

**Transcript: [Artificial Intelligence and World Missions](#)
The Missions Podcast #365
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Note: This transcript has not been exhaustively edited and may contain errors.

00:00:00:09 - 00:00:26:17

Alex Kocman

Listeners, we have a special word from one of our partners on the show. Now, you know, and I know that ministry right now, especially in the West, in this post-Christian context that we're in, whatever that means, it's harder. It's getting more and more tiresome. But that's why Midwestern seminary wants to express the deepest thanks to all of the full-time pastors, associate pastors, lead pastors, elders, lay leaders in the church.

00:00:26:18 - 00:00:47:22

Alex Kocman

Anyone who's in a position of ministry, leadership in the church, we want to say with Midwestern seminary that we appreciate you. Well, Midwestern believes that what Jesus believes to be precious, that which he purchased with his own blood, should be important to us as well. And that's why they exist for the church. We love the work that they're doing.

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Alex Kocman

And as a thank you to those that are in ministry, they want to let you know that there's all sorts of free resources available to read online, to download, to listen to podcasts, videos, articles, all sorts of things and giveaways happening all the time at mbts.edu/pastors. Again, that's mbts.edu/pastors. If you're in ministry, why don't you check out what's over there, see what they have for you, and know that this October and throughout the year that we here at the missions podcast and our partners with Midwestern Seminary, we appreciate you and we pray that you're strengthened in the work that you're doing for the Lord.

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Alex Kocman

And now on to the show.

00:01:33:20 - 00:01:55:14

Alex Kocman

Greetings and welcome to the Missions podcast, the show that explores your hard questions on missions, theology and practice to help goers think and thinkers go. I'm Alex Kocman, director of communications and media with ABWE, joined by Scott Dunford, pastor of Western Hills Church in San Mateo, California. And you are you and we're so glad that you've joined us.

00:01:55:14 - 00:02:14:14

Alex Kocman

If this show is a blessing to you either now or in the past, if you've been a regular listener or if this is your very first time. First of all, we're glad to have you go ahead and remember to drop us a positive rating and a five star review in your podcast platform of choice that'll help other people discover this content, be blessed by it and mobilized by it out into the harvest.

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Alex Kocman

You know, Scott, I was looking at some of the statistics and was delighted to find that double digits of people have applied to serve as missionaries who discovered ABWE, which is the missions agency that we're a part of here. Through the Missions podcast, we're so encouraged. And for those of you who are here just a few short weeks ago for new missionary orientation, we're glad that you're a part of this global family and what a joy that it is to serve together, not just to talk, but to put shoe leather on our faith.

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Alex Kocman

And that's what we want to do today into diving into some important matters of contemporary concern and biblical worldview right today. Scott, we want to talk about things that everyone's thinking about, but through a missional lens.

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Scott Dunford

Yeah, I mean, I'm, I'm of the generation as a Gen Xer that I can recall. We first got email and I can actually remember getting the Internet for the first time and not even knowing how to use it because we didn't have a browser yet. And, and that just seems like impossible to imagine. But it was a big deal even in college when we all had to go to the computer lab and use, you know, the email that was there.

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Scott Dunford

And yet we're seeing just technology changing at a blistering pace. You know, Alex, one of these ways that I've seen, you know, technology changes, obviously. I mean, the government just passed some you know, Biden came up with some new guidelines for what they want to do with A.I. And the U.N. is talking about A.I. But I mean, I remember you using A.I. when it first went public.

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Scott Dunford

What are some of the ways that you've used A.I. that are the ways that you enjoy A.I. or maybe you don't enjoy?

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Alex Kocman

I've dabbled with it. Yeah. And, you know, even just this week, there's new announcements with ChatGPT, which is probably what most people are going to be aware of at this point,

really made a big splash last November when it first came into the public release. I've used it to proofread things. I've used it to help shape some social media content.

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Alex Kocman

I've used it to design logos. I remember I had it design a logo for my wife's business, and it was perfect. The first attempt, it came out exactly what I was looking for and still actually thinking about using that and replacing the current logo. There's a lot of different things. There's also some negative sides. I had a coworker send me an email that was clearly generated.

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Alex Kocman

I wrote back of my brother, you didn't even swap out the like the insert name of recipient here things. And he wrote back, no, I did that on purpose as a joke and I was relieved. I was so relieved that he did it on purpose as a joke. It was just an email to me. But I think we can all think of times maybe we've seen in the news or heard about someone who's had maybe an unfortunate mishap.

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Alex Kocman

And actually, one of those mishaps was shared in the most recent issue of Evangelical Missions Quarterly, EMQ, which is an important journal, and we know some of the people that are involved in that, but some pretty interesting interpretations of scripture coming across people's screens, right?

