

Artificial pt 2: Ain't Got No Soul

Why Algorithmic Companionship Can Never Replace the Image of God

Scripture Focus

- **Genesis 1:27:** *God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*
 - **Psalms 8:4–6:** *What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.*
 - **Psalms 139:1–6:** *You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways...*
 - **Deuteronomy 7:6 / 1 Peter 2:9:** *For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.*
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Sermon Summary

In week two of the three-part *Artificial* series, Pastor John Kupitz addresses the rapid rise of conversational AI, synthetic companions, and lifelike robotics. Tracing human interaction with machine simulation back to Joseph Weizenbaum's 1966 ELIZA program at MIT, the message highlights the "ELIZA Effect" and pareidolia—our natural tendency to anthropomorphize objects and project human consciousness onto non-human entities.

The sermon contrasts materialist anthropologies (which view humans merely as biological machines) with the biblical anthropology of the *Imago Dei* (the Image of God). While artificial intelligence can manipulate text, simulate empathy, and mirror user preferences, it lacks a soul, free will, and spiritual life. The core threat of synthetic companionship is not simply that humans will mistake machines for real people, but that individuals will gradually lose the desire to engage in authentic, vulnerable human relationships. As cultural loneliness grows, the church holds a crucial responsibility and opportunity to demonstrate true community, physical presence, and the living truth of our Creator.

Sermon Focus & Key Points

The Psychology of Simulation: ELIZA & Pareidolia

- **The ELIZA Effect:** Joseph Weizenbaum created a basic 1966 computer program mirroring user input like a Rogerian psychotherapist. Despite its mechanical simplicity and lack of memory, users quickly attributed genuine human understanding and emotion to it.
- **Pareidolia & Anthropomorphism:** Humans possess a deep, God-given desire for familiarity and connection. When isolated or unanchored, people instinctively project human traits onto inanimate objects—from rock formations on Mars to conversational software.
- **The "Wilson Phenomenon":** Human craving for interaction is so profound that when healthy relationships are absent, individuals will fabricate relationships in their psyches with whatever is available.

The Necessity of Biblical Anthropology

- **Worldview Dictates Interpretation:** How one defines humanity governs how one interprets artificial intelligence. Materialistic worldviews view human beings strictly as biological machines, leading figures like atheist author Richard Dawkins to mistake algorithmic text outputs for conscious experience (the "Claude Delusion").
- **Deficient Secular Anthropologies:**
 1. *The Social Being:* Defines humanity solely by the sum of human relationships.
 2. *The Free Being:* Defines human essence strictly by the exercise of unrestricted free will.
 3. *The Helpless Pawn:* Views humans as deterministic cogs in a mechanical universe.
 4. *The Animal:* Reduces human nature entirely to instinct and biological conditioning.
 5. *The Mechanical Being:* Measures human worth strictly by economic or governmental output.

The Imago Dei: Created in the Image of God

- **Communicable vs. Incommunicable Attributes:** Humans bear the communicable attributes of God—including will, creativity, sacrificial love, moral reasoning, wisdom, and emotional depth.

- **Fixed Authority & Stewardship:** Psalm 8 establishes that God crowned humanity with honor and authority over creation. Human stewardship cannot be delegated or farmed out to digital tools.
- **The Infinite Gulf:** Just as the creator-creation distinction between God and humanity is vast (Psalm 139), the gap between humans and software parameters remains unbridgeable. Software possesses code and parameters; humanity possesses an eternal soul.

