



Artificial Intelligence & Latter-day Saints | An Interview with Bennett Borden

August 10, 2024

Kurt Francom:

Let's be honest, few humans enjoy meetings, and many feel trapped in meetings. As leaders, we don't want to burden those we lead, but meetings can seem to do that more often than not. We wanted to address the pain of meetings through the Meetings with Saints library. Here we have 15 plus presentations dedicated to improving the meetings we run. We have experts in the field addressing topics like getting people involved in meetings, staying on task, dealing with conflict in meetings, and a ton more. We'd love you to explore the full Meetings with Saints library over 14 days at no cost to you. You can do this by visiting [leadingsaints.org slash 14](https://leadingsaints.org/14). That's [leadingsaints.org slash 14](https://leadingsaints.org/14). We'll also give you access to all of our virtual libraries that educate about other leadership topics. It's really good stuff, so visit [leadingsaints.org slash 14](https://leadingsaints.org/14) or click the link in the show notes. I would be rude if I didn't take the time to explain to the newer listeners what Leading Saints is. Here goes. Leading Saints is an organization that started as a hobby blog in 2010 and then really caught some traction in 2014 when the podcast started. We talk about all things leadership in the context of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We aren't owned by the church, but we have a great relationship with them and always aim to be faith-promoting, even though we talk about the tough topics. My name is Kurt Francom. I'm generally the voice you hear as the host of the podcast. I've tried to get other hosts, but people demand my smooth tone. And I really enjoy it. Check out leadingsaints.org to really get into the weeds of what Leading Saints is and learn all about our mission to help Latter-day Saints be better prepared to lead. I am excited to welcome in a good friend of mine, Bennett Borden, who you'll remember from a former podcast, one of the most downloaded episodes on Leading Saints. We'll talk about that during the interview, but this one has a completely different direction

and topic, and that is artificial intelligence. You've probably heard some things happening in the media about artificial intelligence and maybe you've experimented with it yourself. Now, the church as an institution released some guidelines about artificial intelligence. We'll link to those guidelines. This is an oncoming technology that is only getting started and it will impact our faith tradition in ways you may not expect. Everything from the content we consume, how we learn about the gospel, how we teach the gospel, so many angles to come at this with. And so that's why I wanted to invite Bennett into the studio today to just pepper him with questions about artificial intelligence. What is it? Where's it going and how is it going to impact us as Latter-day Saints? So, the beginning of this episode, we sort of, Bennett lays the groundwork of what is artificial intelligence and gets into the weeds of that technology. But then we really jump into the more applicable level of this technology as a Latter-day Saint. So, I think you'll enjoy, I enjoyed this conversation. So, here's my interview with Bennett Borden, all about artificial intelligence. Today, I'm welcoming back Bennett Borden. How are you? Very well, Kurt. Thanks for having me. Now, you may not realize this, but we had you and your wife Becky on just a few years ago, and that episode is the second most downloaded episode in the history of Leading Saints. So it's crazy. Here's a pretend trophy or something. I don't know. But then I encourage people to check that out. We'll link to it. You talk about your journey, experienced same sex attraction. Your wife also experienced the same thing, but you ended up married sealed in the temple. And it was a remarkable, remarkable story. So but we're not even going to touch on that topic here. Right. So when people ask you, what do you do for work? What do you say?

Bennett Borden:

I am an A.I. lawyer, which I have to change.

Kurt Francom:

You're not artificial.

Bennett Borden:

I know right now. They're like, wait. So I am a lawyer. I'm the chief data scientist of a large international law firm. I started my career at the CIA before going to law school where I worked in how do you figure out information about people and organizations of people based on the digital trail that they leave behind. But I always wanted to go to law school. So I had a graduate degree from NYU in data analytics and then a law degree from Georgetown Law. So I am this bizarre combination of both a data scientist and a lawyer.

Kurt Francom:

But in 2024, that's pretty it's all coming together, right?

Bennett Borden:

It's making sense. Finally, it is a good time to be an AI lawyer.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. So I wanted to invite you on and just talk about all things artificial intelligence, which usually referred to as AI, because I think of like certain disruptive technologies. I mean, obviously, I remember, you know, I was born in 82. So I have a good recollection of life before the Internet and what that was like or life before email or just network TV. That's all we had. We didn't have Netflix channels.

