



Theme: Authentic FAith in a World of AI
“Don’t Check Your Brain at the Screen”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, February 7-8, 2026, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

² Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. – Romans 12:2

VIDEO Sermon Intro

SLIDE “Don’t Check Your Brain at the Screen”

I keep getting these wonderful cartoons and all kinds of information about artificial intelligence as we continue in this series of sermons from all of you. I thought I'd share a couple of my favorites that connect with what we're going to talk about today. The first is this cartoon That seems appropriate for us who live in Durango and often find ourselves out hiking in the woods and sometimes running across critters. It's a man with his camera who comes upon a bear and a deer sitting in their rocking chairs and they simply say to him, "You'll have to go way deeper into the woods to find the non-AI generated animals."

GRAPHIC AI Forest Animals Cartoon

This weekend we hosted a Gottman marriage seminar and so this one seemed appropriate that was sent by one of you where the man is glued to the screen and makes this comment, “There are deep fakes of me online!”

His wife or girlfriend responds, “Well, they can't be that deep, then!”

GRAPHIC Deep Fake Relationship Cartoon

This is a great example of one of the four horsemen of communication, which are the four behaviors that can destroy any relationship. This is a great example of contempt which is about being critical in a way that we don't take the other person seriously or honor what they are saying. The truth is that this cartoon points to the title of this sermon which is a challenge that we know many people face in today's world. We often get glued to our screens and sometimes we fail to pull up our head and pay attention to what it is that is grabbing our attention.

We have recognized in this series that the **world is changing rapidly**. What is clear, as I have been doing research and reading and listening for the past few months, is that **artificial intelligence is here to stay** and it is **going to dominate the world** in terms of our conversations over the next few years. I don't say this to **scare anyone** but simply to remind us of how fast the world is changing and how important it is for us as people of faith **not to bury our head in the sand** but instead ask what it means to be faithful during times of rapid change. This is why we're asking this basic question as part of this series of sermons.

SLIDE How can we have authentic faith in a world of artificial intelligence?

I want to remind us of a few things we've talked about already in

this series. We began with an overview, and we recognized that we don't need to live in fear because God has already **won the victory through Jesus Christ and his work on the cross**. Yes, there are challenges that we must face and deal with when it comes to any new technology, but we believe as followers of **Jesus that he has overcome anything any technological advance will throw at us**, including suffering, pain, and even death. That's why last week our focus was on **how to find peace** in a world where it feels anxiety and fear are overwhelming us. This has been an issue for every generation and it's important for us to stay grounded in our faith. **We don't have to be afraid because God is with us.**

God gives us freedom to CHOOSE how to respond. While we can't choose everything that is happening in the world, we can choose how to respond. If we care about our **kids or grandkids or the next generation**, then we need to be aware of what is happening in our world to the best of our ability. Then we must learn **how to respond and encourage others** in that response. That's why in these series we are talking about these things that we can do as people of faith as we navigate this current world that feels anxious and out of control.

How do we live in an AI world? (fly in)

- **Read the Bible more and screens less.**
- **Make relationship with God and others primary, using AI to supplement.**
- **Seek wisdom from Scripture, God's Spirit, and godly companions.**
- **Patiently wait on God rather than seek quick results generated by AI.**

SLIDE Invite God to help us discern truth from lies.

I realized that many of us might find it challenging to keep talking about this idea of artificial intelligence but my conversation this week

with Mario C. Martinez who is Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Fort Lewis College and is helping lead FLC into the world of AI was helpful. I wanted you to hear a few things that he shared and even though we couldn't do a video I did take a picture of us.

GRAPHIC Jeff and Mario Martinez

Mario told me that, *"In Fall 2023, I assembled about 16 people across campus to start talking about AI and discuss topics we needed to think about in planning for an AI world. That has continued to take shape with me leading FLC's planning and action around AI. The key to any organization, group, community, or even individual is to ask: WHY? Why should we care about AI? Why should we explore it?"*

"Stewardship over FLC resources, to manage operations in the most effective way possible and prepare workforce ready students (employers across domains now expect students to bring AI literacy and skills.)"

SLIDE "You will not lose your job to AI, but you will lose it to someone who uses AI." –NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang

With that, I decided I better get to work, so I took our photo and used an AI generator to make us look better!

