

**Digitally Interpreting Scripture: How AI Tools Are Transforming Christian Engagement
with the Bible**

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this
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Introduction

The world is overwhelmingly religious, and among the world's major religions, the largest religious population adheres to the Christian faith. Christian populations are especially larger within more technologically advanced regions, and with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) branching into every facet of daily life, its presence is also increasingly felt among adherents of the faith. In fact, due to how many Christians there are, they are likely among those with the most interactions with AI. The faith itself offers many people hope, purpose, identity, and community; it is therefore not of little significance that AI is infiltrating the church congregations' usage. Its involvement in an individual's religious life opens the opportunity for it to even shape one's personal interactions with the divine.

Since Christianity is deeply intertwined with many people's sense of meaning, noting AI's influence is of great importance. Areas susceptible to influence include a Christian's spiritual practices, which consists of many actions such as constant prayer, musical and liturgical worship of God, vigorous study of the Bible, etc. For each of these disciplines many tools are considered in order for the person to grow stronger in their faith, including devotionals, commentaries, prayer guides, and many others. Although there are many reservations with AI, it's looking to be a new asset in the toolkit of even the religious, especially in regard to the study of the Bible. As it is the foremost holy text of Christians, the entire faith stands or falls on it. Therefore, AI's involvement in how it is studied is indeed crucial for billions. However, there are several questions to consider in this area: How does artificial intelligence impact Christian congregations' approach to the Bible? In what ways is the spiritual discipline of Bible study being transformed by AI integration?

These inquiries extend beyond individual practice and into Christian leadership. Pastoral

care for the congregation manifests through counseling and administering sacraments, but also for preaching sermons. Similarly, lay leaders who run Bible studies or teach in church contexts often bear significant influence on how others interpret and apply biblical truth. In these areas, AI has the most potential influence in affecting the content and methodology of spiritual instruction. Just like with previous technologies that have evolved over time, AI is becoming increasingly involved in how Christian leaders present Scripture to others. Drawing from public, open forums such as Reddit, we will be able to see the opportunities and limitations of AI integration in this area amongst Christians. Exploring these questions is essential for understanding not only the future of Christian practice, but also how religious meaning and authority are being renegotiated in the age of artificial intelligence. Moreover, there are ethical implications involving the use of AI in spiritual matters, especially for those in positions of leadership.

Background and Context

Various Large Language Models (LLMs) have been made that aim at religious people. These chatbots are usually trained on religious texts, but some are trained on popular theologians and writers of the past. The goal of these generative AI is to provide on-demand spiritual insight without having to spend prolonged amounts of time digging through books or online resources. However, some contemporary theologians see its usage as making “shortcuts to God” which undermine the spiritual benefits that one might gain had they instead pondered and wrestled through traditional methods of study. It’s clear that there’s a market for these bots, as one of the chatbots QuranGPT has been engaged with by hundreds of thousands of users (Wright, 2024).

People are craving ease of access to their spiritual questions. The question we must ask is: how in-depth can AI allow someone to go? A research study was done looking at AI's abilities concerning engaging with Biblical hermeneutics. It found that there were both enhancements that AI could contribute to the field but also limitations. Signs of it being a positive influence within hermeneutics included its ability to recognize patterns within large datasets, do linguistic analysis in multiple languages, enable integration of varied extra-Biblical resources, perform literary criticism, and conduct theological analysis. Signs of the opposite include humans becoming over-reliant on it in interpretation, the reduction of the Bible's complexities in exchange for efficiency, perpetuated biases, possible algorithmic errors, AI knowledge barriers, expensive and hard to access AI software, concerns of possible data insecurity, and more (Ojieabu, 2024).

A study conducted with Swedish priests and their usage of AI was conducted, preachers routinely turned to AI for inspiration. They used it to brainstorm sermon introductions, generate potential themes from lectionary texts, or quickly gather theological overviews on complex topics like baptism or eschatology (Mannerfelt & Roitto, 2025). None, however, used direct outputs in their sermons. Instead, they extracted ideas from the generated output that aligned with their goals and values. They acted as evaluators, not adopters. They filtered its content through their pastoral experience and theological education. It's quite commendable that they did not resort to plagiarizing the AI, but this begs the question—what would someone who was not as well-trained as these pastors do? This might again point to a possible higher barrier of entry in order for users to fully grasp the AI's true efficacy.

