

A.I. – Integrity

A.I. #3 • September 7, 2025



Introduction

How I use AI says a lot about who I am.

Today, we're in week three of our sermon series on the pressing issues of Artificial Intelligence.

- Two weeks ago, we kicked off by talking about our propensity to want things *now*. We want answers immediately! But in that sermon, we challenged each other to slow down and be **patient**, cultivating the spiritual practice of waiting on God.
- Last week, we started to look at AI and its ability to create realistic-looking information. Technology blurs the lines between **truth and lies**, generating fake items that are nearly impossible to distinguish from real ones. Fake news, fake images, fake stories.

In that conversation, we said that one of the ways to discern truth in this maze of misinformation is to **consider the heart behind it** – to think about what the content is trying to accomplish. If the “fruit” is bad (to borrow the words of Jesus from Matthew 7) – if it sows seeds of distrust and anger and greed – then we can be assured that the heart behind it is bad.

If that is the case, be cautious about what you believe!

But our exploration of truth was approaching AI from the side of **consumers** – those who **see the output**. Today, we need to go to the other side and look at AI from the side of producers – those who **create the output**.

Do **you and I** have the right heart inside us when we create?

How I use AI says a lot about *who I am*!

Illustration

Back in the day (a day that is getting further away every morning!) when I was in school, I was a good student. In fact, I was an *excellent* student. All A's throughout school, never had a B on a report card until Calculus 3 in



college. (And, yes, I confess I was just as insufferably arrogant as you might imagine. I hope I'm better now!).

I was the smart one in my school.

That being the case, I had a lot of people wanting to be around me. Not as friends, but as poachers! I had a regular stream of people approaching me to ask for my homework answers during recess at elementary school, or in the commons area in high school before heading to American Government.

"Hey, Steve," they would say. "Let me copy your answers for this assignment!"

Me, being the goody-two-shoes know-it-all, would lovingly respond, "No."

They might beg and plead, but I stood firm. No. Why would I? I worked and got the answers; they could, too! I held the line against those who wanted a shortcut to the solution.



Now, please know that I wasn't *unwilling to help*. During my freshman year, I spent hours on the phone almost every night of the week with Cara McEwen, walking her through the day's algebra assignments. I didn't *give* her the answers. No, instead I helped her figure the problems out herself. I tutored her and guided her to a solution.

I just refused to *serve up* the answers (even though Cara was kinda cute and high school might have gone differently if I just said, "x equals seventeen"! LOL). Did that accountability help others learn more? I hope it did, otherwise I made a lot of people mad for no reason.

Today, though, people don't need a 'Steve Howell' in their life. They don't have to push the nerd to cough up answers. They have someone else to ask – someone who is much faster, and who is much more willing to comply! They have Artificial Intelligence.

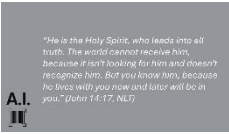
The accountability has been removed. There is no one slowing you down, no one questioning your choices, no one asking if it's a good idea. Without a goody-two-shoes jerk to stop you, AI now gives you the opportunity to generate whatever you want and use it however you will.

How you use AI will say a lot about who you are.

Take heart in this conversation: You don't have to navigate this minefield of morality alone! You might not have a nerd looking over your shoulder, but as



a Christian you have the indwelling Holy Spirit present and evaluating your heart.



“He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.” (John 14:17, NLT)

We can choose to do amazing or terrible things with AI, and the Holy Spirit is right there with us as we make the choices. He wants to give us wisdom and instruction to use this processing tool to glorify God, not ourselves.

And He will ask us some hard questions in the process! Some of His questions apply to all of us, but they are pointed when it comes to AI and how we use it.

If our AI use says a lot about who we are, then it’s time for Him to ask some questions.

One question He might ask is this:



Are You a Thief?

“Of course not!” you might say. We’re good honest, Christian folks here! We know the commandment:



“You must not steal.” (Exodus 20:15, NLT)

And I believe you. I have a hard time picturing any of you in a ski mask, sneaking into houses and cars at night to take people’s possessions.

But there are other ways to steal. Do you ever take things that do not belong to you?

Like in this story from Spain a few years ago:



For six years, a building supervisor in Spain quietly collected a \$41,500 salary from his local government without showing up for work. And he would have gotten away with it too if it wasn’t for him getting an award for his 20 years of loyal service.

