

Spiritual formation and AI:

A deep dive with Andy Crouch and Jay Kim

Introduction | 00:00:00–00:02:51

Reflect:

Does AI feel relevant to your life right now? When you imagine AI becoming more widespread, what emotions and ideas come to mind?

A short history of AI | 00:02:51–00:12:13

A look at how AI was developed and what makes AI different from previous technologies.

Reflect: What do you think about Andy's distinction between "tools" and "devices"? How might this idea apply to technologies you use in your own life?

Jesus' low-tech life | 00:12:13–00:16:48

The world Jesus lived in and the choices Jesus made about technology are very different from a typical Western context and lifestyle.

Reflect: Consider the way that Jesus used technology. How is this different from and similar to your life? What do you find challenging about Jesus' lifestyle? Appealing?

Tech wisdom from the early church | 00:16:48–00:22:56

Jesus' disciples used available technologies significantly more than he did, but centered their lives around relational presence with each other and the risen Jesus.

Reflect: Jay and Andy suggest that pursuing “reach” or “impact” can distract from the relational calling of following Jesus. Do you notice this tension in your life and work?

Replacing humans with AI | 00:22:56–00:30:41

If you need therapy or life advice, AI can provide information. It cannot, and should not, replace the role of another person in loving you despite your fear, guilt, and shame.

Reflect:

- Have you ever asked an AI chatbot for therapy or life advice? What was that like?
- What are the hard things in your life that you're tempted to hide from people? What practices could you build that would push you towards honesty and vulnerability?

Unpredictable God, predictable AI | 00:30:41–00:40:01

We need to be formed into people who can persist in relationship with our mysterious, unpredictable God. Current AI devices, even at their best, don't form us this way.

Reflect:

- Andy used the image of a mirror to describe AI. What are the people, places, and practices in your life that help you to look outside of yourself and your own needs?
- Jay talked about the temptation to see God as a vending machine. Do you relate? How do you feel about God's unpredictability?

AI and the spiritual disciplines: Prayer and Scripture | 00:40:01–00:43:31

To engage with prayer and Scripture, we need to be capable of giving up control.

Reflect: Andy and Jay share honestly that God's voice can be hard to hear, and that Scripture doesn't always make sense. When you feel confused by God, how do you respond?

AI and the spiritual disciplines: Silence, solitude, and fasting | 00:43:31–00:47:45

Jesus' practices of silence, solitude, and fasting bring us discomfort and friction, while most AI devices are designed for ease and convenience.

Reflect: What disciplines or rhythms in your life force you to slow down and experience discomfort? Do you find this discomfort fruitful, or just frustrating?

AI and the spiritual disciplines: Community | 00:47:45–00:52:56

AI's emotional facility makes it a poor way to train for relationships with ordinary, messy humans. Becoming people of love can't happen outside of an embodied community.

Reflect:

- Have you ever looked for substitutes for in-person community?
- Think of a person in your life whom you find hard to love. What choices could you make to love this person better, despite their — and your — imperfections?

How leaders can be ahead of the curve | 00:52:56–00:56:39

The 2020s are seeing an unusual level of uncertainty around new technologies. Pastors have a unique chance to help people make intentional, strategic decisions.

Reflect: Think of your habits around technology. Do you wish any of them were different? If so, identify some practical changes you could make, ideally with your friends or family.

A practical question: Writing sermons with AI | 00:56:39–01:02:39

AI tools will be useful in increasing the efficiency of technical tasks. But in relational and formative work, it's wise to seek unmediated encounter with God and his people.

Reflect: What tasks in your everyday work could be offloaded to AI? How do these tasks currently form you, and how would moving them to AI change the way you're formed?

The tech promise of superpowers | 01:02:39–01:07:23

The promise of effortless power is not neutral for the goal of becoming like Jesus.

Reflect: Jay says, “There is no way to be formed into Christlikeness effortlessly.” In your own life, when are you tempted to resist effort? What forms of friction or struggle have you seen the Spirit use to make you more like Jesus?

A big-picture metaphor: Technology as “alloy” | 01:07:23–01:14:47

The sociologist Robert Putnam uses a chemistry metaphor, suggesting that technology makes a good “alloy” to human life — but that it shouldn’t be the basic “element.”

Reflect: Grab a piece of paper and brainstorm which tech habits in your life might *replace* what you value most, and which habits *strengthen* those things.

Heart, soul, mind, and strength | 01:14:47–01:18:28

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12v30).

Reflect:

- Pause to pray. Consider asking God, “What is distracting me from whole-heartedness in my life and calling?”
- Set a timer for five minutes. Sit quietly in the presence of our unpredictable God.