



AI is Becoming a Spiritual Authority, Even Among Practicing Christians

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Nearly half of practicing Christians report that AI has helped them with Bible study, prayer, spiritual growth, and personal development

BOULDER, Colo.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 20, 2026-- New [research](#) from [Barna Group](#), in partnership with [Gloo](#), reveals AI is quickly becoming a spiritual authority in Americans' lives. One in three adults now believes AI's spiritual guidance is just as trustworthy as a pastor's. Among Millennials, that number rises to 44%, and among practicing Christians — the church's most engaged members — 34% agree.

In spite of practicing Christians increasingly relying upon AI as a spiritual tool, 65% expressed concern about AI beginning to act as a substitute for God with 72% concerned about AI replacing the role of pastors or spiritual leaders. Seventy-three percent of practicing Christians expressed concern about people losing their religious faith because of AI.

"Christians say they trust AI with spiritual growth, and a meaningful share say its spiritual guidance is as trustworthy as a pastor's," says Daniel Copeland, Barna's Vice President of Research. "Yet, large majorities are simultaneously concerned about AI misinterpreting scripture, replacing God, or undermining the role of spiritual leaders. The use case and the underlying fear are both present, and they're pointing in different directions."

The survey also gauged Americans' trust in AI across a range of life domains – including finances, physical and mental health, and relationships. Practicing Christians reported noteworthy openness – outpacing non-practicing Christians and pastors. More than 6 in 10 (61%) said they would completely or somewhat trust AI with achieving financial stability, and 56% said the same for mental and physical well-being. The trust extended into more personal territory as well: majorities said they would trust AI with feeling happy and content with life (56%), understanding and expressing one's true self (54%), having a sense of meaning or purpose (54%), building meaningful relationships with others (53%), and growing spiritually (48%).

"What we're seeing is that Christians are genuinely open to AI as a support for the domains that matter most to them — well-being, purpose, even spiritual growth," says Copeland. "That level of openness is higher than we might have expected, and it holds across multiple areas of flourishing. Christians' willingness to engage AI personally — including spiritually — is running ahead of settled conviction about the role AI should play in the life of faith. Christians have not made up their minds about AI; they are [extending trust and registering fear](#) in the same breath. The research does not resolve that tension. It simply confirms how many people are living inside it."

The detailed findings of this month's release are available [here](#). Learn more about the 2026 State of the Church initiative at gloo.com/stateofthechurch.

About the Research

Data are from two surveys conducted by Barna Group. The U.S. adults survey (n=1,514) was conducted online in November 2025, utilizing representative quotas for age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, and income. The U.S. Protestant pastors survey (n=442) was conducted online in December 2025, utilizing representative quotas for church size, denomination, and region.

[Gloo](#) (Nasdaq: GLOO) is a leading technology platform serving the faith and flourishing ecosystem. Gloo helps missional organizations amplify their impact by powering their technology and expanding their reach, so that people flourish and organizations thrive. The company's values-aligned, AI platform modernizes systems, workflows and data, while its marketing and donor solutions expand reach, awareness, and long-term giving for mission-based organizations. Based in Boulder, Colorado, Gloo serves over 140,000 faith, ministry, and nonprofit leaders.

[Barna Group](#) is a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture. Since 1984, Barna has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about religion, leadership, vocation and generations. Barna is an independent, privately-held, nonpartisan organization based in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas.

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