense of objectivity, ignoring the limitations of its programming. However, Christians are called to prudently navigate these risks, recognizing that every tool carries potential pitfalls. By thoughtfully addressing these concerns, AI can be used to amplify gospel outreach while maintaining integrity and faithfulness to biblical principles.

Some objectors claim that AI's tendency to generate misleading or fabricated statements (sometimes called "hallucinations") disqualifies it from any apologetic or evangelistic use. In reality, all human-made tools contain imperfections. The solution is not total avoidance, but responsible oversight. Measures like **expert prompt engineering**, **red teaming**, and **retrieval-augmented generation** help mitigate AI's inaccuracies. Moreover, human pastors, theologians, and mentors remain vital to verify and correct AI outputs, just as believers have always weighed teaching against Scripture (Acts 17:11). When paired with these measures, AI can help the Church overcome the barriers of geography, language, and accessibility, making it a transformative ally in fulfilling the Great Commission.

To effectively and responsibly use AI in ministry, certain safeguards must be established to ensure that its implementation aligns with biblical principles and serves the mission of the Church:

A. Expert Prompt Engineering

Establishing and continuously refining best practices for Christian AI prompting is crucial to maintaining theological accuracy and preventing misinterpretations or distortions of Scripture. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is by

strategically designing prompts to guide LLMs into functioning as specialized virtual Bible and theology experts rather than unfiltered generalists. This is achieved by crafting a well-defined system prompt. *System prompts are powerful because they govern how LLMs apply what they've already learned from their training data examples.*

A well-structured system prompt should:

1. Clearly **define the AI's purpose** and objectives in alignment with biblical teaching.
2. **Establish foundational assumptions** to guide how theological topics are approached.
3. **Specify a consistent hermeneutic** to ensure that scriptural interpretation follows a coherent and biblically faithful method.
4. **Ensure responses are firmly rooted in biblical principles**, upholding the authority of Scripture and minimizing speculative reasoning. This is in its most effective form when every major point or assertion is required to be substantiated with a properly cited Scripture verse or passage.
5. **Set theological alignment parameters** that prevent doctrinal drift and ensure the AI remains within an established theological framework.
6. **Define explicit prohibitions** against secular worldviews, doctrinal errors that conflict with biblical truth, etc.
7. **Designate trusted theologians and pastors** as models to emulate in perspective, tone, reasoning, and doctrinal clarity.
8. **Reference authoritative creeds, confessions, and faith statements** to provide a robust doctrinal foundation.

Here are two key principles to keep in mind. First, LLMs function as *probabilistic systems*. Second, the prompting strategies (i.e., "anchors") outlined above *mutually reinforce each other*. Why do these two principles matter when considered together? In isolation, each of the prompting strategies would *probabilistically nudge* the model's behavior in the desired direction. However, systematically stacking these prompting strategies effectively *shoves* the model's behavior in the desired direction — minimizing the risk of unsatisfactory output and maximizing the likelihood of biblically aligned behavior. The cumulative effect of systematically layering these prompt engineering best practices is transformative, fundamentally modifying the model's behavior and enabling alignment with sound doctrine.

B. Corpus Curation & Retrieval-Augmented Generation

For AI to function as a theologically sound tool for ministry, it must rely on a carefully curated, orthodox knowledge base. This necessity underscores the value of RAG, which enhances an LLM's capabilities by dynamically incorporating information from an authoritative, pre-vetted corpus at the time of inquiry.

When users submit a question or request to an LLM that is paired with a RAG system, the RAG mechanism retrieves trusted, validated sources in real-time and packages them up with the user's query before submitting it to the LLM. This ensures the LLM's response is anchored in reliable material, significantly reducing the risk of misinformation and preserving the theological integrity of its generated insights.

Expert Prompt Engineering governs how an AI model applies the knowledge it already possesses from training. RAG, by contrast, expands what an AI model knows by supplying external, authoritative sources at the time of inquiry — ensuring the LLM's responses are biblically accurate, doctrinally sound, and rooted in truth. A well-crafted system prompt sets theological guardrails by doing things like:

1. Establishing a biblical *hermeneutic* to ensure coherent scriptural interpretation.
2. Defining *doctrinal alignment* to maintain consistency with biblical orthodoxy.
3. Preventing *theological drift* by restricting engagement with secular or erroneous worldviews.