Methods

In order to uncover the ways in which AI is currently being used to analyze the Bible for study amongst lay Christians and spiritual leaders, we must look at it from several angles. We will investigate what areas in people's Bible study can AI be applied to in order to heighten successful learning. This will then show where AI is currently strong and where it is lacking, and we will analyze people's perceptions of AI interacting with faith regarding this duality. Once we have determined this, we will discern what are the implications to these hindrances or benefits from the viewpoint of a Christian. To gather this evidence, a curated set of publicly accessible Reddit threads in forums such as r/Christianity, r/Bible, r/Reformed, r/Theology, and r/pastors. These were selected due to their relevance to Christian theological study and for containing many accounts of people's firsthand experiences engaging with spiritual matters using LLMs like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude. The research was focused on their reactions to the process or on the interaction's outcome, whether it be positive or negative. As AI is a newer technology, only threads and posts from the last couple of years (2023-2025) were prioritized in this inspection. Bias toward favorable or unfavorable views were mitigated by going through each comment in the thread and only including it if they met the aforementioned criteria that we were looking to study.

Results

Christian youtuber Allen Parr conducted a review of the capabilities of ChatGPT in a Bible study format, and he came to find several outputs that it was able to generate. These included supplying summaries and outlines, reading plans, commentaries, word studies and exegesis, lesson planning, historical and cultural context, character studies, and topical studies (THE BEAT by Allen Parr, 2024). It's not hyperbole to say that generative AI like ChatGPT has

multiple avenues that one can approach their Bible study from. This diversity of usage can also be seen in the online forum sphere, where Christians across the board can interact with one another through posts. Virtually all Reddit users who took on this discussion consistently acknowledged that AI has the ability to accelerate and organize the process of Bible study and sermon preparation (ssper; 2024, May 18; Jon-987, 2024; makos1212, 2024). Many Reddit users shared that they had found AI amazingly helpful in laying the groundwork for teaching or devotional materials. One even expressed that they were “blown away” by how quickly AI could sort, synthesize, or summarize large bodies of biblical content (ssper; 2024, May 18). The ability to generate outlines, connect themes, and clarify passages was one of AI’s most frequently praised features (Jon-987, 2024; makos1212, 2024; longobedience, 2024; Biotechguy91, 2025; Lamboarri, 2025). Some Reddit users focused specifically on the mechanics of how AI aided their workflow. For example, those who spiritually instruct others, such as pastors or Bible study leaders, described how it helped them. They were able to build multi-week sermon series outlines, create blog posts based on sermon transcripts, or offer reflection questions for Bible passages (ssper, 2024, August 27; longobedience, 2024; Strange-Refuse-1463, 2024). A few people who were more tech-savvy even uploaded commentaries into AI tools like Claude or Chatbase to help the system generate tailored responses specific to the faith traditions they adhered to (ssper, 2024, May 25; Aratoast, 2024, June 2). For them, AI essentially streamlined what would otherwise have been a long and complex research process, while also making it possible to incorporate a greater range of theological resources. Notably, even users wary of AI affirmed its usefulness in summarizing difficult passages, paraphrasing ancient or dense biblical language, and simplifying text for teaching those not used to their translation’s pattern of speech (Biotechguy91, 2025; Lamboarri, 2025; SirFoobin, 2025). Some saw it as an improved digital

biblical concordance where one can see an index of words used in the Bible and compare their use—a quick reference that could save time when exploring original language definitions or repeated themes across Scripture (ThereWillBeSmoke, 2025; LitoFromTheHood, 2025). For others, it served as a tool to contextualize Old Testament references found in the New Testament or to compare translation differences across versions (Wrong_Ad_1014, 2025). Overall, users found many ways to utilize AI to their advantage in their personal studies and in their crafting of instructional materials. However, AI doesn't come without its doubts, especially in relation to topics of faith.