Joaquín García, 69, was recently fined \$30,000 for the extended paid vacation from a water treatment plant in Cádiz -- the maximum penalty government officials could deliver, the BBC reported.

According to deputy mayor Jorge Blas, it wasn't until Garcia was due to be recognized for his hard work ... that authorities realized his office was sitting vacant.

"I wondered whether he was still working there, had he retired, had he died? But the payroll showed he was still receiving a salary" ... "I called him up and asked him, 'What did you do yesterday? The month before, the month before that?' He didn't know what to say," Blas said.¹

That is stealing! **Getting the benefits without paying the cost or doing the work.** And culturally, we slip into this behavior without even noticing.



- You pocket a pen that never makes it back to work (guilty!)
- You snack on the food in the store before you pay (I know people who are guilty!)
- You claim hours on your timecard that you didn't work.
- You notice that the clerk didn't scan the second item, and you stay silent.



That is stealing! Taking someone else's **intellectual property** is **also** a form of stealing. *Whether it's trade secrets, patented technology, or a coveted recipe, the theft of these intangible assets can result in significant financial losses and irreversible damage to someone.²*

And this is part of the danger when we use AI: Its information isn't always taken with permission! It's like stolen property!

As we explained about AI last week, artificial intelligence is software that pulls in all sorts of data (text, images, videos, recordings) and uses that data to identify patterns. Those patterns are then used to "predict" what should follow as the answer to a prompt.



For example, if you prompt AI to create a photo of a red bird, the AI program looks through and finds examples of things that are called "red birds" and can use those images to predictively generate something that looks similar.

¹ [Man Skipped Work For 6 Years And No One Noticed Until He Won An Award | HuffPost Weird News](#)

² [5 Intellectual Property Theft Examples: Impacts Of IP Theft](#)

The problem is that the information used to “train” these AI models is often information that belong to others. The companies scrape the internet for data, often grabbing photos that are **licensed**, or text that is **copyrighted**, or data that is **proprietary**.

By using AI, there is a chance you might be stealing from someone else’s work!

Now, this issue is complicated. We have laws about “fair use” and “derivative works” that impact whether someone is stealing another person’s property. Lawyers are currently litigating through all those laws and how they do or do not apply.

But for you and I, we just need to take steps to make sure that we aren’t stealing and harming someone else! Our challenge is a modern-day application of this Old Testament Law:

“When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, but you must not carry any away in a basket.”
(Deuteronomy 23:24, NLT)

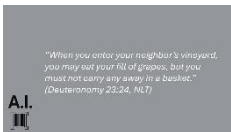
In other words, we must learn how to use it without claiming it as our own. We need boundaries!

How you use AI will say a lot about who you are.

So, don’t let it say you are a thief!

If (or when) you use AI, do your best **not to simply take** from others. Here’s a couple of practical tips:

- **Consider being a patron** and supporting those who create content. If you can pay a dollar or two for an image online, consider supporting the real-world artists who make content.
- **Get consent before you transform pictures** of people...especially if the content will be shared! Like the picture of my friend Jay from a couple of weeks ago (the one with the yurt). He liked some more manly photos like this one that more accurately reflect his look, but he was okay allowing the pictures for the sake of the gospel! 😊
 - And (I hate that I have to even say this...but such is the culture of the day) if you try to use AI tools to make pornographic,

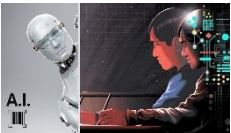


naked, or sexualized pictures of men or women or (God forbid!) kids you know, know that this goes way beyond *stealing* and gets into evils that shouldn't even be mentioned in the church. If that's a temptation, you are a casualty of Satan's lies, so come see me. Let's talk and get help for you.

Don't turn into a thief (or worse), as far as you can help it!

This first question is more on the "input" side of AI – about how we get the information. But more questions happen on the "output" side of AI – what we do with the information or content.

And now the Holy Spirit needs to ask other questions, like:



Are You a Cheat?

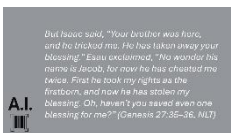
Students, I'm going to talk to you for a minute. How tempting is it to let AI just do your homework for you? Raise a hand if you've thought about it (or done it). Raise a hand if you know other people who do it.