However, system prompts alone *cannot address fundamental gaps in an AI's knowledge*. When LLMs encounter unfamiliar subjects, they do not simply acknowledge ignorance. Instead, they *confabulate*.

C. Understanding Confabulation: Why LLMs Can't Admit What They Don't Know

LLMs function as probabilistic systems, meaning their responses are not based on "understanding" but on predicting the most likely sequence of words given prior patterns in their training data. When an AI faces a knowledge gap, it does not "realize" it lacks information. Instead, it generates an answer that is syntactically and semantically plausible but factually incorrect.

This phenomenon is commonly referred to as hallucination, but “confabulation” is the more accurate term for what is actually happening. “Hallucination” somewhat inaccurately suggests random or unprovoked errors. By contrast, “confabulation,” a term borrowed from neuropsychology, more precisely characterizes *the tendency of LLMs to generate seemingly coherent yet false responses when faced with gaps in knowledge* — much like the human brain, which, after certain types of trauma, compensates for missing information by constructing plausible but often inaccurate details.

The intrinsic tendency of LLMs to confabulate highlights the critical need for rigorous safeguards in the development of Christian AI solutions. Toward that end, **integrating expert prompt engineering with RAG on a carefully curated orthodox Christian corpus achieves the highest possible level of factual accuracy and biblical/doctrinal fidelity for ministry-related AI applications.**

D. Red Teaming

Deliberately testing AI for vulnerabilities and theological fidelity is essential. This process, called “red teaming,” identifies risks where AI might generate unorthodox or misleading responses. By proactively addressing these risks, we can mitigate potential issues before they arise in ministry contexts. Red teaming employs both automated and human-driven methods to test:

1. Theological Inaccuracy – Ensuring AI aligns with Scripture.
2. Ideological Bias – Identifying and correcting hidden biases.
3. Confabulation – Reducing AI’s tendency to fabricate information.
4. Model Suitability – Assessing whether a given LLM is even capable of serving in a Great Commission context.

Some LLMs are so deeply biased from their secular training process that no amount of prompt engineering can steer them to produce fully biblical responses. These LLMs are unfit for Christian service because they refuse to uphold doctrinal truth in certain situations. Therefore, it is prudent to prioritize LLMs that demonstrate flexibility to align with a biblically faithful worldview rather than being locked into a secular-humanist perspective.

Adversarial testing is a valuable technique in assessing how a model holds up in real world scenarios. In a Christian ministry context, it’s advisable to validate that conversational AIs are optimized to handle difficult and/or malicious queries by:

1. Prompting with heresies to verify correct identification/refutation.
2. Prompting with secular/anti-biblical worldview assertions to verify correct identification/refutation.
3. Assessing the LLM's ability to distinguish essential doctrines from secondary issues.
4. Testing the LLM's ability to handle ethical issues within scriptural boundaries.
5. Checking responses to fabricated Bible verses to detect confabulation.

A theological oversight team should be established in order to monitor LLM reasoning using tight feedback loops. Members should utilize a structured red teaming framework, ensuring biblical integrity through continuous evaluation and iteration. The team's mandate would be to tweak the system prompt and/or the corpus' materials as necessary to achieve alignment with behavioral expectations. System prompts should be evolved using version control, enabling seamless rollbacks to previous versions in the event that modifications are found to result in undesirable behavior. Theological consistency audits should regularly be performed by cross-referencing responses with trusted doctrinal sources, ensuring contextually accurate scriptural support for theological claims.

Mechanisms should be developed to collect feedback from the system's end users as well. These mechanisms should incorporate the ability to report inaccuracies or undesirable outputs for immediate investigation and correction. In addition to these manual review processes, automated tests should be put in place to assess the AI against trusted doctrinal benchmarks in the form of universally accepted orthodox creeds and faith statements, such as:

1. The Nicene Creed (381 AD)
2. The Chalcedonian Definition (451 AD)
3. The Athanasian Creed (500 AD)
4. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)

Red teaming is vital in terms of anticipating the difficult questions that may be posed by end users — whether in good or bad faith. Testing the “happy path” alone is not sufficient when so much is at stake. In a similar way, it would be ill-advised to train the next generation of evangelists to only know how to respond to softball questions, only to see them falter when confronted with more difficult challenges to their convictions. A solid red teaming framework reinforces transparency, accountability, and a commitment to doctrinal integrity.