Despite its practicality, AI's theological limitations emerged as a recurring concern. A major issue raised across both Reddit and the academic study was the doctrinal ambiguity of AI-generated responses (FrethKindheart, 2023; SeaSaltCaramelWater, 2023; LiftToRelease, 2025; kriegwaters, 2024). Some were frustrated by the lack of theological specificity, while others noted that AI could combine perspectives from incompatible traditions, creating doctrinal confusion. One user noted that most wouldn't trust a Bible study book that lacked proper citations, and AI outputs often lacked clear references or denominational grounding unless prompted otherwise (Haragorn, 2024). Another major area of concern revolved around whether AI could be trusted to accurately convey religious doctrine, traditions, and ultimately truth. If it is not able to convey these truths in regard to the Scriptures, then it is ultimately worthless for the believing Christian whose very ideology revolves around it. Yet, it does get things wrong. Nearly all Reddit users expressed at least some concern about AI “hallucinating” false information. Users shared instances where AI fabricated citations, misunderstood biblical context, or produced answers that were misleading if not completely incorrect (LiftToRelease, 2025; kriegwaters, 2024; BlueMANAHat, 2023; Aratoast, 2024, June 28). Several emphasized the

importance of cross-checking every theological claim, and many advocated using AI only as a starting point, not a final authority. Some Reddit users went as far as to say that trusting AI in matters of doctrine is like putting “your soul into the hands of a computer making guesses” (Water-is-h2o, 2025). Although these remarks were often framed as cautionary rather than condemnatory, they revealed a deeper unease about whether a tool designed for Bayesian probabilistic output is compatible with a faith that values revealed truth and divine inspiration. Another consistent theme across virtually all sources was that AI cannot replace the human side of spiritual sanctification and teaching. Bible study and preparing for sermons were seen not only as intellectual tasks but also as deeply spiritual ones, requiring prayer, discernment, and engagement with the Holy Spirit (Ian03302024, 2024). Reddit users and pastors alike agreed that AI, no matter how impressive, lacks the spiritual sensitivity and personal experience necessary to rightly handle the Word of God (ThereWillBeSmoke, 2025). One user pointed out that people who are leading Bible studies must first understand the material themselves. Without that foundational comprehension, there is a risk of passing along errors that were generated by AI and left unchecked (creidmheach, 2024). Others emphasized that reliance on AI may hinder the user’s growth in biblical interpretation and spiritual maturity, replacing deep wrestling with superficial outsourcing (kriegwaters, 2024; ivyash85, 2024). There was near-unanimous agreement that AI is best understood as a tool—one that must be handled with wisdom (Ihaveadogtoo, 2024). Reddit users frequently compared AI to calculators or Bible software: revolutionary in what they enable, but only meant to be one tool among many and not replacing one’s personal mental faculties. Just as calculators did not replace mathematicians, AI cannot replace theologians or pastors (ivyash85, 2024). However, concerns about idolization did arise. AI could be considered as a kind of “golden calf”—a technological shortcut to spiritual insight

that might bypass the refining process of prayer, meditation, and study. This ethical concern was particularly strong among those who cited biblical warnings for teachers. James 3:1, which reminds teachers that they will be judged more strictly, was quoted in the context of AI being used to prepare sermons (EnvironmentalPoet298, 2024). Some expressed that because of the high stakes involved in teaching God's Word, tools like AI must be used with extreme care and never as substitutes for prayerful discernment or rigorous study.

To address theological mismatches, some users began experimenting with customizing their own AI tools. One individual trained a chatbot on a curated selection of commentaries aligned with their denomination, and others used AI models like Claude or Gemini to upload specific theological works. These methods were reported to have generated responses more consistent with a given interpretive tradition, having outputs of greater relevance and accuracy (ssper, 2024, May 25; parrotdear, 2024). Still, this approach requires both technical expertise and theological awareness. Most people in general lack the knowledge on how to train AI themselves, instead relying on general-purpose models like ChatGPT, which tends to make mistakes more often. Another category of findings involved deeper reflections about the nature of AI and its place in Christian life. Some users believed that AI could democratize theological knowledge, allowing people to access insights from Church history, academic theology, and scriptural exegesis without attending seminary. Taking this perspective, one user believed that ignoring AI's potential was seen as shortsighted (ThereWillBeSmoke, 2025). However, others insisted that AI could never replace the heart of Christian formation, which depends on prayer, community, and the Holy Spirit. A few even argued that AI's tendency to give users what they want, rather than what is true, makes it inherently dangerous in a religious context (ivyash, 2025). Both Reddit users and pastors expressed that effective use of AI depends on the user's

clarity, discernment, and theological training. Moreover, those who asked better questions and verified responses saw greater success (LitoFromTheHood, 2025; Agreeable-Truth1931, 2025). Still, everyone agreed: AI can assist in studying Scripture, but it cannot replace the spiritual, communal, and personal aspects that make Bible engagement transformative.