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Scott Dunford

Yeah, they started out one of the stories just talking about hallucinations and how I get things wrong, and if someone had typed in show me verses with chapter, verse with book, chapter and verse with quotes from the Bible about truth. And this is the quote that came up. We know that we shall be hold a marker of the farmers and as that the famers we are of the mockers from John 5:5.

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Scott Dunford

Then the article went on to say, if you're not familiar with this verse, it's because it doesn't exist.

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Alex Kocman

And so.

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Scott Dunford

Basically, you know, the I just took a verse, a prompt about, hey, show me verses on this and made things up. So, I mean, you can imagine the kind of problems that this could cause where someone who's unfamiliar with the Bible is asking. I mean, I go to Google and type in, you know, I know I am the way the truth in the life.

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Scott Dunford

And I'm like, what's the reference for that? And it pops up the verse, the chapter and verse, but you start typing in, teach me things about truth in the bar, and it comes up with things like We shall behold a mockery of the famous man. And we were kind of joking, it sounds like some other religious texts, but certainly that is not that is not from the Bible.

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Scott Dunford

And then we were also talking about another. You've heard of this one, Alex, the pastor of a Methodist church in Texas who decided to let a guy develop a whole service for him. And what do you think the outcome of that would be?

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Alex Kocman

About the same as any other Methodist church service. And if you're Methodist listening to this podcast, I love you anyway, and I'm allowed to say that because I used to attend a Methodist Church.

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Scott Dunford

There are sort of there are some good evangelical Methodist churches. There are I know at least one or two.

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Alex Kocman

I couldn't resist, though.

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Scott Dunford

Now it's turned out exactly the way that.

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Alex Kocman

You would think it would turn out, right?

00:06:56:16 - 00:07:19:15

Scott Dunford

Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, people like, well, you know, it was you know, it said the right things. It kind of created a nice little liturgy, but there was something missing. And we sit

here as lovers of God's Word and are just absolutely shocked. Right. Is shocked that there'd be something missing about a service, including the sermon and prayers and everything that was designed by air, that something would be missing.

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Scott Dunford

But it just does highlight some of the ways that air is being used and people are trying to use it for spiritual things. Does that surprise you, Alex?

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Alex Kocman

No, it doesn't surprise me at all. One thing that I think we need to distinguish between different types of artificial intelligence, A.I. tools out of the gate, people use this category of AI like it's new. And of course, that's not quite true. There's things that are newer to the general public, like generative A.I. generating text in images.

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Alex Kocman

I picked up a book that was put out by Popular Mechanics in the nineties. I happened to find it at a relative's house and I pulled it out. It was dated. I forget what year exactly, but sometime in the nineties and I opened it up and there's a whole opening feature on A.I., right? There's and then it wasn't new either.

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Alex Kocman

This is an idea that's been percolating for a long time. These are functional distinctions that I find helpful. An expert in this field is going to make other distinctions, but a few of the people that I listen to and trust would distinguish between artificial intelligence narrowly applied and artificial intelligence more generally applied. The term that you'll hear in the field is AGI, artificial general intelligence.

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Alex Kocman

But really, it comes down to this choice between am I going to use artificial intelligence tools for particular applications, for particular types of tasks, or am I going to use it and trust it to run my life or to run and govern a society or a program or a business or a ministry? Right. These very general where there's layers and layers of analysis on top of meta-analysis, trying to make decisions and take the human component out of things.

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Alex Kocman

Now I am someone just dispense despise. Easy for me to.

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Scott Dunford

Say is positional.

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Alex Kocman

Positionally almost a dispensation. I got asked to think today I'm dispositional. Someone who's in favor of using these types of tools to simplify life. I enjoy that. But look, I mean, we get we got to think if you're watching on video right now, which by the way, you can get the podcast on YouTube, you can watch it on the ABWE website as well as listening in your podcast app of choice.

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Alex Kocman

But in my hand, I'm holding something my smartphone with more computing power than the machines that put man on the Moon for the first time. Right? As Christians imagine, imagine living in Solomon's day and having a thousand servants at your disposal who will play music at your beck and call, who will read Scripture to you or any other book in the world, to you at your beck and call, who will order any product from anywhere in the world and make sure that it shows up on your doorstep within a few days.

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Alex Kocman

Right? You're wealthy. Even if we're not full of full of monetary wealth, we are wealthy in that we have all these servants at our disposal. And that's something that we have to use for the kingdom, right? And so I think first and foremost, there is a way to say legitimately, as Christians, let's plunder the Egyptians, let's use these things for the kingdom.

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Alex Kocman

That's how I'm wired. Some people are more Luddites dispositional and they want to avoid new technology. I'm much more wired to say, How can we use this redemptive plea?

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Scott Dunford

Yeah, I mean, I think people being suspicious of new things because we don't quite understand how it's going to affect us is true. I mean, I see that even with, you know, my kids, you know, social media comes out and, oh, wow, it's a great way to connect with people. And pretty soon you've got people addicted to Facebook and Instagram and Tik Tok and, you know, people going into depression because, you know, everyone else's life looks so much better.