Non-students, do you blame them? How many of you would have used AI if it was a tool at your school, able to write that 500-word essay in 5 seconds or give you answers to your math problems?

Technology makes it easier, but the idea of cheating, or taking credit for someone else's work, has been around forever.

Think back to the story of Jacob in the book of Genesis. Do you remember the story where he cheats his brother Esau out of receiving his dying father's blessing? His mom concocts the plan, and he carries it out, lying about his identity and disguising himself so his father wouldn't know. He cheats his brother out of a significant honor and (they believed) a prosperous future.

When Esau finds out, the situation is tense!



"But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing." Esau exclaimed, "No wonder his name is Jacob [i.e. "deceiver"], for now he has cheated me twice. First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?""
(Genesis 27:35-36, NLT)

And that's what cheating is – it is falsely claiming that something which doesn't belong to you is in fact your own. But it's not just **taking** (that's stealing); it's the **deception** about what is taken.

Are *you* a cheat? Do you present other people's work as your own?



If you are involved in hiring or firing people, you know that cheating doesn't stay only within the walls of school. It is an ever-present danger when it comes to HR. AI makes cheating on interviews easy, especially when they are online (e.g. set up an AI to listen to the conversation and respond with appropriate answers, then read the responses back to the interview. There are even tools to hide your cheating on screen, if you are almost caught!).

How you use AI will say a lot about who you are.

So, don't let it say you are a cheat!

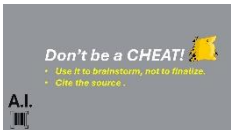
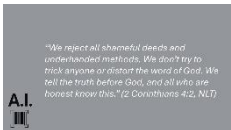
Let the apostle Paul's words shape your attitude instead:

"We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this." (2 Corinthians 4:2, NLT)

You need to be **comfortable enough to be yourself**, not trying to look better or amaze others with a fake impression of knowledge.

Instead of cheating, use AI outputs the same way you would any other source – to **enhance**, not to **replace**. Here are a couple of tips:

- **Use it to brainstorm, not to finalize.** It's okay to ask AI things you might ask others. Just don't let it do all the heavy lifting (*ex: I could ask people in the church about sermon ideas or illustrations, so I could do the same with AI. I could not...and WILL NOT...ask AI to write the sermon*).
- **Cite the source** of your efforts. Many AI applications³ are starting to do this, so credit can be given to the proper places. Say "this is where I got it from." (*Ex: In my manuscript, I have footnotes for when I pull up info*). If you give credit where credit is due, you won't be tempted to cheat and present the information as your own.



³ Like gloo.com

The question of cheating is one “output” of AI, but it speaks to a bigger issue. The Holy Spirit might ask a related question:



Are You Lazy?

Today is the first Sunday of the NFL season. Football games will start up in a few short hours and lead us on a multi-month journey to determine the Super Bowl champion.



But if you don't want to wait through that, let me tell you the results! In the 2025-2026 season, the Buffalo Bills will win Super Bowl LX (finally!) after defeating the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 55-23. Josh Allen gets the MVP.

How do I know? A computer simulation told me so. You won't like the results (the Chiefs actually miss the playoffs and lose the division to the Broncos), but a computer said it, so it must be true.⁴

Of course, we know that simulations are silly. They aren't *real*. And they can't account for the variables and intangibles that are part of the “thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.”



But, if you **don't want to make the effort**, you can skip it.

People are starting to do this with other areas thanks to the power of AI. AI can do your **counseling**, taking over for a flesh-and-blood professional. AI can be your **companion**, taking the place of a spouse or significant other. AI takes the uncertainty and fear and judgment out of the equation, simulating human interactions that you can program to be supportive and always affirming.

The fact that someone would prefer this type of output to real life is an indicator of relational laziness.

Laziness, or the lack of making an effort, is roundly condemned in Scripture.



“Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter. But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you

⁴ [2025 NFL season sim: Predictions, surprises, playoff teams - ESPN](#)

wake up? A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— then poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber.” (Proverbs 6:6–11, NLT)



Laziness drives AI use just like impatience does. We want it *now*, but we also want it to be *easy*. We don’t want to make an effort. We don’t want to be challenged.

