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- Jessica: Welcome to Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived.
We're exploring the ways in which theology permeates all aspects of life.
Through conversations with faculty at Concordia Seminary St. Louis, we will challenge you to deepen your theology and live out your faith in Christ.
I'm your producer and host, Jessica Bordeleau.
I'll talk with a variety of professors on a variety of topics, something different every episode, but all pointing to the intersection of faith and daily life.
It's Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived.
Should pastors use AI to write their sermons?
Should teachers use ChatGPT to write their lesson plans and lectures?
That's the question.
Here to discuss, we have Dr. Ryan Tinetti.
He is Assistant Professor of Practical Theology here at Concordia Seminary St. Louis.
Dr. Tinetti spent 14 years as a parish pastor, serving in Michigan, the West Coast, and Thailand.
A sought-after speaker, Dr. Tinetti has preached throughout the U.S. and overseas and has been a guest preacher on the Lutheran Hour.
His books include Preaching by Heart and The Quiet Ambition.
Dr. Tinetti also writes a regular column for the Craft of Preaching website called The Preacher's Toolbox.
Dr. Tinetti, thanks for being on the show.
- Ryan: I'm delighted to be with you.
Thanks.
- Jessica: Dr. Maxwell has been a professor of systematic theology here at Concordia Seminary since 2004.
He is the chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology.
His primary research area is the early church, and he's published translations of commentaries from that time from ancient Greek.
But in addition to his study of ancient languages, Dr. Maxwell has an interest in the technology of today.
He has experience in computer programming.
He presents on artificial intelligence.
And this is crazy.
He built his own neural network on his home computer.
Dr. Maxwell, thanks for being on the show again.
- David: Thanks, Jessica.
It's great to be here.
- Jessica: While these two men have very different areas of interest, something they have in common is that they are known for being excellent preachers, both in contents and delivery.
I'll vouch for it.
I've heard them.

They're good.

So where do these excellent sermons come from?

How do good teachers create good lectures?

And does it even matter as long as they're good?

That's the question.

So let's just start there.

What are the reasons you've heard people give in favor of AI-generated sermons and lectures?

Ryan: So I think, first of all, most preachers and pastors and other teachers of the faith would probably say, well, you shouldn't just straight up let AI prepare your whole sermon. You shouldn't be writing out a sermon manuscript, perhaps not even writing a lesson plan or anything like that. For me, I think the even more interesting question is, to what extent should AI even be involved in the preparation process? As you are going about readying to preach and to teach should I even be involved? And I would say the biggest reason that people give in favor of it is time. They say this can be a tremendous time saver for busy pastors and teachers to save that time, the busy time of having to prepare lesson plans, of doing all of that study. AI can really help you to expedite that process.

Jessica: That's what I always thought. Instead of spending hours alone in their offices, laboring over the sermons for us, pastors could be out there doing hospital visits, taking care of people. That kind of makes sense.

Ryan: Yeah. Visiting the sick, evangelizing the lost, taking care of business. It's a compelling vision.

Jessica: What do you think, Dr. Maxwell?

David: Is that a fair reason to use an AI-generated sermon? The question I would have is, how do you envision that they would use it exactly? Well, because I know in the post that you wrote, one of the concerns is that if you use AI to replace part of the work of writing a sermon, then your skills would atrophy, right? So then there's a sense in which you would harm the pastor. So I thought, well, maybe one question to pursue was, what are the possible ways of using it? And would they all result in atrophy? Or are there ways of using it that could actually help sharpen your skills?

Ryan: Sure. What would be an example of a way that could help sharpen your skills?

David: Well, you might imagine that you write the sermon and then you feed it into AI and

ask it to critique it from either, you could say from a Lutheran theological perspective, maybe you say, critique it from like, what grade level is the vocabulary, critique it from the perspective of how coherent is it? You know, there's all kinds of criteria that you could give it. But I mean, that would be a way where it seems to me that it wouldn't be causing your skills to atrophy. It might actually sharpen them.