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Scott Dunford

And I never thought that would happen. Of course not. You just you want to see your, you know, your grandkids pictures and next thing you know, you can't pull away from it. And, you know, you walk into any room. It's not just young people anymore. It's old people and young

people together. All staring down their phones. And we're all going to have neck troubles because of it.

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Scott Dunford

You know, we don't always know the outcome of these things. I do. People subscribe to Missio Nexus. If you're a missionary with ABWE, I think you still get a free subscription to even evangelical missionary cool Evangelical Missions Quarterly, EMQ, which is a journal put out by is your nexus. It's really good, even if you don't agree with every single thing that's written in there and you want of course, but there's so many good things that talk about some of the things that are happening on the cutting edge of missions.

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Scott Dunford

But this was really interesting because, you know, we've heard of Seattle, a major partner in in translating the Bible around the world. They've partnered with Christian Vision, another ministry called Christian Vision to create closed domain chat box. So Alex, can you explain what is a closed domain chat box?

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Alex Kocman

First, people have to understand that whether it's Google's Bard, whether it's Bing, whether it's chat, GPT, they're all using this same GPT model, which at this point is an open public model. So this week ChatGPT which is kind of the big dog in the room Sam Altman, their CEO that they announced that now they're releasing a premium service where you can set up your own individual individualized chat bots for various applications on that, on that ChatGPT framework, if you're a software developer, if you're a coder, you could already do that and you could already do that back when the first GPT model was released publicly about a year ago, if not more by

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Alex Kocman

this point. And really all this is, is taking a language model, a large language model, and it's feeding that to the machine such that the machine is interpreting whatever input you give it in terms of language. This is why some of the mistakes were the way that they were. Early on when I was experimenting with this, I would give it simple math problems and it would flub them, but it's because it's not calculating them like a calculator on your computer typically would.

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Alex Kocman

It's looking at the language you're using and it's interpreting it as human language and it's saying, let's find a likely response that sounds mathy based on based on the Internet, based on all of those things. And so what you get is a very professional sounding mathy answer that happens to be factually incorrect, right? Similar to the Bible verse application there.

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Alex Kocman

And of course one thing that GPT did, OpenAI did within the last year was instituted methods of getting real user feedback and allowing human users to train the model through submitting feedback and reports. And what that what that does is that improves the model and it eliminates some of these errors. But fundamentally it's giving it access to a dataset and it's letting the machine learning look at that data and then and then apply plain language prompts to it and return plain language responses.

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Alex Kocman

And so the question becomes what data are you going to feed it and what rules are you going to give it for its responses and for how it right now it sifts through data. So when we're talking in this Ian Q article about open domain versus closed domain, by the way, I'm sure somebody way smarter than me can write to us.

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Alex Kocman

Alex Admissions Podcast dot com Go ahead and tell me everything that I got wrong, but this is my layman's attempt to explain these things. But when we're talking open domain versus closed domain, something like a chat, GPT has access to the entire internet, which by the way, when you're when you're crowdsourcing, you know, questions like what is ultimate meaning in life, you know, good luck.

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Alex Kocman

And that's a part from any of the worldview assumptions of the programmers. Those are assumptions that are getting baked in. There are no neutral programs, there are no neutral algorithms. But when we're talking about more of a closed domain model, something like Seattle is using Seattle International and some other missions organizations are experimenting with, you're limiting the dataset, you're feeding it certain things, you're feeding it scripture, you're feeding it theological content.

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Alex Kocman

You're also programing certain worldview assumptions into that model to get types of responses. And that's what this article explains in detail. And you can really control the veracity of those responses. Write more by limiting the dataset. It's interesting to see, you know, what machine learning does with special revelation, right? When that's the data that you give it to work with.

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Scott Dunford

That's fascinating. So, you know, someone like I said, you know, from Gen X, you know, the fact that an open GPT goes to the World Wide Web, I think we should use that term more often. It grabs anything. It helps explain. It helps explain, you know, why you get such wild answers. But you can create a system that has like you just describe certain rules that allow you to give, you know, hopefully better answers.

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Scott Dunford

And so what they're working on right now, which I think is fascinating and I'd be interested to see how this works, is the fact that they can they can people can just go up, you know, type in their questions about God and theology and the Bible and give answers that hopefully are going to be within a certain set and in accurate and not grabbing from the whole world wide web I to keep using that but from a certain set and they're saying that one of the benefits of this is that they can do it in different languages.

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Scott Dunford

They can put this into places where, you know, missionaries may not be able to go. And so when people are asking their questions about the Internet or about I'm sorry, about God or theology or the Bible or Jesus that they're loading it with, with good information, good things. I don't know if you've noticed, Alex, this is this is little maybe a little bit off topic.

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Scott Dunford

You know, if you type in a question about the Bible, most of the time, what the number one resource that comes up, do you know, Do you take it? Guess at what it might be.

