

August 6, 2023

The View

"Sirs, we wish to see Jesus." – John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly "headquarters." The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.

We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.

Mark Your Calendars

Bible Exhibit, with Mike Wilson, October 21, 2023

Invite your friends and relatives.

Schedule

The Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: "Jesus at work in the Gospels."

Young Adult Class (room 12): "Jesus: making the best use of the time." Ephesians 5:15-17

Room 15/16: "Building a Great Marriage"

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today

David Posey: "Slaves of Christ"

Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

"Praying the Psalms" (Auditorium)

HS/College Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey's home

Middle school class: monthly (contact David Sanderson (david.r.sanderson@intel.com)

or Seth Reagan (sethreagan@gmail.com)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes: 5th grade and lower

6th grade and up, auditorium: Praising God in Song

Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

Your Child & AI

CHRISTIANS SHOULD HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES — especially when it comes to training up our children.

I Chronicles 12:32 says,

“the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command.”

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome,

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light”
(Romans 13:11-12).

One of the things we should be informed on is ChatGPT, and chat bot AI. While those words may seem like a foreign language to many of you, I suspect your children are not only familiar with ChatGPT, most have either already played with it or have downloaded the App. Simply put, ChatGPT is a conversational chatbot by OpenAI that can produce text, based on any question or request. If that sentence also sounded like a foreign language allow me to try and put it into even simpler terms: The internet has a feature of programmed artificial intelligence that can write things for you and answer questions.

For instance, need a term paper on Johann Sebastian Bach and his music? Not only can ChatGPT easily handle the job, you can even tell it things like how long you want the paper (i.e., 500 words) or what grade level you would like it written in (i.e., 7th grade). [I actually asked for an essay on the life of Johann Sebastian Bach in 500 words, which it gave me. I then asked for it from a 5th grader — and it changed the wording to match words commonly used by 5th graders.]

Many people are already using ChatGPT technology to assist them in writing emails and papers. Hopefully parents are already realizing one “issue” with this new technology. Suddenly essays, term papers, and research papers can be done in the blink of an eye with little to no effort from the student. Using ChatGPT means we did not actually do the work ourselves. So, one area we are going to have to talk to our children about is the ethics of not doing an assignment — but rather, allowing a computer to do it for us.

But what about the darker side of ChatGPT? So this technology is conversational. Many of our young people are having fun asking it all kinds of crazy questions. But some of those questions have eternal consequences. For instance, I have had a couple of young people share questions they have asked ChatGPT about things like evolution and God. The answers these young people received was definitely not from a Biblical worldview. In both cases the chat bot was sowing seeds of doubt. (In one case the young person was giving serious consideration to changing their faith based on the responses he received.) I decided to investigate firsthand, so I asked ChatGPT “Is there a God?” Here was the response I received:

“From a religious standpoint, many faith traditions assert the existence of a higher power or divine being(s) that governs the universe and plays a role in human

affairs. These beliefs are often based on sacred texts, personal experiences, and faith. On the other hand, some individuals hold an atheistic or agnostic viewpoint, asserting that there is no evidence or convincing arguments for the existence of God. They may rely on scientific explanations, empirical evidence, and philosophical reasoning to support their position.”

Notice the first paragraph uses words like “beliefs” and “experiences.” The second paragraph, talking about atheism, uses words like “evidence,” “scientific explanations,” “empirical evidence” and “philosophical reasoning.” It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out which direction this bot leans.

I explained to both young men that the way these chat bots work is by breaking down language inputs, such as sentences or paragraphs, into smaller components and analyzing their meanings and then answering using data collected from the internet and machine learning — much of which was coming from an atheistic worldview. These bots rely on data input — and much of the data it combs through is secular and godless.

My fears were confirmed when I asked deeper, more philosophical questions such as, “Is Jesus the only way to heaven?” I asked questions about Christianity, the institution of marriage and family, etc. It became obvious very quickly that this bot is strongly advocating diversity, inclusion, and worldviews that are in direct conflict with the Bible.

I only spent a short amount of time with this chat bot, and yet, I was inundated with a tsunami of statements that would cause many young people to question their faith. Some of it very subtle and seemingly harmless. Some of it downright antithetical to God’s Word. We should not be surprised, as much of the web and the data out there were uploaded from individuals who do not hold to New Testament Christianity.

All of this comes at the same time news agencies are reporting a massive rise on AI-generated images of pornography, child porn, and child sexual abuse. Yes, you read that correctly. They are using similar technology to generate pornographic images — including child porn. Parents, it is critically important that take the role of protecting our children extremely seriously — especially in this cyber world. Make sure you know what your children are doing online. And if you don’t have filters on your devices please consider getting them!