Ryan: So when I talk about, yeah, skills, skill erosion, and the concept of, I mean, to use an analogy, a natural kind of example from our contemporary age, there are all kinds of areas in where skills, I'm afraid, are eroding, perhaps in favor of other skills. But take something like finding directions, where 20 years ago, perhaps 25 years ago, if you had to get somewhere, maybe you've got an atlas, perhaps you would use something like MapQuest and look it up. Yeah. For older folks, we remember things like this. But you would need to be able to find your way. There had to be some degree of navigational skills, not to mention 100 years ago and further back, right? Now we are so accustomed to GPS, to our navigational systems, to our phones, in order to tell us how to get anywhere, that the skill of being able to navigate unfamiliar, even relatively familiar terrain, has really atrophied and eroded our ability to find our way in the world. The cultural critic, Christian guy, Andy Crouch, in his book Culture Making, he talks about how every new technological advance does a couple of things. It both makes some things possible, and it makes some things impossible, or at least really difficult. And so you're talking about with GPS, well, it makes it impossible for me to get lost, or makes possible for me to find my way, whereas before, it would take me a lot more time. And I'd say, yeah, there's some truth to that. But what it does do, undeniably, is it also erodes your ability to find your way in the world, and not just find your way, but to be able to attend to the world, to call back to a previous episode that you had, in a way that I'm not just experiencing the world mediated through screens and through devices, I'm instead able to just look around in my world and find it by way of signposts, and perhaps even people, imagine that, talking to folks. If I get lost, stopping and asking for directions, famously, you know, as men, sometimes we struggle with this, but that doesn't mean that it's a good thing that we struggle with it. It's good for us to ask for help, too. So that would be one small example of that kind of skill erosion. But with respect to preparing to preach, what does that look like, that kind of skill erosion? So when I think about that whole process, it's the first step of gathering all sorts of materials. And this is where, if there is perhaps the most valid uses of AI, it's in that kind

of gathering material stage where you are using it almost like a more focused search engine, where now I'm able to look for something more specifically or find leads on sources, that sort of thing.

But a skill that could potentially help to erode would be your ability to organize your message and to structure it and so forth.

And this is, David, you're saying, well, this is something that maybe you need that help to have that kind of organizational.

And I would say, yeah, we all need help with it.

My default just wouldn't be, okay, how can I find some kind of program, artificial program, in order to help me with that?

Can I seek help from a brother, from a friend or from a teacher?

Is this a skill that I can continue to pursue myself and hone, rather than becoming increasingly reliant upon an artificial supplement to it?

Jessica: Isn't that what a commentary is?

Ryan: Well, so this is, I think, a second thing that people will mention about it, is that AI, artificial intelligence, these are tools, okay?

And just like commentaries are tools, tools, or dictionaries, or any of these are tools.

So, David, how would you compare and contrast AI as a tool versus an old-fashioned kind of traditional book?

Do you think that they're in the same category, or is there something that's substantively different about the two of them?

David: Well, they have different strengths and weaknesses.

So, one issue that comes up is bias.

Books are all from a specific point of view.

Ryan: Sure.

David: And the advantage of AI in that respect is you can actually tell it what perspective to address.

So, there's a little more flexibility in terms of the bias issue.

AI is better at... I mean, you can ask follow-up questions that you can't ask.

And this is Plato's actual argument against writing, right?

The reason that you shouldn't write things down, according to Plato, is because you can't ask any questions to a written text.

So, you should just only, like, talk.

You shouldn't write.

Well, now AI, you can actually ask a question.

So, in that sense, AI is probably stronger weaker than a book.

But a weakness of it, where it's probably weaker than a book, would be that you have to understand what it does.

So, it's not... Basically, what large language models do is they predict the most likely next word in a sentence.