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Alex Kocman

I'm going to guess it's the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

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Scott Dunford

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Yeah, it's unbelievable. It's frustrating to me, you know, that we've not done a better job of cornering the Internet with good truth about God's Word. But yeah, I mean, the Mormons are spending lots and lots of energy and time and money on SEO, search engine optimization and all these other things and, you know, I think there is some value in Christians thinking well about technology.

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Scott Dunford

Do you see any downsides of using a chat box A.I. to help talk about the gospel?

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Alex Kocman

I do want to talk about the downsides. I also want to make sure users are—here I am getting confused—listeners. You guys are listeners. You're more than just users to us. I want to make sure that our listeners are thinking through what the positive applications are too. So let's just finish fleshing out the positives and move to the positives.

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Alex Kocman

Positively, what we're talking about is we already know the number of people in the world who are discovering the gospel through the Internet. And listen, Scott and I, we're proclamation guys. We are Spirit and Word. We are normal, ordinary means of grace type guys. We believe in long-term church planting. That's exactly where we line up.

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Alex Kocman

But we can't deny that God the word of God cannot be chained. And because of that, the Lord is using the Internet in incredible ways. I know of a missionary serving in North Africa who this year they had their first convert after years of ministering there because of someone who found Christian content, a Muslim who found Christian content on the web, and now they're thinking about starting a YouTube channel and growing it right.

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Alex Kocman

We see this all across the world, but especially in the Islamic world, in massive numbers. Well, imagine not only giving these types of seekers access to Scripture and to biblical articles and having to translate them. Imagine if you could automate all of the translation. Imagine if you could translate more easily into a number of dialects and sub dialects of Arabic or whatever language group you're working with for maximum distribution.

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Alex Kocman

Imagine that you could do the same and apply that to video content as well and captioning it. Imagine. Imagine you could then load that into a chat bot and give someone who maybe the spirit is at work in their life to draw them, give them the opportunity to in places where they don't yet have contact with a missionary, where they don't yet have contact with an unbeliever, with a believer to be able to query the text in plain natural language.

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Alex Kocman

They don't even know what types of things to ask yet they don't know the right questions to ask. Yet they might ask questions that are more informed by their Islamic sensibilities than Christian concerns. But for the chat bot to know and to be able to give them answers from Scripture, does it replace a missionary? No. Doesn't replace a church?

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Alex Kocman

Absolutely not. But could that be an incredible tool in evangelism? Actually, yes.

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Scott Dunford

Yeah.

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Alex Kocman

And that's the type of thing we have to consider. I think the downsides of that. Well, they start to become obvious over time. Right? Right. You look at an overreliance on those things can certainly be another factor. The critical thing with the downsides is that and you can elaborate on this, too, Scott, but nothing is neutral.

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Alex Kocman

That's why I'm encouraged to see that missionaries and mission agencies are developing their own tools because no tool, no software, no algorithm is neutral. They all include the worldview assumptions. Scott, you're in Silicon Valley, okay? All of the people writing these algorithms are in your backyard. Are your neighbors, are they approaching those from a position of neutrality and just openness to truth, or are they not programming a lot of their own assumptions into these things?

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Alex Kocman

And so, yeah, diversity, equity, and inclusion—whether it's, you know, religious pluralism or anything.

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Scott Dunford

Well, sure, it just is just a general ignorance about the things of God. You know, I mean, 35% of the population in the Bay Area call themselves none like no, no spiritual affiliation at all. And then on top of that, so many of the other programmers are Hindus by background. And they just this is a little off topic, but it goes along with your question.

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Scott Dunford

You know, I think there's 250,000 Hindus now in the Bay Area. They would be the largest they'd would be the fourth largest city in northern California if they were their own community. And that's just that's just actually in the east bay of Northern California. I mean, it's growing. And so these are the people that, you know, nothing inherently like I'm not saying these are bad people intentionally doing these things.

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Scott Dunford

They just don't come to things with a biblical worldview and understanding of God's Word. And they're the ones that kind of building and programing these things. And so we do have to be really careful about, you know, what is going into this and how it's being how it's being developed. Because as much as there is ignorance, there is also intentionally you know, this is the are some of the articles we're talking about this are isn't intentional putting in a certain kind of ideology is inserted into the rules of the chat boxes that are definitely leading people down in a way that is contrary to biblical thinking.

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Scott Dunford

And so yeah, of course we have to be really careful.

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Alex Kocman

And that's why it's a good idea for, for so if you're a technologist listening to this, Christians need to get ahead. Christians need to be developing their own GPT models for various applications having to do with missions and some of the things that we shared or just general resources and tools. So OpenAI is not worldview neutral. Their CEO is openly atheistic, openly homosexual. In their press release,

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Alex Kocman

this is cited in the in the Missio Nexus article, OpenAI admits in their own words, their belief that, quote, there's currently no source of truth. That is the worldview that these things are coming from now. Little anecdote. So one of the features in ChatGPT is you can preprogram certain instructions, you can tell it, hey, whenever you know, I have you do this type of task for me, do it in this way, right, with this type of a style.