Let me encourage parents to have a serious conversation with your children. Discuss what ethics are and where we derive our ethical standard from. Talk to them about the broad and narrow way, and which road has more people on it — and then contrast that with the data on the internet. Talk to them about why Paul wrote Philippians 4:8 and what that means in regard to the internet. Encourage them if they have Bible questions or questions about life to come and ask you first. And finally, set some boundaries on this new technology. Be proactive instead of reactive. Help them navigate through this crazy new technology.

— Brad Harrub, FOCUS PRESS, July, 2023

Jeremy's Egg

This story may be true or it may be apocryphal but it has a dramatic ending...

Jeremy was born with a twisted body, a slow mind and a chronic, terminal illness that had been slowly killing him all his young life. Still, his parents had tried to give him as normal a life as possible and had sent him to a "faith-based" elementary school. At the age of 12, Jeremy was only in second grade, seemingly unable to learn. His teacher, Miss Miller, often became exasperated with him. He would squirm in his seat, drool and make grunting noises. At other times, he spoke clearly and distinctly, as if a spot of light had penetrated the darkness of his brain. Most of the time, however, Jeremy irritated his teacher.

One day, she called his parents and asked them to come to the school for a consultation. As the Jeremy's parents sat quietly in the empty classroom, Miss Miller said to them, "Jeremy really belongs in a special school. It isn't fair to him to be with younger children who don't have learning problems — there is a five year gap between his age and that of the other students!"

Jeremy's mom cried softly into a tissue while her husband spoke. "Miss Miller," he said, "there is no school of that kind nearby. It would be a terrible shock for Jeremy if we had to take him out of this school. We know he really likes it here." Miss Miller sat for a long time after they left, staring at the snow outside the window. Its coldness seemed to seep into her soul. She wanted to sympathize with the parents. After all, their only child had a terminal illness. But it wasn't fair to keep him in her class. She had 18 other youngsters to teach and Jeremy was a distraction. Furthermore, he would never learn to read or write. Why waste any more time trying?

As she pondered the situation, guilt washed over her. "Oh God," she prayed aloud, "here I am complaining when my problems are nothing compared with that poor family! Please help me to be more patient with Jeremy."

From that day on, she tried hard to ignore Jeremy's noises and his blank stares. Then one day he limped to her desk, dragging his bad leg behind him. "I love you, Miss Miller," he exclaimed, loudly enough for the whole class to hear. The other children snickered, and Doris' face turned red. She stammered, "Wh-Why, that's very nice, Jeremy. Now please take your seat."

Spring came, and the children talked excitedly about the coming of Easter. Miss Miller told them the story of Jesus, and then to emphasize the idea of new life springing forth, she gave each of the children a large plastic egg.

"Now," she said to them, "I want you to take this home and bring it back tomorrow with something inside that shows new life. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Miller!" the children responded enthusiastically — all except for Jeremy. He just listened intently, his eyes never left her face. He did not even make his usual noises. Had he understood what she had said

about Jesus' death and resurrection? Did he understand the assignment? Perhaps she should call his parents and explain the project to them.

That evening, Miss Miller's kitchen sink stopped up. She called the landlord and waited an hour for him to come by and unclog it. After that, she still had to shop for groceries, iron a blouse and prepare a vocabulary test for the next day. She completely forgot about phoning Jeremy's parents. The next morning, 19 children came to school, laughing and talking as they placed their eggs in the large wicker basket on Miss Miller's desk.

After they completed their Math lesson, it was time to open the eggs. In the first egg, Miss Miller found a flower. "Oh yes, a flower is certainly a sign of new life," she said. "When plants peek through the ground we know that spring is here." A small girl in the first row waved her arms. "That's my egg, Miss Miller," she called out. The next egg contained a plastic butterfly, which looked very real. Miss Miller held it up. "We all know that a caterpillar changes and grows into a beautiful butterfly. Yes that is new life, too." Little Judy smiled proudly and said, "Miss Miller, that one is mine."

Next Miss Miller found a rock with moss on it. She explained that the moss, too, showed life. Billy spoke up from the back of the classroom. "My Daddy helped me!" he beamed. Then Miss Miller opened the fourth egg. She gasped. The egg was empty! Surely it must be Jeremy's, she thought, and, of course, he did not understand her instructions. If only she had not forgotten to phone his parents. Because she did not want to embarrass him, she quietly set the egg aside and reached for another.

Suddenly Jeremy spoke up. "Miss Miller, aren't you going to talk about my egg?" Flustered, Miss Miller replied, "but Jeremy - your egg is empty!" He looked into her eyes and said softly, "Yes, but Jesus' tomb was empty too!"

Time stopped. When she could speak again. Miss Miller asked him, "Do you know why the tomb was empty?" "Oh yes!" Jeremy exclaimed. "Jesus was killed and put in there. Then his Father raised him up!" The recess bell rang. While the children excitedly ran out to the school yard, Miss Miller cried. The cold inside her melted completely away.

Three months later Jeremy died. Those who paid their respects at the mortuary were surprised to see 19 eggs on top of his casket, all of them empty.

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