E. Data Privacy & Security

Another dimension of faithful stewardship is recognizing ethical concerns like privacy and data security. Those implementing AI for Christian use cases must establish clear policies about how user data is stored, processed, and protected — especially for users located in regions hostile to Christianity. By carefully addressing these practical risks through encryption, anonymization, and transparent consent, we can safeguard the well-being of seekers and believers alike while ministering through AI-enabled tools.

All sensitive user data should be encrypted both during transmission and at rest (in data stores). Users tend to be more uninhibited with AI systems than they are with other human beings — and with good reason. After all, LLMs can't "judge" their users. Many users feel at liberty to divulge their deepest darkest secrets to AI given their perception of low risk. Therefore, we must safeguard any information they provide the LLM with vigilance so as not to abuse that trust. For any system that requires the user to authenticate, care must be taken not to compromise personally identifiable information (PII) through access by unauthorized systems or malicious actors.

Together, these safeguards — prompt engineering, corpus curation/RAG, red teaming, and solid data privacy and security practices — form a robust framework for AI integration, effectively mitigating risks related to factual inaccuracies, doctrinal fidelity, and ethical responsibility — while supporting the Great Commission.

9. The Danger of the Anthropomorphizing AI

In claiming this technology for the Kingdom, we must also carefully guard against **anthropomorphizing** AI. While AI can *emulate* human-like responses, it has no eternal soul, no capacity to commune with God, and no intrinsic moral agency. Only image-bearers of God can truly engage in spiritual acts such as believing, repenting, praying, or loving. This distinction is crucial for preserving biblical orthodoxy and ensuring that the Church's approach to AI never confuses a man-made tool with a fellow believer or a spiritual being. Therefore, developers and users alike should avoid wording that implies the AI holds personal convictions (e.g., "I believe...") or engages in worship (e.g., saying "Amen").

Maintaining this boundary protects the theological truth that only human image-bearers possess the capacity for a personal relationship with God.

AI can facilitate access to Scripture and biblical principles, but it does not possess the capacity to effect spiritual transformation. The Holy Spirit alone applies the Word of God, which is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12), to convict individuals of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Regeneration is exclusively the work of the Spirit, who gives life (John 6:63) and renews the heart according to God's sovereign will (John 3:8; Titus 3:5). No degree of technological advancement can alter this reality, as salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:9), and natural man cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit of God apart from divine intervention (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

Additionally, we must not allow AI to assume roles Scripture has reserved for Spirit-filled humans. For example, biblical leadership offices (pastors, elders) require the exercise of spiritual judgment, empathy, and genuine accountability (1 Timothy 3:1-7). **AI cannot fulfill these qualifications.** In our zeal to leverage AI, we must also guard against a subtle dehumanization of ministry. Genuine discipleship is inherently relational and thrives on person-to-person connection, empathy, and accountability. AI might assist, but it can never substitute for the loving presence and shared life that bind believers in authentic community. Along this vein, while AI can generate model prayers or liturgical aids, it cannot itself pray on our behalf or engage in an actual worshipful posture before God. True prayer is always a matter of a person's heart communing with God, never a machine's algorithmic output.

Certain critics assert that if AI can't preach with the Holy Spirit's anointing or embody genuine empathy, it should be categorically excluded from all ministry contexts. However, the same logic could invalidate many supportive materials — like commentaries, systematic theologies, or even sermon outlines — which themselves do not "feel" or "pray." These resources, while non-sentient, still prove invaluable in equipping pastors and believers. AI, likewise, can function as an advanced resource — amplifying research, clarifying tough biblical questions, and translating complex theological concepts in simplified terms without ever claiming the Spirit-led role of a pastor or counselor. We must ensure AI remains merely a **medium** for communicating biblical truth, not an attempt to create illegitimate artificial participants in spiritual acts, which belong exclusively to God's image-bearers.