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Alex Kocman

And so forth. Well, I have mine set up to respond from a from a biblical worldview, and I give a few specifics of what that would mean. You know, it's not perfect, but it does avoid some of the biases. But, you know, try as I might, and I've tried multiple image generating models. I like to experiment with A.I. art.

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Alex Kocman

I have tried so hard to get it to create some sort of an image of Jesus on the throne and heaven. And then every nation underneath his feet and, you know, Islam, you know, pride flags, like everything, just the chaos of the world happening down here. And Christ enthroned above it all. And won't you know, it will not. I cannot get the thing to do what I want because you cannot overcome what it's been programed to do as far as what it thinks constitutes sensitivity.

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Alex Kocman

Right. It'll start taking Islamic images and it'll put them up in heaven with Jesus. It will do the same with other secular imagery. It will surround the throne with a pride rainbow. But it won't put them under Jesus' feet. It knows what that means. And for Christians who, as we are, we're people of the book, we know that we're too digitally saturated.

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Alex Kocman

We know that there's a dark side to these things as well, and we can get into the dark side of these things. There are there are lots of things that are lurking in the shadows of some of these models that are actually concerning. But imagine if Martin Luther had had the same approach to the printing press.

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Scott Dunford

Yeah.

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Alex Kocman

Would we have had a Reformation? Arguably not.

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Scott Dunford

Sure. Yeah.

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Alex Kocman

And we've got to see these as Great Commission tools.

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Scott Dunford

Yeah. There were some things that were probably lost in the hand copying, you know, of things. There certainly were some beauty and some art that was lost in that process, but there was also so much that was gained. And I think that you bring up a good point that, yes, Christians need to use these tools but not become so dependent on those tools that we let it do our thinking for us that we continue to become to be people of the book.

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Scott Dunford

And then we continue to come back to the truth of God's Word and use these as supplemental things but not become so dependent on them. And with every new technology, other technologies are lost. And that's just a difficult kind of thing to kind of wrap our mind around. You know, like I, I love being able to use my log as program and click over a word and find the Greek origins and look at multiple commentaries.

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Scott Dunford

And but in that I get lazy in my in my Greek. I'm not as good at Greek as I used to be because I'm using the tools. You know, I don't need to be as good at Greek anymore. But I, you know, going back to one of the ways I think this could be so exciting for missions is this Bible translation idea.

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Scott Dunford

You know, the fact of, you know, we've had for a long time being able to use Google and typing in something and have it translate into Spanish. But it's shocking how good it is now. I mean, I had a whole conversation with someone in the airport who was asking me they were in didn't speak English, and they were struggling with what to do in the airport.

00:25:54:21 - 00:26:22:07

Scott Dunford

And we were texting back and forth, using, you know, using the little translator app. And it was fantastic how well it could communicate. Well, now imagine taking that and translating whole sections of the Bible and then obviously having a translator go back and check the work. But I think of the time that that would save I mean, Robert Morrison back in China or William Carey would probably have, you know, what would they have given to be able to save years and years and years off of their work, to be able to have that done?

00:26:22:08 - 00:26:36:01

Scott Dunford

You know, I think that's an incredible tool. Where do you where do you see this headed, Alex? I mean, you've thought about this a lot. You're using it in ways you're you are well, you're not a programmer. You're very techie, obviously. Where do you see this heading?

00:26:36:06 - 00:26:57:03

Alex Kocman

You know, Jesus is parable of the wheat and tares and the kingdom of darkness in the kingdom of light are both growing at the same time in different ways, with different levels of influence and at different rates and side by side with each other. I think any time we look at a new technology, we have to see it through that biblical lens.

00:26:57:05 - 00:27:19:02

Alex Kocman

There has been a demonic agenda, at least as far back as the Tower of Babel, of what we would today look at and call transhumanism. This idea that you can transcend the limits of your mortality, of your biology. And we see that all around us today, efforts of global elites all the way down to the teenager that lives next door to you.

00:27:19:02 - 00:27:43:14

Alex Kocman

We think that we can transcend our limits. We think that we can transcend sexuality and the roles that have been assigned to us. And we're constantly looking for ways to, you name it, live forever merge with machines, right? These things are not just innocent pastimes. These are not just the dreams of certain types of technologists and scientists and inventors.

00:27:43:15 - 00:28:10:03

Alex Kocman

Underneath all of this is oftentimes a rank unbelief. It's the effort to build a tower that climbs up to the happens. If you want a really good book on that topic, I would recommend I would recommend to actually I'd recommend C.S. Lewis classic, the third and final book of his space trilogy, which is that hideous strength. And then there's a book of the same name dealing with the same concepts by a Melvin Tinker, That Hideous Strength.