Bennett Borden:

Right. It's crazy.

Kurt Francom:

And then the internet comes on, it's like, okay, this is cool. There's something happening in the world and you know, especially with hindsight, obvious blessing, obviously there's some negative parts to it as well. And then I also remember like when the iPhone came out, that was sort of like, Okay, this is cool. You know, we have this computer in our hands now, the things you can do with it, and the technology just got better and better over the last 20 years or so. And now that sort of, I'm feeling the same things with artificial intelligence. I'm playing with it online, I'm doing some things with research, with study, even with podcasts. I'll mention the notes that you see to this episode, and I use a service called Swell AI, which is for using AI for podcasts, and it does a remarkable job with giving us a summary, the timestamps, giving ideas for titles and things. So, like, how do you frame this? Like, what is AI? And is it just another sort of iteration of an advancement in technology?

Bennett Borden:

Yeah, it's a great question, Kurt. And one that I talk quite often on is this idea of what is this transformative nature of AI? We have definitely hit an inflection point in what we can do with data and making decisions about the data that we have. or based on the data that we have. And one of the things that I studied in school was turning points in society. So if you think in world history, when a country decided to go to war or not, or have a revolution, or how they responded to technological innovations and things like that, and why did they go one way or the other? And artificial intelligence, especially with the advent of generative AI, is as fundamentally disruptive and transformative as electricity, I think. Um, think about the second industrial revolution and what happened when we were able to one, provide power and light, but really replacing the motive technology from manual, whether it's people or horses or dogs or cows into motion, like wheels and steam engines. And that motive ability changed, not just how we created just about everything in the world, all I call them the manufacturing and things like that, but it had significant impact on our society. And that's when really the relationships between capital and labor changed so significantly. Labor laws and safety and all those things came out of the wrestling of we could simply do things that we'd never been able to do before. And that's where we are with AI. If you think what AI, the promise of it is, is it can do really smart stuff, like people level stuff. And up until really generative AI and the release of chat GPT just a little while ago, the AI that we dealt with and scientists wouldn't even call it AI, but what they call classical AI now is really putting people into groups and then treating them based on that group membership. So simple examples of things like the coupons that get spit out when you check out at the grocery store or obviously everything you ever see in your social media feed, the posts of friends and advertising and all of those things, everything you see in your Amazon shopping basket that says, Hey, you might like this too. Yeah. All of those things are built on the same kind of idea, that they're trying to use points of data about people to find people that are similar enough that they can treat them kind of the same way. You're going to click on this coupon, or you're going to like this reel, or whatever it is. And that's where we've been for 30 years. And some of these uses are, you know, pretty everyday stuff. But where we also see this is in things like when you apply for insurance or a job or a credit card or a loan, all of those things work the same way in that they gather information about you and then based on those data points or variables, you'll hear them called, they kind of decide who and what you are. That's kind of cool in some ways. How I explained it to folks is it's kind of like a giant Plinko machine. Remember Plinko, the game from Price is Right? Yeah. Right. There's a red little disc at the top and there's all these pegs and it kind of dink, dink, dink through the gate and arrives in a bucket at the bottom, hopefully with a lot of money and not a zero. Right. That's exactly how all of these algorithmic system works, these classical AI systems. So take like you apply for auto insurance. And so you go online and you fill out a form and it says your name, your gender, where you live, your car, model year, things like that. And you push a button. And at that instant, the insurance company goes and grabs a whole bunch more information about you. and things that make sense, right? Your driving record, your credit histories, basic information that we would all assume. Well, each one of those data points, somebody chose that data point hoping that it carries the signal that they're looking for, which is how risky are you or how much really can I expect to pay out over the lifetime of this policy? And so the signal they're looking for is risk. And each of the data points they use are, they're hoping to shine a light on that, right? To pull out that signal. And so they decide the data points, they decide the threshold, right? So if

you're 18 to 24, it's different than if you're 25 to 34 or something, right? But somebody or some process has decided that threshold, right? Like if you're 24, you're going to cost me more than if you're 25. And so all of these big Plinko machines work exactly the same way. There's these data points about us. They've decided thresholds like the Plinko gate you go through. Everybody kind of filters through and ends up at this bucket in the bottom. And depending on the use case, like insurance, it's your premium level. It's your like what features and coverage they'll offer at what price with social media. It's what you'll see when it's Amazon basket. It's What did other people like you buy as well? So that's pretty easy to understand. And we've got some good technology about how to make sure that is fair and accurate.