GRAPHIC Jeff and Mario Martinez

GRAPHIC Jeff and Mario Digital

GRAPHIC Jeff and Mario Game Style

The best part was it gave me better hair and took out my wrinkles! To this end, Mario told me he has...

"...worked hard to develop cross functional groups to address AI resource support, policy, and exploration. What I did find two years ago, however, was that community partners were most eager to work with me (as opposed to faculty and students), so

that is where I started. Increasingly, however, administrative and academic corners of our campus are serving as “early adopters” in the AI space, with support from my office.”

Then he said this...

“Our appetite for learning and growing is who we are. We will not stop AI advancement and integration into every aspect of our society—including churches, universities, and households...

...that said, those you love, those institutions and organizations you affiliate with—should have a choice about our engagement. This will vary across societies and the world. One of my sons is currently in China. AI—and cameras—are everywhere. The young are learning about AI, and it is becoming part of the cultural fabric. Around the world, there is variation, but the integration in society is on a continuum—but I would want everyone to know the momentum is there.”

“I would rather proactively engage with technology, convene people, learn about it, and engage in difficult, sometimes easy, but always energetic conversations about it.”

I thought you might enjoy seeing one of the things the AI department at FLC produced recently. They did one of these videos for us in Durango and they showed us an early prototype at the conference they put on in mid-December of last year, but they were not quite ready to launch it yet so instead they sent me this one they did for Telluride.

VIDEO Marcus AI Video from FLC for Telluride

Everything in that video was generated by artificial intelligence, including the character, Marcus. Part of my conversation with Doctor Martinez was around both the benefits and the risks associated with artificial intelligence, and he recognized like most of us that there are bad actors and that we need to be thoughtful and aware as we are

using artificial intelligence. This was one of the articles that should have been my inbox this week and it was a bit disturbing and frightening to know that now artificial intelligence scammers are coming for pastors and they are using our likeness and our voices to convince people to give money and to say things that they would never say.

GRAPHIC Article AI Deepfake Scammers hitting Churches

It only took me a few minutes to make this video just for you.

VIDEO Jeff on Cats and Dogs

SLIDE Don't check your brain at the screen!

All I needed was an image of myself and a recording of my voice which is easily found on our website with my sermons. Today's message is very simple, and it's based on something that I've said to you often as your pastor about being a part of this church community. We want this to be a safe place to ask questions, and we want you to not check your brain at the door. I remind our students going out into the world that if they ever get into a place where they are told they can't ask questions they should leave in a hurry. The truth is that God wired us and designed us to ask questions and that is part of how we determine what faith means for us and how we claim faith in a God who made us to love us. This was important to John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist faith tradition. Here is how they summed up what faith is all about and something that I say to you often as your pastor.

SLIDE A Faith where Head and Heart go Hand in Hand

Our faith is one where the head and the heart are meant to go hand in hand. **We use our intellect**, and we remember that we are meant to experience faith with our hearts, and we are meant to live out our faith with our hands. One of the things I tell you often is your pastor is to **not check your brain at the door** but use it as you wrestle with faith. **Your faith must be your own** and you can't have mine or the

person sitting next to you. We only develop a deep and meaningful faith that is compelling and useful in our lives if we are **willing to ask the hard questions**. Many have left the religious faith of their childhood because they we're **not allowed to bring their brain** into the equation, and what I hope we might do today is see that it is essential to use our head AND our heart AND our hands for a deep and meaningful experience of faith.

Many are leaving faith and churches because of misinformation and fake images and videos. I would suggest **that it has caused much of our division in today's world**, as we get stuck in algorithms that only give us certain information and we fail to question what is being sent to us by that algorithm. Our world becomes small and we fail to live into the simplest commandments given to us by Jesus. Those great commandments quote Moses and the Hebrew Bible of his upbringing.

BIBLE

³⁷ Jesus replied, “**You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.**” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

SLIDE **DIANOIA** = “through the mind” or “thinking things through”

The Greek word is translated literally as, “through the mind,” or “thinking things through.” Some Greek dictionaries refer to this as, “critical thinking.” We are meant to **love God with our critical thinking**, engaging our brain in the act of pursuing faith when it comes to understanding the world in which we live, God, the Bible, our spirituality and spiritual experiences. We love God with our mind, so we **wrestle with the meaning of life and artificial intelligence**, and we don't simply set it aside because when we are tempted to simply leave faith behind because we are **never meant to separate our heart, soul, and mind, from the faith experience**.