00:28:10:03 - 00:28:44:19

Alex Kocman

And it deals with that same transhuman humanist spirit of babble. We've got to be aware that as we go out into the world, as we evangelize our neighbors, whether it's in Silicon Valley or whether it's anywhere else in the globe, that we find ourselves, that that we are dealing not just with gross, ugly, false religion that oppresses. We're also dealing with cleaned up demonic lies that look beautiful like the lie of the apple and the serpent in Eden, that it looks like it'll make you wise.

00:28:44:19 - 00:29:06:08

Alex Kocman

It looks like it'll help you to transcend. And yet what it brings about his death. But it's so appealing and it's so enticing. And it appeals to what we see as the goodness of human nature. But that's where the dividing line comes down to is, yeah, is human nature good or not? And of course, we know that human nature is not only frail but affected by sin.

00:29:06:12 - 00:29:29:07

Alex Kocman

So the other direction that I see happening at the same time is that even while evil goes from bad to worse in that way, that these things can be used for the advance of the gospel, I think they can make Christians more productive. We're busy people. And yet what, what, what time savers could we use to have more time for family, to have more time for our congregants in our churches, to have more time for prayer?

00:29:29:09 - 00:29:48:11

Alex Kocman

If we can put technology in service of those things, then praise God. That's a gift from God. If we can use it to advance the gospel through translation. Again. What would have happened in the history of the West if Luther had had this sort of anti-technology attitude that some have today towards the invention of the printing press?

00:29:48:14 - 00:30:12:18

Alex Kocman

The printing press is exactly what facilitated the spread of Protestantism. And so we've got to think today about how that can also serve to advance the gospel. I see both things happening, and I see evil getting worse in some ways. While Christians continue to treat this as an area where we can glorify God, where we can take dominion over creation, and where we can ultimately put these things in service of kingdom priorities.

00:30:12:19 - 00:30:35:03

Scott Dunford

You brought this up. You know, the fact is you we have a technological struggle at Babel where people are using technology to think that they can reach the heavens and basically replace God. We don't need God anymore. We're technologically advanced enough now to throw him off. It's the same battle that people are having today. But like I love the way you kind of sum that up is that it doesn't mean that technology is bad.

00:30:35:03 - 00:30:58:12

Scott Dunford

The same technology can be used to help us worship the Lord and can be done in His glory. We should be using our minds and our technology and our thinking to help glorify the Lord and spread the good news of Jesus. And I want maybe, maybe I'm often thinking this, but like you see creation beginning in a garden, but it ends in the new creation of the Garden City.

00:30:58:12 - 00:31:20:08

Scott Dunford

You know, there is an element of to use it, for lack of a better term, like development, technology there, you know, like, yeah, we see that God is doing something unique in, in, in, in organizing things in a different way in the new, in the new heaven, a new earth, and then an Eden. And so it's not that these things are necessarily bad, but how they're used takes so much wisdom.

00:31:20:10 - 00:31:42:14

Scott Dunford

So, you know, I wonder, you know, as here I'm getting older, I'm 47, I'm younger in some circles, but I'm definitely older than you. And I feel older and older and older with each passing year and the next generation is a middle aged and becoming older than that. I'm a grandfather. How do I how do I help shepherd the young ones that are coming in to not just be so negative?

00:31:42:14 - 00:31:57:22

Scott Dunford

Hey, shut that off. Quit using it. But how? How would you advise me, Alex, as a pastor, as a churchman, as a missions influencer to encourage a younger generation to think about how they use technology? What would you say? And maybe these final kind of thoughts?

00:31:57:22 - 00:32:12:19

Alex Kocman

Well, first of all, as you describe yourself, getting older, I feel like the words of Bilbo Baggins apply here. I don't know half of you as well, a half as well as I should like. And I like less than half of you as well as you deserve. That's for some reason, what's coming to mind for me.

00:32:12:21 - 00:32:15:14

Scott Dunford

Because it was celebrating is aged birthday, right?

00:32:15:14 - 00:32:55:04

Alex Kocman

Right. On his 71st birthday. Exactly. So you know, you're getting there in human years. That's about 47. Yes. My thought is this, Scott, and I want to hear how you're dealing with this with your children as well. And you're young adults. Children. But number one is, touch grass. Christians have a unique edge up here that we don't have the option of getting sucked into a multiverse because we serve the God who is writing the plot line of every single ant crawling on the surface of the earth who breathed into existence.

00:32:55:04 - 00:33:22:07

Alex Kocman

Every star who is sovereign over every crashing wave, right? That we have something so much better. And we've got to be aware of the allure of these things. And we have to realize it's inevitable and people will be drawn into it. But we cannot make that same mistake ourselves, really, in a world where because of many factors, including technology addiction, you see every nation, okay, this is a missions podcast, right?