And so, what that means is that what you're getting, even though it's thoughtful, I mean, it reads in a thoughtful and coherent way, usually, that doesn't mean that there's intention behind it or

that the AI, like, even knows that it's telling the truth.

It has no concern over whether what it's telling you is true or false.

And so, there's a sense in which you're probably better off trusting a book than trusting an AI response, just because a human author is probably at least going to care whether they're telling you the truth.

And you have to realize that AI doesn't.

So, that would be a weakness.

And so, I think you have to take the strengths and weaknesses into account if you're going to use it as a tool.

Ryan: Right.

And for me, recognizing it as a tool, one of the things that I bristle at about that argument is the notion that, well, any tool is just neutral.

And especially when we talk about the large language models and generative AI, this has been coded and created by folks who have a very particular perspective on the world.

They're not, there isn't, as far as I know, somebody, you know, stroking a cat in Silicon Valley who's deciding for every particular search how it's going to go.

Nevertheless, there is, every search that you're doing through your generative AI and the creation that's getting is a kind of internet sausage.

And you don't always know what's in it.

David: Well, okay.

Can I just... So, those are two different things.

Ryan: Yeah.

David: So, the claim that the designers have created a bias versus you're getting internet sausage.

Ryan: Sure.

David: I think the second one is more relevant.

Ryan: Uh-huh.

David: That I... because the way AI is structured, the programmers are programming the network.

Now, I suppose they could have an influence on the bias as to what training data they feed it.

Ryan: Sure.

David: But I think the goal is that they're trying to feed it everything under the sun.

Ryan: Right, right.

David: All right.

So, the real issue is what you're getting is stuff taken from the internet.

And so, how well... so, the question becomes... Yeah.

Ryan: What is it?
What's in there?

David: What's in there?
What is its bias?
It's not the creator's bias.
It's the internet's bias.
But I have been working on an article on the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, which is the early church council where we get the language of two natures in Christ.
And I'm just trying to unpack the history of where does their actual formulation of their... Well, they call it a definition.
It's really kind of a creed.
Where does that come from, right?
So, I just asked ChatGPT to give me...
Oh, give me like three different outlines for a possible article on this.
And what it came back with was like all the cliches, which wasn't helpful to me because I have a particular take on it that's not going to go with the normal.
And since we're not... this isn't an early church podcast, I'm not going to detail about what the cliches are.
But just generally speaking, you're more likely to get cliches out of AI because you have to understand what it's doing.
It's taking the data off of the internet.
And so, what is everyone saying about this?
Well, that's what you're going to get.
Right now.
So, then the question becomes, well, is that going to be helpful to you or not helpful to you?
I mean, there may be cases where it is helpful.
It's like crowdsourcing.
Maybe the wisdom of the crowd actually would be helpful here or maybe not, right?
So, it's part of like discerning what you're dealing with, the nature of the tool that I think is important here.

Ryan: Yeah.
The nature of the tool and what's the job that you are trying to use it for.
And this is where to the specific task of preparing to preach, I think that it proves to be woefully inadequate in many respects.

David: Well, what are some examples that you would give of like ways to use it that you shouldn't do?

Ryan: So, I gave the example before of doing outlining, that sort of thing.
I think that that can be susceptible to that sort of skill erosion.
But even finding, okay, what is the... Here's my text.
I'm going to be preaching on Matthew 11 and what should be...
We use the language like focus and function in our preaching.
So, your focus is kind of... What's the big idea?

Why is this text good news for us?

And what's the function?

What's the goal?

What do I hope is going to be the outcome for the hearers in this?

It'd be very easy to have ChatGPT or what have you generate, not one, but a whole, you know, set of different focus and function statements.

And that seems benign enough because, well, the text is the text and what's the message we're going to get from it.

And fair.

However, you're not just reading the text itself.

You're reading it conjoined with the people whom you are reading that text for and preparing to preach for.

And so, in your... Laid on your heart and in your mind as you are preparing are those specific people.