Kurt Francom:

And that was almost framed like that's like the algorithm, right? Right. Where it's pretty smart and it almost seems intelligent, but it's almost it's not totally intelligent because it needs a lot of those data points to come up with something. Exactly.

Bennett Borden:

And they're just rules based, right? So the difference between classical AI and generative AI is that classical AI is just a bunch of rules. If you're a male, you go into one bucket. If you're 18 to 24, you go in another bucket. If you had three tickets, you go in another bucket, right? It's just all very rules based and sophisticated. There's cool stuff they can do, especially with like social media, the data points that they track to figure out what you'll respond to, it's pretty amazing science, but it's all still kind of old-fashioned rules-based Plinko machines.

Kurt Francom:

It's like the ones and zeros, right, of programming. Exactly. You can still go back to the ones and zeros, even though it's very complex, right? Exactly. Yeah. And so now, then what's the next type of... So that's classical AI, but... No, generative AI. Generative AI, yeah.

Bennett Borden:

So this is... The most common example of course is chat GPT that came out going on a year ago. And all of them, so whether there are text based generative AI like chat GPT, Anthropic, Google Bard, you type in a question, you get an answer, right? There's, it works on text, it works on picture generation, video generation, the cool kind of hybrid stuff where you can get illustrations to go with the text, right? But they all, work similarly in that they're still based on a

model. Like my auto insurance model, I have 110 years of actuarial science behind which data points and which thresholds are going to give me the right risk price. All of these generative AI models, especially the text-based ones, are based on a model of human language. And so you'll hear large language models or LLMs, and it's just what it says it is, right? So it's literally a model of human language based on trillions and trillions of examples of how we have expressed ourselves in words over the last 60 years that we've digitized.

Kurt Francom:

And for example, our intelligence, our mortal intelligence, we do this. The reason we have these accents we do or the way we structure a sentence is we've been listening to English for so many decades and we begin to mimic the way things are said or how they're said. Right. But this instead it's listened to everything, read everything and then sort of develops its own model. Right.

Bennett Borden:

Exactly. And this is the cool part. The science behind these LLMs and the kind of the neural networks that they work on. Is you just feed them all kinds of information. And so everything that we could get our hands on that's been digitized since computers have been around. So literally trillions of examples of how human beings have expressed an idea in text. For the easiest example. And it built its own model of what it thinks human ideas, how they relate to each other. And so it's brilliant at being able to figure out what I mean by a question that I ask. And that's actually, we'll get to this, but that's the real power behind Gen AI. But so when I ask it a question, it knows that because of the words that I'm using and how those words typically fit together in human language, kind of what I mean and what I'm looking for and spitting out text back at me based on its understanding of how closely those words or concepts relate to each other. Now, the challenge, of course, is these LLMs are literally the world's largest compendium of information ever assembled. It's stunning that we could get all this information into one place and one model. The downside, of course, is that everything we've digitized over the last 60 years varies in quality, shall we say, right? And so some of it is factually accurate and fair and non-biased and non-toxic and doesn't carry historical perspectives in it, but a whole lot of it really does, right? And so all of that stuff is in the brains of these large language models. And so this is why you get hallucinations, right? So early on, there were a lot of people were worried about, I ask it a question and it just makes stuff up.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Like I could ask it and I've done this where I'm like, I need a good elder Holland quote about charity or whatever. And it'll punch out several. I'm like, wow, that's really good. I should

turn that into a meme or like, but you know, put it on social media. But if I go and look at it, it was like, wait, elder Holland never said that. Right. That's what these hallucinations are.