Discussion/Analysis

The renowned pastor John Piper preached at a conference hosted by The Gospel Coalition, reciting an AI-generated prayer that praised God and telling the audience its origin. The prayer sounds fairly impressive, but Piper quickly shuts down the idea that it's giving actual praise. He argues that the lives of believers should be motivated as a response to experiencing God's grace personally, thereby taking on a completely non-AI meaning to everything in life (The Gospel Coalition, 2025). In essence, there is no heart in an AI's praise—just words. This appears to be in congruence with much of the beliefs held by many of the Redditors whose posts were analyzed. What emerged across the data is a clear division between AI's functional benefits and its spiritual limitations.

On one hand, AI has reshaped the process of Bible study. It offers users, especially laypeople, faster access to summaries, outlines, thematic connections, and simplified but clear explanations of Scripture. Many Reddit users applauded how AI was able to enhance their ability to study or prepare teaching material. This suggests that the spiritual discipline of Bible study is increasingly shaped by efficiency and accessibility, particularly among those who may not have traditional theological training or tools. However, there are significant concerns alongside the newfound convenience. One of the most consistent objections across this examination was AI's

doctrinal ambiguity. Because it pulls from a broad set of sources, AI responses often blend or flatten theological traditions, sometimes combining incompatible perspectives. Without denominational grounding or clear citations, the material it offers may appear on the outside to be insightful but be theologically incorrect or hollow in the eyes of an expert theologian who knows what they're truly looking at. Many users pointed out that AI occasionally fabricated sources, misunderstood Scripture's context, or offered misleading interpretations. In seeing this, they advocated that AI should only be used as a starting point, not as a foremost authority.

Ethical concerns were especially strong among those in leadership. Reddit users repeatedly warned the Biblical teaching that teachers are held to a higher standard and must be careful not to pass along unchecked AI-generated errors. In this sense, the stakes are higher for pastors or Bible study leaders, since teaching inaccuracy could lead others astray. AI, while helpful, does not carry the spiritual accountability required for teaching God's Word. A few more tech-savvy users tried to address these concerns by training AI models on denominationally-aligned commentaries or uploading theological documents into tools like Claude or Gemini. However, most users simply lack the skill to do the same, instead relying on ChatGPT's general outputs, which ironically increases the risk of error. Ultimately, users agreed that AI is best seen as a tool—not a replacement for prayer, discernment, or theological reflection. Those who witnessed the most benefit were those who asked better questions, cross-checked answers, and integrated AI into a broader, spiritually grounded process—essentially, those who really pushed for it. While AI cannot replace the simpler interaction of faith, that was never its goal. What it can do now is support biblical engagement when users move with intentional wisdom and humility.

Conclusion

In their blog *Word by Word*, the Christian software company Logos put forth the future vision that “AI will be as significant in personal devotions, preaching, and academic biblical studies as the personal computer, the internet, or the smartphone have been” (Barnes, 2024, May 24). Although optimistic, they detail several pitfalls that one could fall into when using AI within Bible study. These include laziness, pridefulness, replacing real relationships and people to learn from a machine, and more. They called for Christians to instead pursue humility, wise discernment and stewardship, and being led first and foremost by the Holy Spirit in their Scripture reading rather than AI being at the forefront. This is an illustration of the climate surrounding the topic of AI and Bible study. While many acknowledge the promise and practicality of AI tools, especially for what’s in store for its future, there remains a strong call for personal spiritual responsibility. The tension lies between innovation and tradition—between leveraging new technologies and remaining grounded in the relational, Spirit-led nature of Christian formation. As AI becomes more embedded in devotional life, the question becomes not only what we can do with it, but what we *should* do with it.

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