You are wetting them together in your preparation, which, of course, no AI model is ever going to be able to do.

And so, for me, even in that basic, fundamental, small kind of task, it's already kind of short-cutting or cutting out essential elements of that relationship between pastor and people and text and occasion that this is where the sermon really comes out of, that relationship.

David: Well, so, I don't know.

It's not obvious to me.

Like, if you were to say, give me five outlines of a sermon on Matthew whatever, and it does it, and then you look at the outlines, and then you think, okay, well, you have your people in mind, and then you're thinking about your people in relation to these five different things that things spit out.

It's not obvious to me that you've shortcutted that relationship with the people.

Ryan: So, not just the relationship with the people, but your relationship with the text.

So, when I think about what I'm doing as a preacher in that preparation stage, so much of it is I'm wrestling with the scripture and with the Lord through that scripture, praying back to him.

And I guess we need to call out what I think in some ways is the elephant in the room with some of this, which is that, yes, we can imagine a scenario where pastors use this in a really disciplined kind of way, in a one-off, very narrow kind of thing.

My concern, and some would say, well, this is just a slippery slope argument sort of thing, but is that with the ease that happens, especially with a more generative kind of AI, where it can create things on the fly, would be so natural for pastors to start to rely upon it and then to ask it to do more and more.

So, if you can do it in a very circumscribed, disciplined sort of way, there could be benefits to it.

I think that I... maybe this is just betraying my own kind of Lutheran anthropology.

Pastors are saints and sinners, and I want to put the best construction on all of us and assume that we would be able to use AI in the best possible, most disciplined sort of way.

I'm afraid that both our understanding of human nature and, frankly, experience and

history attest that we're going to take shortcuts, find ease where we can, and what might start in a simple and circumscribed kind of way could easily become much more than that.

David: But there's all kind of tools already that exist that serve to streamline... I mean, there's books of sermon illustrations, there's Bible commentaries that help you read the text more carefully, there's logo software that'll parse the verbs for you. I mean, are you against all of these things? Or, like, why is AI a special case?

Ryan: Well, maybe you're not talking to the right guy, because I tend to be against more of these things than others are. But I think that what makes it more of the special case is the generative piece, where it's one thing for me to read a commentary, to glean those insights, and for me to lay those to heart, to wrestle with them, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, and for that to be part of my own process. It's another thing for me to be outsourcing that to another thing. And, you know, you mentioned Plato before, and it does go back to that skill erosion, because this other issue with writing is that it's not going to help with remembering, it's going to help with reminding, right? It's not going to help, it's going to cause people to be more forgetful, that their minds aren't going to be as sharp, their memories aren't going to be as sharp, right? And this has, I mean, is manifestly the case. I'm pro-writing, I'm pro-books, let that be on the record.

Jessica: Otherwise, I'm going to return the one that I have that you wrote.

Ryan: Yeah, right, exactly. So it's not that these things are all bad, but there are lines that need to be drawn somewhere. And for me, the line before generative AI is one that's worth drawing specifically when it comes to for pastors preparing to preach.

Jessica: Do you see that as different than teachers using it for lesson plans or lectures, lesson outlines?

Ryan: Yeah, that's a good question to a certain extent. So I think there can be similarly creative work. I mean, there are both very creative work and some of the tasks that are involved. When it comes to preaching in particular, so much of preaching is, I'm going to lay my heart and soul on the pulpit and bring it before the people of God. This is true in teaching too, to be sure. But how am I myself wrestling with the Lord? I mean, I always think in my mind's eye, the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel or perhaps with the Lord, you know, and he comes up limping. And for preachers, week in, week out, what we're doing is wrestling with the Lord through the text, wrestling with him in prayer and thinking about our people, what they need and how this word touches them and how it touches our own heart,

that there's a sense in which we ought always to be limping on our way up to the pulpit, metaphorically speaking, as we are making our way and preparing to deliver this word that it's out of the overflow of my heart that my mouth is going to speak. And to the extent that I offload some of that work, and maybe it is making it easier, maybe it's making it more expeditious, I think that in the long run, it might actually be deforming me, malforming me as a preacher, as one who is himself being formed by that word so that I'm able to deliver it to the people of God.