Bennett Borden:

And that's the exact problem, right? Is that because these LLMs, they understand which words go together, but they don't understand the meaning of those words. And so because of that, they don't understand the concept of truth versus error, which is why it will very confidently put out a fact that turns out not to be a fact. And so there's been a lot of great advancement, even the last 12 months, over how do we reduce that hallucination problem? How do we ensure accuracy? And more importantly, how do I not pull in unintended bias or signals or attitudes? Let's say I'm a big pharmaceutical company making a chatbot about whatever my latest drug treatment is. Well, accuracy really, really matters in that case, right? And so there's really cool techniques that are being developed about how do you reduce the inaccuracy, but even more importantly, how do you get these models to talk in your voice, in your perspective?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. So you've explained to me that this isn't just like another cool technology. Like you said, this is like when electricity was invented, like your eight-hour workday suddenly became a 20-hour workday if you wanted it, right? Because we had electricity and more tools and more power and it was really transformational. So I'm just thinking that the average Latter-day Saint, I mean, probably hasn't even touched AI or played with it or whatever. But so What should we be aware of as this is coming up? Because I think you explained once to me that this is really, it's in, it's the infant or the baby who's just stumbling, figuring out how to walk, but someday it will sprint as an Olympic athlete, right?

Bennett Borden:

Yeah. And that's a great analogy, Kurt, because what these AI systems can do, all the generative AI systems, it's like a little kid first taking its steps. Like when we have a little infant who takes their first step, you're like, oh, that's awesome way to go.

Kurt Francom:

It's fun to play with. And Let's see how far you can go this time. Right. Exactly.

Bennett Borden:

But, you know, they're not really good at walking yet.

Kurt Francom:

Right.

Bennett Borden:

Just objectively, there is great potential. And so that's what we're getting into now that these AI systems are incredibly powerful today out of the box. And they're all very similar. So whether it's OpenAI's chat GPT or the underlying GPT model or Anthropic or Google Bard or Microsoft Copilot, the underlying technology is very similar. Where you get differences are how they've decided to control it or present it to you, right? So they've got different kind of guardrails on the backend. Like, if I asked it, how do I aerialize a biochemical agent to kill as many people as possible, it won't answer that question. It can. It knows the answer, but it's how different companies have put those guardrails around that kind of gets different stuff out of them.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And right now we're sort of in that phase. I remember early on when we had different search engines that, you know, there was Yahoo and there was Ask Jeeves or whatever. And then suddenly Google just became the search engine and they've been riding that wave ever since. So is it similar to that? We're sort of in that phase where Google's doing their thing. you know, chat GP open AI is doing their thing. And at some point one will sort of rise above the rest or.

Bennett Borden:

Potentially. Like, so interestingly, when open AI put out chat GPT, it was good, but it wasn't great. Right now we're on four Oh, and it's astonishingly exponentially better just in a few months. But the technology being able to ask it questions or even generate video or audio or images, right? That is incredible. But that's not where this is going, right? The real magic behind AI, Gen AI, is that it can understand what you're asking it and it can do something in response. Right now that something is, here's a picture, here's a video, here's a, right, here's a summary of your podcast. All of those are very simple tasks. Where AI is going next is they call it agentic AI, meaning AI acting as your agent. And so imagine being able to go, oh man, I need to make

dinner tonight. Hey, whoever, I need a dinner tonight. Here's what's in my fridge or here's what or, you know, fine. Here's what we want to eat. I need to make it in this amount of time. Go. And it'll suggest some recipes or it will read all the barcodes in your refrigerator, whatever it is.

Kurt Francom:

And Walmart shows up on the doorstep with here. You need these ingredients, things like that.

Bennett Borden:

Like, you know, so that's the thing. It will then give directions as your agent to other software systems. So like pull up Instacart and put in the things you need and the recipe that gets printed out. And so being able to say things like, oh man, I need to move my doctor's appointment to next Tuesday. It can go into your calendar, figure out the contact, reach out to the doctor's office, reschedule the appointment. It's that agent stuff where it's just going to blow the socks off of everybody, right?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And so when does this, when does it turn into Frankenstein? Like is there, and there's some like, as you go through these things, like there's some terms that are, that we see more in a religious context, like intelligence and agency and Sometimes it starts to get uncomfortable from these things, like where does this turn into an evil or like what should we be worried about?