Yet God often values other things above efficiency and ease. To quote Professor Kelly Kapic of Covenant College:

“God is more interested in relationship than in the speed of our progress; he is more concerned with lifting our gaze, provoking our song, and stimulating our imaginations with his goodness and glory than in simply bringing us over the finish line. And as most artists or authors know, mechanistic efficiency is often the enemy of creativity.”⁵

Trying to bypass the process might be faster, but it is not better. Sometimes the process of struggling is more valuable than getting the answer! Wrestling with the meaning of a Bible passage... or struggling as you compose a song... or working on your own business plan before trying to ask for the “right” answer on the computer...will always yield more heartfelt meaning than a prompt on the computer.

How you use AI will say a lot about who you are.

So, don’t let it say you are lazy!

Instead, the counterpoint to all the questions today (Are you a cheat? A thief? A lazy person?) really comes down to one solution:



Be a Person of Integrity

AI has the power to enhance our character flaws, giving laziness and stealing and deceit the digital tools to flourish. Those evil qualities have always been part of the human condition; they aren’t new. Yet they are a human experience that Jesus is working to sanctify and eliminate!

⁵ [Unlearning the Gospel of Efficiency - Christianity Today](#)

He doesn't want us to sink to that level. He wants us to **confess our sins, turn to Him** for forgiveness, and then allow the **Holy Spirit to transform** us into men and women of *integrity*.



Integrity is described by other words in Scripture: we are to be **blameless, upright, righteous**.

Integrity speaks of **consistency** of personhood.

- "I am who I say I am."
- "I do what I say I do."
- "I know what I say I know."

But it's not just consistency; it is **consistently reflecting God's** character.

"Declare me innocent, O Lord, for I have acted with integrity; I have trusted in the Lord without wavering." (Psalm 26:1, NLT)



When we allow Him to produce righteousness and integrity in our lives, then it gives Him room to work. I love this verse out of Psalms:

"Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps." (Psalm 85:13, NIV)



It's a reminder that sin gets in the way of God's plans. If I want to honor Jesus – if I want God to get the glory – then I can't sink into sin and self-gratification. I can't do it in real life...and I certainly can't let it happen behind a keyboard.

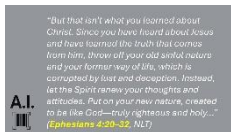
How you use AI will say a lot about who you are.



If you still have room on your paper, write down the following passage:

Ephesians 4:20-32. It starts like this:

"But that isn't what you learned about Christ. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy..." (Ephesians 4:20-24, NLT)



Read through that passage today. Read through the rest! (Is it written down?) You will be blessed to learn what that new nature looks like, to see integrity and righteousness in practical terms.

But always remember the source. It is in Christ! It is the work of the Spirit renewing you!



How you use AI will say a lot about who you are.

Like we've said the last couple of weeks, it's not so much about the technology....it's about the heart! If who you are is a new creation in Christ, then it will show up in the way you act.

Don't be a thief. Don't be a cheat. Don't be lazy... online or in person.

Instead, be a Christian with integrity!

Prayer

Invitation

Please stand as we sing our final song today.

Sermon Notes

How I use AI says a lot about who I am.

(John 14:17)

Are You a Thief?

(Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 23:24)

Are You a Cheat?

(Genesis 27:35-36; 2 Corinthians 4:2)

Are You Lazy?

(Proverbs 6:6-11)

Be a Person of Integrity

(Psalm 26:1; Psalm 85:13; Ephesians 4:20-32)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- Who is a person in your life that keeps you accountable for the decisions you make? Why do you listen to them? (Or do you?)
- Read John 14:17. In what ways can you look for the Holy Spirit's guidance and presence to guide you, specifically when you use technology?
- Have you ever stolen something? Why is stealing a big deal spiritually even if it isn't a big deal financially?
- Would you ever be tempted to present answers from AI as your own (e.g. in an interview)? How can we avoid being underhanded?
- What is the difference between using AI to brainstorm ideas versus using it as a replacement for your own thoughts?
- What are some things that God values more than efficiency and ease? What might we gain if we choose *not* to rely on technology for all our answers?
- Define "integrity." What are some Bible words that share the same meaning?
- Read Psalm 85:13. How can your integrity and righteousness help others to see and respond to God?
- Read Ephesians 4:20-32. Read it again. How have you put on your new nature in Christ today? Give 2-3 examples.