The Cultural Threat & Gospel Opportunity

- **Loss of Relational Desire:** Synthetic companions offer affirmation without vulnerability, conflict, or accountability. The primary danger is that individuals will retreat from genuine human connection to avoid social tension.
- **Relational Ministry:** Machines cannot offer physical presence, genuine comfort, or sacrificial love. The church must leverage cultural conversations around AI to engage people with respect, ask fundamental questions about human value, and point them to their Creator.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. **Understanding the ELIZA Effect:** Pastor John shared how people easily project human feelings and consciousness onto simple software programs or inanimate objects. Why do you think human beings are so quick to seek emotional connection, even from things they know are not alive?
2. **Comparing Worldviews:** Contrast a materialistic view of humanity (that humans are just complex biological computers) with the biblical view that humans are created in the Image of God (*Imago Dei*). How does each worldview change the way a person values human life?
3. **Communicable Attributes:** What are some of God's "communicable attributes" (e.g., love, wisdom, creativity, moral justice) that humans reflect, which a computer program or robot can never truly possess?
4. **Relational Avoidance:** The sermon noted that AI companions appeal to people because they offer connection without the risk of conflict, awkwardness, or vulnerability. Why are conflict and vulnerability actually necessary for true, healthy relationships and spiritual growth?
5. **Practical Gospel Engagement:** Pastor John suggested asking friends or coworkers this question: "*What do you think it is that makes us human?*" How could asking this question in a normal conversation lead to an opportunity to share the Gospel and talk about God's design?

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: Formed in the Image of the Creator

- **Scripture:** Genesis 1:26–27
- **Reflection:** Human identity is anchored directly in the nature of God. Unlike the rest of creation, human beings were made specifically to reflect God's image and likeness. Your dignity, value, and identity are not derived from your efficiency, intelligence, or economic output, but from the signature of your Creator upon your life. In a culture that increasingly treats people as tools or complex machines, resting in the *Imago Dei* protects us from measuring worth by worldly standards.
- **Prayer:** Lord God, thank You for creating humanity in Your image. Help me to remember my true value in You today, and grant me grace to treat every person I encounter with the dignity due to a bearer of Your image. Amen.

Day 2: Assigned Royal Stewardship

- **Scripture:** Psalm 8:1–9
- **Reflection:** David considers the immense scope of the heavens and wonders why God places such value on mortal humans. Yet, God crowned humanity with glory and honor, placing the stewardship of creation into human hands. God did not assign the governance of His world to angels, animals, or human fabrications. We are called to exercise active, responsible stewardship over our lives, relationships, and culture, rather than retreating or outsourcing our responsibilities to technology.
- **Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for the responsibility and trust You have placed upon us as Your image-bearers. Give me wisdom and courage to be a faithful steward of the time, relationships, and duties You have entrusted to me. Amen.

Day 3: Known and Knit Together

- **Scripture:** Psalm 139:1–6, 13–16
- **Reflection:** While a computer program can store data and analyze text patterns, it cannot truly know or care for a person. God does not merely process our inputs; He knows our hearts, discerns our motives, and knitted us together in our mother's womb. True security comes from being fully known and fully loved by the God who created us, eliminating the need to hide behind digital screens or seek shallow validation from synthetic sources.

- **Prayer:** Lord, You have searched me and You know me completely. Thank You that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Help me to find my ultimate security and validation in Your deep, unchanging love. Amen.

Day 4: The Courage for Genuine Community

- **Scripture:** 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21
- **Reflection:** Synthetic relationships are attractive because they promise connection without accountability, tension, or sacrifice. However, divine love is inherently sacrificial and active. Spiritual maturity requires stepping into real, messy, and vulnerable human relationships where we can practice patience, forgiveness, and active care. God manifested His love by sending His Son into the physical world, setting the pattern for us to love real people in real ways.
- **Prayer:** Jesus, thank You for loving us through real sacrifice and presence. Give me the courage to pursue genuine, Christ-centered community, stepping past awkwardness or fear to love others as You have loved me. Amen.

Day 5: Ambassadors of Light in a Distracted World

- **Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:9–12; Colossians 4:5–6
- **Reflection:** As society wrestles with loneliness, technology addiction, and confusion surrounding human purpose, the church is called to stand as a beacon of truth and hope. Rather than reacting to cultural shifts with fear, disgust, or harsh judgment, Christians are called to engage people with gracious speech and wisdom. By offering authentic presence, real friendship, and clear biblical truth, we can direct a hungry world back to the living God.
- **Prayer:** Holy Spirit, equip me to be a faithful ambassador for Christ this week. Fill my speech with grace and wisdom, and open doors for me to have meaningful conversations that point people back to their Creator. Amen.