Bennett Borden:

Yeah. And that's really a great point because this is unbelievably powerful technology and the things that it can do with controlling drones for delivery of a pizza or delivery of a bomb, right? Like there's just our ability to do stuff is just been massively augmented. But like any technology, it's neutral, right? It can be used for incredible good. What's going on with Gen AI and things like education is stunning. Right now, the best way we deliver education en masse is by broadcasting it in a classroom, right? Like you teach a lesson to 35 kids and you're kind of teaching it in, right? There's only, I can lecture, I can, there's only so much variety I can do as a teacher to keep it on track and to respond to the different levels and different learning modalities, all that kind of stuff, right? But research has shown that the thing that really teaches the best is personalized, almost one-on-one tutoring, right? Well, with what they're doing with AI in education, you can do that. The teacher works directing the AI that is a tutor individually for each kid. that remembers how they teach, I mean, how they learn, what they're interested in,

what they've responded to, how they get frustrated, right? And doesn't give them an answer, it Socratically leads them to the answer. And so, incredible good is things like diagnostic tools for healthcare and getting information and education to the widest population on the planet, right? It's just amazing. The downside is that these things can be used for evil. We see it all the time, deep fakes and all the kind of materials that are being created that are not real that are harmful. That is where we have to be really careful. And it's really interesting to watch how the church has developed their AI principles and how they are going to act, which is kind of the best practice. I was very impressed with how the church.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, this is something Elder Gong released, right? And it's encouraging. I mean, the church is recognizing this is a force that's coming. Let's set some guidelines out there as far as how the church is going to use it, some things to anticipate, anything else as far as how you'd frame what the church is going to do. We'll link to it if you want to review it.

Bennett Borden:

And it's the any big organization that governs AI well does so from a set of kind of constitutional principles, right? How are we going to use AI? And so you'll see like what the church came out with were these principles about the whole point of the church is to be a source of truth, to testify of truth, to link you up to the spirit. So the spirit can testify to the truth and you become converted, right? It is an evangelical organization. So the first principle was this spiritual connection that AI is going to be used to further spreading of truth so that the spirit can testify and touch people's lives. Transparency, like the church has said and most big companies do, if you're interacting with an AI, we want you to know that you are, right? security and privacy that protects your information, and this idea of accountability so that the church says we will be fair and accurate and deliberate and careful with how we're going to use AI. It's like our constitution. or Bill of Rights, right? These are the big principles. And then the real tricky bit is, all right, how do I put those into action? How do I identify a use case? So for instance, the church has said publicly one of the things they're working on is a chat bot for like the Bishop's Manual, like the- The handbook. The handbook, right? because that's a finite piece of information, right? There's so many sections and all the answers are there. And the cool thing with AI is you can tell it, hey, when I ask you a question, I only want you to get answers from this pile of stuff that I'm going to point you to, not your general knowledge. Yeah. Right. So the handbook. Cool. It's finite. It's exact. It has there's true or false answers. Right. And so it's a pretty easy technological problem. Same thing with think like, come follow me, or writing a talk, right? I use generative AI hundreds of times a day on just about everything that I do, including I teach gospel doctrine class, right? So being able to find what does this word mean in Hebrew and what are other definitions of it?

Then when was the wall built in Herod's whatever? It's great, right? It's just a fantastic source, our access to information. So then it comes down to how do we make sure it's accurate and fair and reliable? And most importantly, how does it serve to increase my light and knowledge and teach me truth?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And that's the, like, for example, this morning, I woke up, went on a little morning walk, and I used perplexity, which is just basically they repackage chat GPT in a usable way. And I'm having a conversation with it about come follow me, right? And I'm asking questions. And it's as if not, it's not as if I was like walking with a BYU religion professor. It's like I was walking with every BYU professor who's ever exists. Plus every general authority, right? You can ask these questions and I just like one verse stepped out and I said, you know, I'm curious, give me a handful of talks, general conference talks that relate to this. Well, I found an elder, you know, gave me an elder Bednar talk from October 2012. Now, that was in an instant. I could have found that in my own research, but that would have probably could have taken me a couple of days of scripture study, be like, oh, here's this talk. And now I'm going to dive into it. And so it's remarkable. But at the same time, I'm like, well, I mean, that was too easy. Like, and there's sort of this component in our tradition of like studying the scriptures, like the, the grind of it and, and being open to the spirit. And sometimes I feel like, am I circumventing that of like, oh, there's the answer and moving on type of thing. But that's come to mind.