00:33:22:07 - 00:33:49:10

Alex Kocman

Every nation you see declining birth rates. You see birth rates that are that are no longer hitting replacement levels in a population. The Christian worldview, the earthiness of the Christian worldview has an answer here that marriage is godly, that producing children is glorious, that God can be known in part through his natural revelation that actually he not only has a spoken word, but a spoken world, right?

00:33:49:10 - 00:34:14:07

Alex Kocman

These are Christian insights. These are not insights that people proposing that we live in a metaverse and that our entire life be dominated by artificial intelligence and just artifice in general. They don't they don't have that. We have something that they don't we can't trade them. At the same time, I think we need to be nimble and adapt and be aware of when we when we can employ these things and do that wisely.

00:34:14:13 - 00:34:41:20

Alex Kocman

I think we can do it to be more efficient in ministry. I think we can do it to be more efficient administratively in our costs in some areas. I think that there's a number of potential applications and as we're dealing with young people, I think the worst thing that we can do is dismiss it outright. I think that that's not doing justice to really how God is at work in in human development and in in the course of history.

00:34:42:01 - 00:35:01:13

Scott Dunford

Yeah. So, I mean, I think going along with that is teaching young people about the dangers and the positives of these technologies. Those who have gifts in technology encourage them to develop them and to use them in a good way. But that also then means that we've got to do a good job on the front end, disabling them and not just disabling people.

00:35:01:13 - 00:35:25:07

Scott Dunford

Like, you know, here's a little eight-week booklet we're going to go through. But helping them think biblically, thinking through philosophy from a biblical perspective, really develop a robust life of the mind and heart so that when they're coming to these questions or thinking about them deeply, I think it's so that the questions that are out there are huge and yet the word of God has the answers to these questions.

00:35:25:07 - 00:35:49:04

Scott Dunford

There's also, you know, 2000 years of Christian thinking that they can guide us as we go down these paths. But so much of evangelical Christianity today has been so watered down and so late and so focused on just really temporal kind of questions that our young people and our middle-aged people are just not very equipped to deal with the complexity of what's coming at them.

00:35:49:05 - 00:36:09:17

Scott Dunford

So I think that goes along with it to train our young people in how to think. Well, I mean, I think we need an hour. We need another RC sprawl, you know, to teach us again, like how to incorporate good thinking into our theology. I'm sitting here in the Silicon Valley and seeing the pressures on the church.

00:36:09:17 - 00:36:37:12

Scott Dunford

And what what's happening here is what every church in America is probably eventually going to have to face, you know, and that is the questions are coming at us hot and fast, you know, about sexuality, about different religions. And the nature of truth and righteousness and goodness. And yet in the middle of like in we're seeing here society breaking down in some ways, like some pretty obvious ways, not quite as bad as maybe you see on the news, but there are some definitely breaking points.

00:36:37:14 - 00:36:59:08

Scott Dunford

But yet I'm also seeing some cool things happening. You know, you mentioned people coming to Christ. I've seen two young men come to Christ, one from a Hindu background and one from a very nominal Roman Catholic background because of videos they started watching on and on YouTube or TikTok. And I was I just was on the campus. We have a college campus right across the street from our church.

00:36:59:10 - 00:37:06:02

Scott Dunford

Do you want to come and join us in the ministry? We need young people to come and help us here. But we walked across the street.

00:37:06:04 - 00:37:08:15

Alex Kocman

Scott, always mobilizing. That's right.

00:37:08:17 - 00:37:31:11

Scott Dunford

We need help. And don't flee to places with lots of churches. Come to places like here that need the gospel. And, you know, we just we walked up to students and said, hey, we're here to talk about spiritual things. Are you interested in talking? And that was so scared to use some of these conversations, but we were shocked how many students are like, I mean, I don't know why I was shocked, but like, yeah, we'd love to talk about that.

00:37:31:13 - 00:37:51:01

Scott Dunford

And we sat and talked for about half an hour, you know, with two different young men last week. They just had lots of questions about incarnate reincarnation and the Bible and Christianity and community and just, you know, just, you know, seeing the brokenness of our society and wondering if there's answers. And neither those young men came to Christ that day.

00:37:51:01 - 00:38:10:03

Scott Dunford

But I believe it was the beginning of a conversation. And so, I'm also encouraged that in this breakdown we're seeing people are realizing that it's broken and needing answers, and we should be the ones standing up and saying, Here's the way it is. Here's how to find the answers. And technology could be one of those ways, because that is where those people are.

00:38:10:07 - 00:38:17:12

Scott Dunford

You know, so many young people are living on their phones, on their game, their gaming consoles, on their computers.

00:38:17:12 - 00:38:18:17

Alex Kocman

They're on their almost all day.

00:38:18:17 - 00:38:21:13

Scott Dunford

Almost, said Gameboys. I almost did.