I have this theory that one of the reasons many of our **institutions**

are struggling is because we have separated ourselves and these critical parts of who we are from each other. The word heart in this text is also about our body, and the word soul is about our experience of spirituality, and our mind is about thinking. We go to the **doctor for our body**. We go to the **pastor or to some religious institution for our soul**. We go to **school or now to the Internet for our mind**. The way these 3 words are used by Jesus in the Greek, however, is not actually separating them but bringing them together. I would suggest that all our institutions will continue to struggle until we can **bring together** our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I came across this great greeting card the other day.

GRAPHIC A Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Waste

“A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” Then in small letters, “**Oh well. What’s done is done.**” God gave us a brain and it’s one of the most amazing gifts we have been given. Critical thinking is critical to our faith, and that includes **knowledge, libraries, books, science, psychology, biology, mathematics, and even artificial intelligence**. These are not enemies of faith, but they are tools which can lead to a greater and deeper faith. **Faith often begins by asking questions** like, “Is there a deeper meaning to life? **Is there a God?** Is there something greater than we are that beckons us and gives us a deeper purpose?”

What I find powerful about following **Jesus is that he asked questions** and encouraged us to wrestle with our faith. When someone asked him what they must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said, “Well, what do you think?” When they answered with the greatest commandments, loving God and loving their neighbor, this person asked, “**Well, who is my neighbor?**” Jesus then tells them the story of the Good Samaritan and asks, “Now, who do you think was the neighbor?” And when his disciples were struggling with the identity of Jesus, he asked, “**Now, who do YOU say that I am?**”

While it’s important to engage our brain, the opposite is true as

well. **If we have the intellect or artificial intelligence without theology or morality**, or a sense of values and purpose, and without an understanding that there is a reason for our existence, **we don't have the whole picture** of what we are made for. This is especially true in this time in our history when we're wrestling with things like **artificial intelligence and cloning** and many other areas which are not covered directly in the Bible and cannot be found in the table of contents. I love the way Albert Einstein put this, who was a man of deep thought and deep faith.

GRAPHIC The Intuitive and Rational Mind - Albert Einstein

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift, and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift."

We need both the intuitive mind and the rational mind, the heart, soul, and mind. **Jesus tells us to love God with all of ourselves**, because that is how we truly experience faith that is deep and compelling and meaningful. I think it's important to remember that **God is not offended by our doubts or our questions**. God can handle it! I think God expects it and understands that part of being human is asking questions. Let's not forget that we believe **God created us this way**.

SLIDE If we are going to question God, we should be more than willing to question what we read on our phones or computer screens!

The truth is that none of us will ever fully figure out God and the nature of the universe, as much as we would like to. I have discovered for myself that when **I think I have God figured out, my God is too small**. The more I think I know, the less I find out I know! We find in the Bible that the great people of faith whose stories we find throughout the scriptures had doubts.

We are meant to engage our minds when it comes to our faith. This is **especially important when it comes to our faith and things like**

politics as we move closer and closer to the election this fall. I was listening to this week to one of the podcasts I find really helpful and the woman being interviewed talked about some of the people online who are paid upwards of **\$50 million by a select group of billionaires** to flood the Internet and social media with hate speech that gets people riled up and contains not only falsehoods but outright lies about candidates they don't want to see elected. This is true on both sides of the political spectrum, and it is causing our consciousness to change because we are spending so much time listening to people sharing things that just aren't true. **Part of using our mind is recognizing what is true** and not allowing ourselves to be swayed by hate.

We may not realize it but **hate speech has become big business** because it causes the **dopamine in your brain** to react and then you want another hit. **It's like an addiction** and the only way to combat that is to **use our minds to make good decisions about what we watch**. One of the things I believe is that our **brains were not made to consume as much information** as we are trying to consume these days. We were never wired to take in all the information that we are trying to take in because in essence, I think **we are trying to be God**. Remember that the first story in the Bible is about two people who are sucked in to eating fruit from the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. They wanted everything, and sometimes we do as well, and that means we need to think about what we are consuming and putting into our brains.