Jessica: I know you're thinking something.
I encourage you to say it.

David: Well, again, I mean, I'm... So, since I'm a language guy, are you opposed to Logo Software?

Jessica: What's Logo Software, Dr. Maxwell?

David: So, Logo Software, it's a software package that has the Greek New Testament in it, and it's got it so you can hover over a word and it'll tell you what the form of the word is and define it for you, so that you don't have to look it up in a dictionary, or so that you don't even have to memorize the grammar paradigm charts if you don't want to.

Ryan: Right.
So, I think, once again, I think that's a useful tool, and I'm not opposed to its existence.
Do I personally use it?
I don't.
I think that it's helpful, again, with the skill erosion piece to continue to pursue it.
That's not for everybody.
Not everyone's going to have, perhaps, the time to be able to pursue not only the language study, but then the continued use of the language.

David: Or another... Let me just unpack that a little more.
So, it's not that I'm saying that we should go back to the early church and not have concordances.

Ryan: Right.

David: But what I'm saying is, like, the horse is out of the barn.

Ryan: And so, just let her run free.

David: Understand what it's good at, what it's not good at.

Ryan: Right.

David: Because, I mean, you can argue all you want, pastor

shouldn't use this thing, and you're not going to win that.

I'm sorry.

It's just not going to happen.

So, I think a better approach would be to just, like, can we use it?

Are there better or worse ways of using it?

Ryan: Sure.

And to me... the fact that AI allows you to have a conversation with it, makes it kind of fundamentally different than some of these other tools.

And it may actually help address some of this, because it forces you into a conversation, just like you would, you know, you could have a conversation with another person while you're preparing your sermon.

Ryan: And why don't we do that?

I mean...

David: Well, I do that.

Ryan: Yeah, good.

Jessica: I know a podcast where people do that.

Ryan: Exactly.

I guess I'm just... I'm just so...

Pro-people and pro... and kind of analog kind of stuff that I don't...

I am very hesitant and wary of the continued encroachment of new technologies, especially digital technologies that are seemingly degrading our need to rely upon one another, to rely upon our human faculties and on things that are apart from a screen.

And so, with all of this, I mean, David, I think you've made some good points, and especially about the importance of being discerning with this, that the horse is out at the barn, and I don't disagree with you.

I'm thinking of one of my favorites, Wendell Berry.

And Wendell Berry has an essay in which he refers to a conversation that he has with somebody.

And this was... I think it was in response to an article he wrote, my card's on the table here, why I'm not going to buy a computer.

This is what he wrote, you know, in the 80s.

And here he is with us still in his 90s.

And to my knowledge, he's never had a computer.

I have a computer.

Okay.

But somebody asks him in response, where are you going to draw the line?

Where are you going to draw the line?

Right?

You know, kind of this.

And he says, that's a good question.

It's one worth losing some sleep over.

And he says, I don't know always where to draw the line.

But the fact of the matter is the line needs to be drawn somewhere.
And I think for any and all of us, it's too easy to slip into, well, it's a tool.
It has positive and negatives.
For that to be an excuse for us not to be as thoughtful and discerning about its use.
But, well, it's out there.
It's available.
And to quote Ian Malcolm from Jurassic Park,
you know, we thought that we saw that we could.
We never stopped to ask whether we should.
And I think that that's the question that we need
to maybe, yeah, lose a little bit of sleep over.
I mean, this is one of the places where I'm drawing the line.
So, yeah, not using generative AI in my preaching prep.
I think it's important to, wherever those lines are
for you personally, you need to be deliberate about it.
Because guess what?
I mean, like you say, maybe there isn't a kind of bias in terms of the LLMs or the
large language models and the AI from Silicon Valley.
But there's a larger bias that this stuff would be
frictionless and entering into every aspect of our lives.
You doggone better believe that that's coming for us.
And so, yeah, I think that we need to be a little bit more deliberate and even
sometimes a little more Amish or quasi-Amish
with some of it anymore without the neckbeards.