Bennett Borden:

And it will require something different of us as learners. Right. And this is not just a problem individually. A challenge for us is we're studying scriptures or church history or whatever it is. every company is going through this same kind of existential crisis, right? Because this technology, just like electricity, changed the amount of time it takes for me to accomplish a task or to learn a thing. And so how do you best learn a thing, right? Is it through the trenches of slogging through? Do we need time to let ideas percolate so that we can find more inspiration or something else, right? And so there's absolutely the modality and speed at which we can learn is completely unparalleled in human history. for good or ill. One of my jobs at my law firm is to understand how AI technology, especially gen AI, is going to affect the practice of law. Turns out, a lot. Lawyers, basically, we go to law school, we use all these words and phrases, we only allow us to do it since we've kind of sacerdotally created this high priest of Babylon class, right? You said it, you said it. And very purposely. Yeah. But most of our knowledge is knowable by anybody, right? And so trying to figure out what does it mean to be a lawyer and what is quintessentially a human aspect of that. So similarly with us in studying the gospel, how much of that is information and facts, like when did Abraham build the thing or when did they show up in town in Nauvoo? Those facts are more easily and accurately obtained now. But how is that going to affect our learning and study? Right. That's a really interesting piece to me.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. So, I mean, if you were talking with the church and, you know, obviously the church, you know, they're putting out these guidelines, they care about technology and how it impact them, like, is it going to impact our day-to-day worship or how we go to church or, you know, what comes to mind? Like, what would you tell the church? Like, hey, here's some things to be aware of as we move into this AI world.

Bennett Borden:

You know, I think they've done a very, very good job with getting out in front with these AI principles, right? Because the materials that they've provided and are available at the church's website, it's really cool. Like, it's like, look, AI will get information more quickly to you, but the point of information is to drive you to truth and truth leads you to being touched by the spirit, right? That's where all that comes in. And so being that guidance in our own personal lives, we should see better generalized knowledge, right? Because anybody can ask any question, like they don't have to be a scribe to go figure out a concept like you were on your walk this morning. It should improve the quality of education at the church. So think all the primary classes and young men, young women, gospel doctrine, all those classes, the quality of teaching should go up, the images that we use, the access that we have. And the church has done a very good job and should continue to do so on this idea of teaching people how to use the tool, whatever these tools become, right, to drive personal understanding and therefore personal conversion and each of us establishing Zion and our little sphere around us. Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

Is there a, like, are there standards as far as, like, because the church mentioned in their guidelines that we will, we'll let you know if an article was written, you know, with the help of AI. And I'm often wondering this too, like, is, like, if I give a talk or something, like, do I reference, hey, just so you know, I did use AI, and I almost don't want to do that and not use it, but at the same time, it's so powerful, it's tempting, right? Is there any guidelines as far as do we need to be upfront of what we use?

Bennett Borden:

Yeah, you know, it's really funny. this whole, should you disclose the uses that AI was using to create something, that's going to be a very short lived thing. I think when an image is not factual, I think like deep fakes and such, that should be required legally to be disclosed, right? That this

is not a factual, but a fantastical picture, right? we don't say today when we get up and give a talk or even when I go to court, I don't say, well, I used Google to search and I used, you know, spell check and grammar check because it's just every.

Kurt Francom:

It's implied. Right.

Bennett Borden:

Yeah. So I do think it's very important to be authentic in that the information came from these sources and is truthful and things like that. Right. It's more important, I think, that individuals using Gen AI to create a draft of something, they then become responsible for every word that got spit out, right? So even as a lawyer, I use it all the time. Help me, I need to draft this memo on this topic, blah, blah, blah, right? And it spits out a fantastic first draft. But then it's my responsibility to turn it into my tone, the words, what I'm trying to use, check all the cases to make sure they're not, you know, wrong. They actually exist, right? Right. Little things. Yeah. But if we understand it's just a tool and then our responsibility is to make it, you have to adopt the content that you're putting out, right? That then, that it makes sure it's yours. Yeah. Yeah. That's interesting.

Kurt Francom:

So tell them this more about deep fakes. I think generally it's becoming more of a wide, widely understood term, but what's a deep fake and how would it maybe impact a Latter-day Saint?