The only way this kind of thing changes is if we become thoughtful Christians who ask difficult questions and who don't get carried away by the emotional response of our faith. My hope, especially **during this political season, is that we would be thinking people** who are willing to challenge what we hear and ask if it aligns with the **teachings of Jesus and the Kingdom** that he preached. Does this line up with the life, teaching, death, sacrifice, resurrection of Jesus? Does this sound like the teaching of the apostle Paul or the

prophets in the Hebrew Bible? **Does it sound like the God whose nature is love? Does this sound like Jesus and the Kingdom he preached?**

My hope is that we are thinking people who **ask these critical questions** and don't just simply go along because we get that hit of dopamine in our brain and it juices us to be able to feel good for the moment, but in the end, **we sacrifice being witnesses and faithful followers of Jesus.**

We must be willing to engage our brains and use critical thinking. We love God with our mind by asking questions and being discerning people who don't just respond but take a moment to ask if this lines up with the person of Jesus that I have come to know and love and follow. What I know is something that I talked to you about several weeks ago, that **when we mix politics and religion, religion always loses**, and we sacrifice our witness as followers of Jesus. Jesus did not come to be a footnote to any political ideology. **Jesus did not come to take sides, but he came to take over**, in our hearts so that we might live differently. **Whether we are on the left or the right or in the middle, we must be discerning and critical thinkers.** We are followers of Jesus first, a king who came to proclaim a different kind of Kingdom.

Another area where this is so important for us to use our brain and our minds is when it comes to the overwhelming amount of **conspiracy theories that we find online**, along with the false information that shows up repeatedly. We find we are flooded with these If we spend too much time on the interweb. If we are going to spend time looking at things on the Internet, and then we are going to share a link to anything, we must be **willing to do our due diligence**. The reason I'm mentioning this in a sermon is because the **Public Religion Research Institute** found this in their latest polling and research project released last month.

SLIDE *Christians were twice as likely to believe conspiracy*

theories spread on social media than religiously unaffiliated people.

That is sad and it is a reminder of what happens when we separate religion and knowledge, the use of our minds to think critically. **We end up with a faith that believes almost anything** if we are unwilling to be critical and thoughtful. We must be better than this and be willing to ask tough questions about both our faith and things that we read online. Loving God with our mind means that **we are not meant to accept everything that we read** or see online or anywhere else. When we spread conspiracy theories or news that is not accurate, we also are **violating the 9th commandment.**

BIBLE *You must not bear false witness...* -Exodus 20:16a

VIDEO Kids AI

Sometimes bearing false witness can be fun and playful like these kids who are made the star of the wedding or the beach, or even a kid's avatar, or kids reminding us we used to have snow! But sometimes they are more serious and hurtful.

GRAPHIC AI Kiss Video Generator

I came across this interesting AI tool which will take pictures of two people and make it into a video of them kissing. Every one of these tools has a disclaimer which tells us to **use AI likenesses responsibly**, but you and I both know that people will not always do that. One person posted online a video using this kind of tool and he was sued by the woman who happened to be married to someone else. This is bearing false witness and can easily cause all kinds of damage. We also see this happening on a societal level and many of us violate this commandment unwittingly when we pass on things that we read on our screen that we haven't checked and that is inaccurate or just plain untrue.

We are not to share anything that we don't know is true. The

challenge for us is that we have this thing called the **amygdala** in the middle of our brain and it's designed to protect us and warn us when there is danger. It is what **triggers our fight or flight reflex**. While the amygdala might send off an initial warning, we are then meant to **use our higher brain functioning to ask if this threat is real**. We are meant to analyze and use critical thinking. If we don't, we find ourselves being afraid all the time. **Politicians, preachers, and many people online are masters at triggering the amygdala** because it's what **generates clicks and likes and makes them money**. We have many who are masters at using fear to lead us to act in ways that are destructive.

MIT in their technology review in 2020 found this disturbing fact:

In 2019, in the run up to the election in 2020, 19 of the top 20 Christian Facebook pages were run by Eastern European troll farms.

Those who have no faith in God whatsoever have no problem with trying to appeal to people's faith and hooking them with fearful website when we are not willing to engage our critical thinking skills.

Christianity Today did a report in 2017 looking back at the 2016 election and found this.

Russian operatives created a popular Facebook page to target conservative Christians with Jesus filled memes as part of a broad social media campaign to sow dissension among Americans during the 2016 election.