00:38:21:15 - 00:38:24:15

Alex Kocman

The good thing. I didn't draw attention to it for all of our listeners.

00:38:24:21 - 00:38:26:20

Scott Dunford

Yeah, yeah. Thank you. Thank you for sparing me that.

00:38:26:20 - 00:38:30:08

Alex Kocman

We're smooth. That's all we do here is we're just super slick. Perfect. Yeah.

00:38:30:08 - 00:38:32:07

Scott Dunford

And we never embarrass each other. That's great.

00:38:32:13 - 00:38:34:20

Alex Kocman

No. Maybe I could edit this podcast.

00:38:34:21 - 00:38:37:06

Scott Dunford

Well, how do we know it's not being edited by A.I.

00:38:37:08 - 00:39:01:10

Alex Kocman

I guess we don't actually. Scott isn't even here. He's just an air avatar. And since he's not real and is just a construct, I'll give myself the last word, which is, which is just that. Let's also get practical for believers, for believers who are thinking like, that's great big picture type stuff. I am teaching theology; I listen to the Missions podcast.

00:39:01:11 - 00:39:21:01

Alex Kocman

I'm based in this other country where there aren't as many theological voices. And so, we're training pastors or we have young Bible college students. We'll just know that you will have students using these tools you need to get in front of that. You need to have policy not to completely eliminate it, but to allow it to be used ethically.

00:39:21:03 - 00:39:48:19

Alex Kocman

So, can it be a research aid that gets fact checked? Can it be a proofreading aid but not developing original content, not replacing the research process, the writing process? We're not plagiarizing anything but attempting to exclude it completely from your students' lives. Just taking that one instance there, well, you're going to have something like the Barbra Streisand effect, right?

00:39:48:19 - 00:40:13:02

Alex Kocman

You're going to have people are more interested in it now because you said that they're not allowed to touch it. With that, we need to think about the Christian ethical implications of this. We need good Christian theology, not just in the U.S., but across all the nations. Good theology on what are the ethical and the immoral uses of these types of technologies.

00:40:13:04 - 00:40:44:09

Alex Kocman

We need a theology of beauty. I'm going to channel a friend of mine who's here in the office here. We need a theology of beauty. We need to look at passages like how the spirit is. It works through someone like Bezalel in the Old Testament and designing the beauty, the craftsmanship, the intricacies of the tabernacle, and think, okay, human craftsmanship is something that the Spirit of God is even involved in, not just evangelism, but also in human and cultural products of beauty that are used towards godly purposes.

00:40:44:09 - 00:41:09:15

Alex Kocman

And so, what does that mean? And maybe we value those creative endeavors that humans undertake. Maybe we value that more. Now, since the market is flooded with so many cheap alternatives, you know, if the market's inflated. But because of that, we want the real thing even more. And as we're making disciples of the nations and going about that, we offer something that Sam Altman and Mark Zuckerberg.

00:41:09:16 - 00:41:29:03

Alex Kocman

None of these people can offer what it truly means to be human. And yet we follow the one who knows what it is to be truly human, because he became truly human. And that's the message that we spread with the world. With the world. And Scott, I did say that I'd give myself the last word, but you're not a construct.

00:41:29:05 - 00:41:34:09

Alex Kocman

You're a flesh and blood person. So, I'll let you get the last word, actually, and then I'll take a cell.

00:41:34:11 - 00:41:54:13

Scott Dunford

I don't know how I can improve on that. I appreciate everything you said, and I'm thankful for guys like you who are techies and many others that I know. Even in our churches here, out here in the Bay Area, there's so many guys that work for Facebook and ladies that work for Facebook and and Google. And they're thinking deeply about how to, you know, how to use technology for the glory of God.

00:41:54:15 - 00:42:14:07

Scott Dunford

And let's just pray that that number increases. Maybe that's an area that someone's listening as they I could never be a missionary because they're thinking about preaching and teaching, but maybe they've got gifts in technology. You know, I know we could use a few people like that, you know, not just at ABWE, but probably any mission agency this listening would say, you know what?

00:42:14:07 - 00:42:29:14

Scott Dunford

If we had a few more people that we're like gifted programmers and gifted in technology and would love to develop that like gave your life to serve Jesus using the gifts that God's given you. And I would love to see how that gets, how that continues to get fleshed out in the days ahead.

00:42:29:19 - 00:42:51:16

Alex Kocman

Amen. Couldn't agree more. And we do want to hear from you, whether you're a coder or a technologist or not. If you're just someone who's tinkering around or maybe you've just barely figured out this thing called email that Scott opened the show in talking about, we'd still love to get a note from you. You can email Scott Admissions podcast Scum or Alex Admissions podcast dot com to get in touch with us.

00:42:51:18 - 00:43:10:07

Alex Kocman

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00:43:10:09 - 00:43:14:07

Alex Kocman

Until next week, go make disciples of all nations and we'll see you then.