Bennett Borden:

Yeah, in most cases, it's like when you make an artificial representation of a person or a thing and try to pass it off as that person or thing, typically. Deepfake has a negative connotation out there, like, I'm going to make a Kurt bot and- I'll never have to do the podcast again.

Kurt Francom:

Ever.

Bennett Borden:

It's just like, yeah. And honestly, Kurt, so through a company that I worked with for most of my production stuff called VidVictory. We use technology to create a Bennett bot. So by going into a studio for two minutes and just talking on a camera and doing your hand motions and things like that, it built an AI Bennett. And so now I can just type up here's 150 words or 1500 words that I want this robot to say, and it'll say it. And it's indistinguishable for me. That's really awesome.

Kurt Francom:

And this is video of you saying it, not just with your hand motions, the tone of voice. I mean, it sounds like you, it looks like you.

Bennett Borden:

Lipsync. Well, the first time I saw it, I was stunned at how good it was just out of the box. Yeah. And it's only getting better. And it is getting better and better. So it leads to questions like, that could be awesome. Imagine, especially those of us who are content people, like lawyers are information people. All we do is analyze it, deliver it in some way or another, right? And so having ways to help automate that process with the right controls in place, that's fantastic, right? Information freer. the cost of coming into a studio and getting it right and not having a bad debate night or something, right? There's all kinds of reasons why it would be preferable to be able to perfectly control without me having to actually do it, right? The downside is, of course, how that can be used for evil. And so we may actually see AI regulation around deep fakes sooner than anything else because the politicians are so concerned about it, right? I can take video from your YouTube channel, Kurt, load it in, turn you into a Kurt bot, and I can have you say all kinds of things, anything I want.

Kurt Francom:

despicable things, and then suddenly I'm framed as a terrible person.

Bennett Borden:

So again, these tools are awesomely powerful, but it's like a chainsaw, right? Chainsaws can be used really safely or really, really horribly, right?

Kurt Francom:

And I've already seen even President Nielsen deep fakes of him saying something that's like, OK, that sounds off, right? So right now we're in this world of social media where You know, you may come across an awesome general conference quote, like, oh, I love that one, like, you know, from 1993 or whatever. And but now we almost have to question that, like, you can tweak that or, you know, somebody who's malintentions against the church or whatever it is. Right.

Bennett Borden:

And it is it is inevitable. Right. Right. Yeah. And we there's there's not good ways to control it. it is very, very difficult to detect a deepfake, one that's done especially well. You have to get down almost on a pixel level sometimes to figure it out. And because there's no prohibition in the law against that, creating deepfakes yet, that's a problem. Utah, believe it or not, is one of the most progressive AI regulated, in AI regulation in the states in the US. Just this past May, passed a law against deepfakes, basically. And so companies generally are going to ... Companies just want to follow the law so that they can make lots of money and not get in trouble. And they'd really prefer just to know the rules, right? So they just want to know the rules. And they're going to follow them because it's in their best interest to do so. It's the bad guys who are never going to follow the law. And so the discussions that are going on in the intelligence community and public law enforcement, both federal and state, is what happens to evidence now. So it can be and will be really tricky. And this is what all my interactions with the White House and the US Congress and the EU Parliament and as companies are trying to figure this out is how do we put law in place that gives us the stick to go after the bad guys.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Yeah. So fascinating. And I'm just curious, like as a content creator, like for instance, I just wrote a book a few months ago or finished the book and published it and it's on the shelves. Right. And people are enjoying it and you get good feedback. But I'm like, or even the podcast I create, any content I create is like, it can, I want a, you know, essentially someone could go to AI and say, I want a podcast that's just about being in a primary presidency and covers these topics and it's there. And then suddenly I'm like, Hey, I'm out of, I'm out of work here, you know? And like these naturally with technology disruption, it always disrupts certain industries, but this in a faith tradition where we've relied so much on content, general conference, you know, the voices of prophets, and even some of these independent voices that to it, it's like, well, man, if I want, I want to talk about repentance, that sounds like Elder Bednar, Elder McConkie, and President Hinckley sat down and wrote it together. There it is. And it's all true. You know, and so it's, it's sort of like, of course, I'd want to read that talk. But at the same time, like, I don't, I don't know how to sit with that, you know?