Jessica: Where is your line in the sand, Dr. Maxwell?

David: I guess I'm a little hesitant to draw it as strictly as Ryan wants to, just because
I'm not convinced... I haven't used AI enough to know, like, what it's capable of.
You have a better idea than most of us, though,
because of your work with neural networks.
Well, I have a very basic idea of how the thing works, but
that doesn't mean I know, like, what kind of capability it has.
Or even, like, you could push me on the bias issue.
I don't actually know what kind of... the
various ways in which bias could creep into it.

Jessica: So what would you use it for?

David: Well, in my view, you want to ask the question, are you
using it in a way that sharpens your skills or dulls them?
And so I wouldn't outsource all the work.
I would use it as a brainstorming partner.
I'd use it as, you know, critique the sermon and with
whatever criteria you're interested in focusing on.
Those sorts of things, I think, are okay.
I'd even be okay to give me five outlines just to see what it would come up with.
That's not to say I'm going to, like, not think about that myself.

Ryan: Sure.

David: But what I wouldn't do is just have the thing write it for you and just go with it.

Ryan: Yeah.

David: I mean, partly because, like, if you're going to be a pastor, one of the central duties of being a pastor is preaching. So you presumably want to do that, right? I mean, that's not something you outsource.

Ryan: Yeah.

No, that's right.

I mean, this is right at the heart of our office.

It's the predact opt.

It's the preaching office.

So preaching is part and parcel of what we're doing.

I think, I mean, this isn't even a discussion about the uses of AI, valid uses of AI to, you know, collate addresses, prepare the church directory.

I think there's other places where, eh, it could be helpful and useful, and I'm not necessarily averse to it.

But when it comes to this, at the very heart of our work as pastors, preachers, teachers of that kind of creative, generative, and spirit-filled labor, I don't.

I want that to be, to the extent that I can, I want that to be as analog as it can be, and attendant to and reliant upon the Holy

Spirit for myself, for the sake of my people.

I mean, we could talk about, you know, just that sense of stewardship and that I've been entrusted with this task from the people of God.

And, you know, Tom Long, who's a great homiletician, and he wrote a book that we use in our homiletics classes called *The Witness of Preaching*.

He gives a good litmus test for, it's in the context of plagiarism, but I think this applies to also the use of AI.

And he just asked the question, what would my people think if I told them that I was using this, right?

And so that could go back to, well, you know, I'm just using sermons that I found off the internet.

I mean, even apart from AI.

I'm just, I'm just using stories that I found from some subscription service.

I think that God's people would rightly feel like, okay, maybe now and again, but on a consistent basis, that's what you're, that's what you're doing.

Or I've got some outlines from, you know, from some other resource, third-party resource or what have you.

That doesn't feel right.

And would you be willing to say, to tell your people, yeah, I mean, this outline, this structure came to us from AI today.

And these insights that I have exegetically, I didn't develop them myself, nor was I reliant upon a spirit-filled preacher and theologian, whether it be, you know, Jeff Gibbs, Jim Voelz, whomever.

This is from some of that internet sausage that I got.
I'm betraying my biases.

Jessica: So you'd be comfortable if they read a sermon or
use an outline from a person that they trusted.
So if they had a book of sermons...