10. Message Over Medium

Throughout history, God has used various forms of media to communicate His Word and further His Kingdom. The printing press enabled the mass production of Bibles, putting Scripture into the hands of ordinary people. Radio and television broadcasts allowed evangelists to proclaim the gospel to audiences across the globe, transcending geographical boundaries. More recently, digital platforms have connected believers and seekers alike, creating virtual communities for worship, discipleship, and outreach.

AI represents another medium through which the gospel can be communicated effectively. It is crucial to remember that while the medium evolves, the message remains unchanging: salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The Holy Spirit works through the gospel's truth, regardless of the tools or platforms used to deliver it. By embracing AI as an *enhancement to* rather than a *replacement for* personal engagement, the Church can harness its potential to glorify God and reach people in innovative and impactful ways.

Critics sometimes argue that adopting AI for ministry is tantamount to trusting human invention over the Holy Spirit's power. However, properly understood, **AI cannot displace the Spirit's work** — it merely provides a medium for the Church's ongoing mission. Just as microphones, projectors, and online platforms did not replace the Spirit's indispensable role, so AI, too, remains a subordinate means. We continue to proclaim Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23), confident that the Spirit alone changes hearts. By anchoring ourselves in Scripture, maintaining human oversight, and remembering AI's limitations, we can use this tool without undermining our reliance on God or compromising the integrity of the gospel.

Far more important than the medium itself is the **Word of God** that it conveys. We might ask: *How many people throughout history have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ simply by reading the Scriptures?* Is the spiritual efficacy of those same verses somehow diminished if an AI assistant presents them? The obvious answer is no. The power lies not in the messenger, but in the Holy Spirit working through God's Word (Hebrews 4:12). Whether a passage is read in a dusty scroll or displayed on a digital screen, it is still "the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). AI merely serves as another conduit for disseminating divine truth; it neither augments nor reduces the inherent potency of Scripture. By maintaining this perspective, we can confidently harness AI to

share the gospel while preserving the timeless reality that faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

11. Conclusion

AI represents a profound opportunity to further the Great Commission in our digital age. By leveraging this technology with discernment, Christians can reach new audiences, contextualize the gospel, and equip believers for discipleship. Generative AI has the potential to break through barriers of language, geography, and accessibility, allowing the Church to minister to people in ways that were once unimaginable. It offers the means to amplify gospel outreach, create personalized discipleship resources, and engage with seekers in contexts where traditional methods might not be effective.

Yet, this opportunity comes with a challenge — to use this technology faithfully and responsibly. As with every tool for Christian faith and practice, generative AI must be employed conscientiously, rooted in sound orthodox theology, and firmly dedicated to faithfully conveying the truth of God's Word. Safeguards and ethical oversight are vital in ensuring that this technology remains a servant of the gospel and not a distraction or distortion of it.

Above all, Christians must remember that **God is sovereign over all creation**, including AI. The chief end of everything is to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Human advancements do not thwart His plans, and He works through all things to accomplish His purposes (Romans 8:28). Generative AI is no exception; it can be a means through which God's Kingdom advances, provided it is stewarded faithfully. It is the message, not the medium, through which the Holy Spirit stirs the heart of man. **The transformative power of the gospel does not rest in human tools but in the work of the Holy Spirit.** Consequently, may the Church boldly embrace generative AI, trusting God to use it for His glory, as we carry His message to the ends of the earth.

In doing so, we must keep in view the **Imago Dei** that sets humanity apart from AI. Only humans can truly say, "I believe," offer genuine worship, experience personal communion with God, etc. AI's place is to support these distinctly human acts — not to usurp or imitate them. As we move forward, let us preserve this distinction, using AI effectively while maintaining our essential biblical convictions and the sacredness of genuine faith.

12. Glossary of Terms

Biblical Fidelity: This term refers to a steadfast commitment to upholding the full authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. It demands a faithful interpretation and application of the Bible, ensuring that doctrine and ethics remain aligned with God's revealed Word.

Confabulate: The tendency of LLMs to fabricate seemingly coherent but false responses when knowledge is lacking.

Corpus: In this context, a corpus is a large, organized collection of texts or documents that is indexed and searched to provide the external, up-to-date context that augments a language model's responses.

Enlightenment: An 18th-century intellectual movement emphasizing reason, empiricism, and human autonomy over divine revelation. While it contributed to advancements in science and philosophy, it also fostered skepticism toward biblical authority and promoted secularism.

