

MASTERS OR SLAVES?

INTRO

The aims of this study are to discover what the bible teaches about freedom and privacy and in the light of that explore whether the convenience that some applications of AI offer – like surveillance and social media, results in losing our freedom and privacy.

AN ONLINE WORLD

- Since the early part of the 21st century with the creation of social media, online shopping and powerful search facilities, and aided by the smart phone in our pocket, we have become an ‘always on’ society.
- Many platforms capture all our online data and activity to process and manipulate us.
- That’s because the platforms are free and the owners business model relies on targeted advertising to make a profit.
- It’s not realistic to provide informed consent to the use of our data. In reality we have been deceived and lost our privacy.
- These platforms undermine authentic relationships – diminishing our ability to reflect that aspect of Imago Dei.
- Social Media threatens our democracy through pushing fake news, 6x more likely to be read than real news so it increases user engagement on the platform.

- The Capitol Hill riots in the USA were stimulated through social media, that should give us pause for thought!

A SUREVEILLANCE STATE

- Our privacy and freedom is threatened by another application of AI – facial recognition.
- Mass surveillance using facial recognition is a feature of life in many cities and communities in China – yet they are not 100% accurate and the data is often biased towards a particular group – where there is the most training data.
- The Chinese state targets ethnic groups like the Uyghars, and even underground church leaders. It’s justified as – ‘protecting its citizens’.
- Western countries are also starting to use it.

SMART Cities

- Smart cities, capitalising on high-speed mobile data networks and the ‘Internet of Things’, can make travel easier and more efficient, yet require the tracking of our every movement and transaction.
- Whilst controversial in the West, many countries like the UK have begun to deploy such technologies threatening our privacy and freedom.

THE BIBLE AND PRIVACY

- Should we be concerned about these challenges to our freedom and privacy?

- To answer that we will need to understand what the bible teaches out the notion of privacy and freedom and whether our image bearing is impacted by the AI based applications we have been considering.

Data is property

- Our digital data is like a digital signature of who we are, where we go and what we do.
- It is our property – should the state or a company be allowed to steal it from us?
- The bible teaches that we should respect each others property and establishes that it is rightfully ours.
- Policing without consent surely breaks the moral law.
- A violation of human rights – HR charter based on biblical principles.

FREEDOM AND DIGNITY

- As people made in God’s image we should be allowed the dignity of bearing that image without freedom of movement and association being curtailed.
- Surveillance systems steal our identity.
- A surveillance state requires citizens to conform to the behaviour norms that it has established – but what if they are anti-Christian?
- In China it is illegal to be a member of an unofficial church and church leaders are in a database of criminals.

Next Study – Autonomy or Responsibility?
Now do the bible study for unit 5.

Read Exodus 22:1-15, 2 Kings 6:1-7

What does this passage teach us about how God views property?

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How do you think that these principles apply to our ideas – what lawyers call Intellectual Property?

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How does the idea of property ownership apply to our digital footprint (everything we do, say and look at online, where we travel, what we do)?

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Read Leviticus 19:11, 25:17

How do these principles apply to our digital footprint?

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Do you really know what companies like Facebook and Google do with everything you do on the internet (your digital footprint)?

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Do you think that because you agree to Facebook or Google using your data that it gives them the right to exploit it the way that they do?

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What are their implications when facial recognition systems wrongly identify someone and accuse them of a crime?

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Read Isaiah 56:1 & Ex 20:15-16

How do these commands apply to our digital world and state surveillance?

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Reflection

Discuss the trade-offs between having free services and a few big companies owning and using our digital data when we are online?

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What are the dangers of getting our news from social media?

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Why do you think that there are so many conspiracy theories today?

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The police say that the innocent have nothing to fear from mass surveillance, do you think that this is correct and a justification for it?

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The aims of this study are to discover what the bible teaches about freedom and privacy and in the light of that explore whether the convenience that some applications of AI offer – like surveillance and social media, results in losing our freedom and privacy.

Read Exodus 22:1-15

What does this passage teach us about how God views property?

- God views us as individuals who have rights of ownership of land (see also Deut. 19:4) and other means of livelihood, such as animals (see also Deut. 22:1-3) and tools.
- In OT terms, property was an important means of economic survival.

How do you think that these principles apply to our ideas – what lawyers call Intellectual Property?

- Following the principles above suggests that our ideas and inventions also have economic value and could potentially be used to support an individual economically.

How does the idea of property ownership apply to our digital footprint (everything we do, say and look at online, where we travel, what we do)?

- Our data is personal to us in the sense that it expresses aspects of who we are (like, dislikes, what we buy, our medical data).
- The idea here is that these things are part of who we are, part of being a human being and should not be violated or stolen, even accrued by someone else for profit.

Read Leviticus 19:11, 25:17

How do these principles apply to our digital footprint?

- Our data shouldn't be stolen or used falsely against us thereby wronging us. This can happen with digital data that is stolen or access by another party without you knowing (e.g. because you went down a rabbit hole on Facebook and read fake news or a conspiracy theory doesn't mean that you are part of that group).

Do you really know what companies like Facebook and Google do with everything you do on the internet (your digital footprint)?

- Help the group to explore the many ways in which information about them is collected and exploited for advertising targeting (e.g. what you

look at or what you buy can be used to work out an illness or condition you might have, what your politics are etc).

Do you think that because you agree to Facebook or Google using your data that it gives them the right to exploit it the way that they do?

- This is an open question but many people don't realise what they are giving away. It has been said that for people to knowingly consent (informed consent) to their data being used they would have to read hundreds of contracts.

What are their implications when facial recognition systems wrongly identify someone and accuse them of a crime?

- People have been dealt with falsely (Lev. 9:11) and wronged (Lev. 25:17).

Read Isaiah 56:1 & Exodus 20:15-16

How do these commands apply to our digital world and state surveillance?

- Companies and the state should seek to act fairly and do what is right (connect the idea of what is right with the previous passages and principle that have been discussed), they should not allow injustice to happen through wrongful accusation from mass surveillance.

Reflection

Discuss the trade-offs between having free services and a few big companies owning and using our digital data when we are online?

- We can lose more than we gain, become addicted, controlled and diminish the image of God in us (being free and colluding with a disrespect for privacy)

What are the dangers of getting our news from social media?

- We don't really know what's fact, fake news or a conspiracy theory.

Why do you think that there are so many conspiracy theories today?

- They are viewed 6x more than factual news because they are used by social media algorithms to hook people. News feeds are filtered to increase engagement.

The police say that the innocent have nothing to fear from mass surveillance, do you think that this is correct and a justification for it?

- It betrays the fact that innocent people DO get accused and it also takes away privacy and freedom. Most people don't know when they are being surveyed but it's a crime to take your wallet to identify who you are!