Ryan: Well, what I'm saying is, I think even in those
cases, Tom Long's question forces us to ask, are you willing, would you be willing
to share that with your people and say, yeah, this is where I'm getting this from?
And if not, that ought to be, that ought to give us pause.
Augustine talks about this in, on Christian teaching.
And this is, you know, 4th, 5th century AD, many, many years ago.
And it was a problem.
There were plenty of preachers who were unequipped for the task that was being
laid upon them in terms of, preparing to preach.
And he says, listen, some of you guys really, you're not great preachers.
I'm paraphrasing here.
And he says, so perhaps you could memorize, learn by
heart, somebody else's sermon and then deliver it yourself.
But he says to do so without deception.
So you need to own up to the fact, this is, these are not my words.
These are Augustine's or Ambrose's or whomever that I'm now delivering to you.

Jessica: So what I hear you saying, Dr. Tinetti, is don't use it at all.
Only use people and books.
And Dr. Maxwell, I'm hearing you say, there's a place to use it.
And I would only use it this far.
Am I correct?

Ryan: Well, I'm not here to bind anyone's conscience about it.
I would second what, what Dr. Maxwell is saying in terms of, if you're going to use
it, I would say, be discerning, be disciplined, and
have very specific ways in which you're using it.
And I would encourage that to be primarily limited to that first stage of preparing
to preach, of kind of your, what classically would be known as the
discovery or invention stage, where you're kind of gathering materials.
So at that same point or afterwards, when you've done your work of reading the
text and translating and thinking about the first
impressions, listening to Lectionary Kick-start.

Jessica: Yes.
What was that?
But Lectionary Kick-start, it's a wonderful podcast produced by Concordia Seminary.
You can find it...

David: Designed to help you streamline your sermon writing
process and not have to do as much work, right?

Jessica: Designed to engage in conversation with other pastors and laity so that you can wrestle with the word in ways that people can grasp.

Ryan: Well put.
So using it in a very specific, targeted kind of way, I can see there being room for that.
Like, as for me, I'm veering away from that.
But like I say, I'm not trying to lay down a new law for anybody.
But there's no question that you do need to ask yourself and wrestle with, where is my line in this and in so many areas?

Jessica: Now, did I peg you when I said that your opinion is, there are good uses, I could see where it could be used this way, but you don't have a definitive line in the sand yet?

David: Well, I mean, my advice would be use it in ways that sharpen your skills, not in ways that dull your skills.
So that would, so I wouldn't necessarily limit it to the first phase.
I mean, you could, you could, I don't have a problem asking it for help organizing thoughts, or help critiquing your sermon after you write the thing.
I mean, that's an, I've never tried that.
But I think that'd be a very interesting way to use it, just to see, you know, what kinds of critiques it would come up with.
The final question on our show is always this, What do you want our listeners to

Jessica: remember?
The poet Robert Frost said once, no tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.
And when I think about it for pastors, there's a sense in which no tears in the preacher, no tears in the hearer.
Not that every sermon is going to evoke tears from the people, but just that sense that the sermon comes through that prayerful wrestling with the word where I am myself struck by it, where I am receiving from the Lord, and it's out of the overflow of my heart, then that I'm able to speak to them.

Jessica: Dr. Maxwell, what do you want our listeners to remember?
That if you do use AI in sermon preparation, you use it in a way that helps you wrestle with God's word.
And not avoiding that wrestling.

Ryan: Yeah, good.

Jessica: I'm definitely going to continue thinking about how what you said applies to teachers as they prepare for the classroom, write Sunday school lessons, get lectures ready.
I can see that both of you are passionate about writing good sermons.
So from the perspective of a person in the pew, thank you for taking that seriously.
Dr. Ryan Tinetti, thank you for being on the show.

Ryan: My pleasure.
Thank you.

Jessica: Dr. David Maxwell, thanks for being here.

David: Thanks, Jessica.

Jessica: You can find more episodes of Tangible on all the major hosting apps, YouTube, and on our website, concordiatheology.org.

We have a lot more free resources there, including sermon prep tools.

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We have these sweet new Tangible vinyl stickers.

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I'm your producer and host, Jessica Bordeleau.

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