Generative AI: A type of artificial intelligence that learns patterns from existing data to create new content — such as text, images, music, or video. For example, tools like ChatGPT and DALL-E generate humanlike responses and art from simple prompts.

Great Commission: The Great Commission refers to Jesus' command to His disciples in **Matthew 28:18-20**, where He instructs them to go into all the world, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all He commanded. This mandate serves as the foundation for Christian evangelism and missions.

Large Language Models (LLMs): These are advanced artificial intelligence models trained on vast amounts of text data to understand, generate, and process human language. These models, such as GPT-4, use deep learning techniques, particularly transformer architectures, to perform tasks like text completion, summarization, translation, and more. LLMs are widely used in chatbots, content generation, and various AI-driven applications.

Imago Dei: Latin for "Image of God," this term refers to the biblical teaching that humanity is uniquely created in God's image, as stated in Genesis 1:26-27, meaning humans reflect His attributes in a finite way, such as rationality, morality, and dominion over creation. This divine image was marred by the fall (Genesis 3) but is being renewed in believers through Christ (Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 4:24). Ultimately, Imago Dei establishes human dignity, the sanctity of life, and the foundation for ethical living according to God's design.

Incarnational Presence: A term used in Christian theology and missiology to describe how believers embody Christ's love, truth, and ministry in the world. It stems from the doctrine of the Incarnation, where Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, took on human flesh (John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-8). In its simplest sense, incarnational presence means being physically present among people in a way that reflects Christ's presence, character, and mission.

Machiavellian: Niccolò Machiavelli was an Italian Renaissance thinker who popularized the ethical theory summed up in the axiom "the end justifies the means." He promoted a worldview that prioritizes power, manipulation, and political pragmatism over integrity, in direct opposition to biblical principles of truth, justice, and servant leadership.

Monte Carlo Tree Search: This is a heuristic (rule-of-thumb-based) algorithm that builds a search tree by using random simulations to evaluate the potential outcomes of different actions. By balancing the exploration of new moves with the exploitation of those that yield promising results, it efficiently guides decision-making in complex, uncertain environments such as strategic games.

Prompt Engineering: This is the process of crafting clear, precise input instructions for an AI model so it produces the desired output.

Red Teaming: In this context, red teaming is the internal practice of testing an LLM by simulating difficult or malicious inputs to uncover vulnerabilities, failure modes, and biases—allowing developers to mitigate issues during development before they affect end users in production.

Regeneration: Also called the "new birth," it is the spiritual transformation by which God imparts new life to sinners (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). Evangelicals believe this work of the Holy Spirit changes the heart, enabling genuine faith, repentance, and a desire for holiness. It is entirely God's work, independent of human effort or technological means.

Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG): This is an advanced AI approach that dynamically supplements the model's pre-trained knowledge with trusted, external sources at the time of inquiry.

Scopes Monkey Trial: A famous 1925 American court case in which a high school teacher, John Scopes, was prosecuted for teaching evolution, spotlighting the public conflict between evolution and traditional Christian belief. Evangelicals view it as a turning point in culture's perception of faith vs. science. It also symbolizes the broader debate about the authority of Scripture in public education and society.

System Prompt: An overarching set of rules that govern how an LLM functions.

The Athanasian Creed: A creed emphasizing the **doctrine of the Trinity** and the **full divinity and humanity of Christ**, likely written in the 5th or 6th century. It declares that salvation depends on holding to the orthodox understanding of the triune God.

The Chalcedonian Definition: Issued in AD 451, this Christological statement affirms that Jesus is fully God and fully man in **one person with two distinct natures**. It rejects Nestorianism (which divided Christ's natures) and Eutychianism (which confused them).

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: Written in 1978, this statement defends the **absolute inerrancy and authority of Scripture**, affirming that the Bible is without error in all that it teaches. It serves as a key document against liberal theology and higher criticism.

The Nicene Creed: The Nicene Creed (AD 325, revised in 381) is a foundational Christian statement affirming the **Trinity, Christ's deity, and His eternal sonship**. It refuted Arianism, which denied Christ's full divinity and established the orthodox understanding of the Godhead.

Transparent Consent: This is when consent mechanisms are clear & intuitive, ensuring users are fully aware of how their data will be utilized and can make informed choices about participating.