It's disappointing and sad that the **Russians knew to target Christians** in their attempt to stir people up and divide us one from another, creating fear. We who follow Jesus are meant to live differently. The scriptures teach us many times about how we are meant to deal with fear that creeps up inside of us. The apostle Paul tells his protege **Timothy not to get caught up in fear** but instead to use his mind to be thoughtful and practice self-control when he writes these words in 2 Timothy 1:7.

BIBLE

⁷ **For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.**

We want to be **lifelong learners who continue to grow** and become like **Jesus, who was a learned rabbi** and studied the scriptures. We encourage us to read our Bible using the **Meditation Moments** each week. We hope you will find a group where you can study together and ask questions. We ask **every group to be open to questions** because we all have them, and we need a safe place to ask them. We want to be a Church of critical thinkers who engage our minds and wrestle with our faith so that we can then live it in the world.

SLIDE Media Hygiene and Cleansing

I want to invite you to **do 2 things** this week as we think about this idea of bringing our head and our hearts together. One of them is to do a **media hygiene, cleansing** what we look at and consume so that we are taking in what is good. I also found numerous research projects which found to be true that if we read more than we watch, it helps settle our brain and keeps us from being anxious.

SLIDE Reading more than watching

Our brains were not meant to take in all the images of destruction of a hurricane or the ravages of war on a constant basis. We are much better off if we read more than we watch because we can both learn more and take it in at a pace which doesn't emotionally wreck our brains. **There's nothing wrong with watching SOME news**, but I've said to you before that if we are watching more news than we are reading our Bible, we are all in lots of trouble. The truth is that **most news that we watch is commentary**, as is much of what we read on social media. Instead, find new places and new sources from all sides of the political spectrum and be well read so we can be well informed.

SLIDE <https://adfontesmedia.com/>

GRAPHIC Adfontes Interactive Media Bias Chart

SLIDE www.snopes.com

I have found this website helpful and shared it with you before, which is as non-biased as they come. They have reviewers from the left, right and middle, who give a sense of which way the media we are consuming leans AND the accuracy of that information, with the least accurate (often lies) at the bottom, to the most accurate and factual at the top. I want to challenge us to be learned people who use our minds as we consume information AND before we send it out to anyone.

I also encourage you to use something like this website which is called Snopes. I was going to show you an image of this but everything on there was political and I didn't want to get you all worked up but I do find it a helpful website for finding out if something is true or false. Please, I beg you, before you like anything or post anything on your social media, use your brain and do a little research period I would even suggest that **if we are not willing to do the research, then we are not responsible enough to be on social media** and we should just get off of everything.

The second thing I would encourage us to do is to remember these words from Paul in Romans 12. This contains our memory verse for the week AND an important reminder that we are ONE body, and we need all the parts...the mind and the heart. Let's say this together out loud.

BIBLE

² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

BIBLE

³ Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. ⁴ Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵ so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

We invite God to change our heart and mind. We don't think we are better than others and we recognize we may be wrong. We commit to be followers of Jesus who bring together the mind and the heart so we might love God, love others, and love ourselves well. Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

Oh God, help us to have a desire to go deeper in our faith, to understand more clearly truth that we find in you. May we not be threatened by knowledge, questions, skepticism, books, learning, science, psychology, history, or higher education. Instead, help us to see all these as tools to help us better understand the truth. Help us be discerning and not be people who are gullible, who easily believe whatever we see on our computer screen; who allow our political or personal biases to use our faith, but instead to allow our faith to shape how we see the world and other people.

God, help us to be a place that loves and welcomes those who are wrestling with their faith and seeking a new understanding, so that in our lives people might see an authentic Christianity where the head and the heart can go hand in hand. In Jesus name. Amen.

February 6-7 Order

1. Jenny welcomes people.
2. Song – “A Thousand Hallelujahs”
3. Jeff welcomes and shares:
 - A. QR Code
 - B. Communion is Open to All
 - C. Invites people to greet each other.
4. Sermon Video Intro
5. Sermon
6. Communion Prayer
7. Communion
8. Song – “New Wine”
9. Song – “Same God”
10. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
11. Care Ministers
12. Offering – GRIEF workshops
13. Med Moments
14. The Bridge
15. Closing Prayer