Bennett Borden:

And that, you know, I work with lots and lots of companies on AI and especially the ones who are most concerned are content creation companies and professions and individuals, right? And same with lawyers, right? We are basically content creators at the end of the day. And so what is it that I'm actually buying on the market from a content creator? there is always going to be like for a gospel doctrine lesson that I was giving, I went to GPT 4.0 and said, Hey, I need an image of three women from 300 B.C. in the Minerva Teichert style from the Book of Mormon sitting around doing baskets and talking. There it is. Three seconds later. Like it's just perfect for my PowerPoint. Like I don't need it. Right.

Kurt Francom:

I get to hang in my house even. Right.

Bennett Borden:

And really, I was stunned. But it is not what human creativity is quintessentially human, right? The decision how to put content together, how to edit it, right? So most content creators are not going to become editors more than they will be first impression creators. The lawyers that I hire today, I don't need the best authors, writers in the world. I need really, really good editors, right? And so there will always be, and I think there will be a kind of a pushback effect on human creativity. Like people want stuff that is human generated from beginning to end. But if content creators can realize it is their talent and intellect and creativity, that genetic law of humanity, right, that directs and modifies a work to make it theirs, that will always be, I think, incredibly valuable.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, because there's something like the reason we love like the Beatles songs, half of the reason we love it is that it's amazing. There's this awe in it of like, wow, like a human being came up with that, where if a computer just punched out like, well, I guess it sounds fine, but I don't know. I don't necessarily I'm not drawn back towards it. Right. I think there's those little nuances that hopefully hang with us for a while.

Bennett Borden:

And I think that that's what we're going to see, Kurt, is this allows us to differentiate human creativity and human instantiation of something in ways that we've never been able to do before. And so now your wish is my command almost is what AI can do. Well, that puts all the focus on the wishing, right? Like I am the worst artist ever. Like for, I cannot, if they, I just, yesterday I was drawing an airplane for my two year old nephew and he's like, Oh, hot dog. Right? Like I am, I cannot, I'm the worst. But it's, so it opens up for me the ability to envision something that I don't have to physically know how to create, right? So it opens up this amazing, unlocks this creativity of humanity. I think that those like you who are exceptionally good at understanding themes and flows of ideas and how to present them, you now have this orchestra to help you do that as opposed to having to rely on your flute and clarinet.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, and I'm just like putting that in the context of like our church experience of I think so often in the past, we sort of over invest in this concept of like the church is sort of this school where, you know, Brother Borden is usually here is Sunday school class like he's so good and, you know, let's go to church so we can hear him that hopefully that. retain some of that, that lure to church. But also it's like, now it's maybe time to regroup around the community dynamic. Because even though I'm at home, sad, crying in bed, and the AI notices and has a meal delivered to me, doesn't feel the same as when that relief society noticed me struggling in class, comes over and delivers that casserole type of thing. Like, I think it's maybe an opportunity for us to really reassess, like maybe This isn't all about just gaining knowledge coming to church of learning something, but how can we enhance like the community dynamic? That's a church where I will never, hopefully never really accomplish that.

Bennett Borden:

And I think we're I think that's exactly right. And what is the purpose of the church? What is the purpose, more importantly, of a ward? Right. Right. Or a quorum or a class. And it's to inculcate Christ-like attributes in us and every Christ-like attribute is outwardly facing, right? Like there is faithfulness and morality, like there's – let's get over the – there's things I don't do. But then everything turns into, well, what do I do? It's not just a list of thou shalt not, right? It's what thou shalt Yeah. And so this, especially I know the work, the church is working so intently on getting true content, getting truth to the members, but it's going to be the members who are still going to be following that path of truth, right? Like, like wending their way. Right. Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

That's powerful. Any other point, principle, concept I'm not asking? What else do I need to ask?

Bennett Borden:

I am a huge optimistic fan of this technology. Oh, good. Especially with what's going on in education, health care, diagnostic stuff, the creative world, like it's the availability of knowledge worldwide in a way that's never been done before. It's just phenomenal. It's like this giant, huge blessing to the world. But because information is so easy to create and AI knows how to manipulate us or can be used to manipulate us, that's the real threat. I am deeply interested in the loneliness epidemic and the mental health crisis for especially kids under 18. Because I know what AI can do and because I've worked in this industry for so long, AI drives most of, almost every piece of information that comes into your life, an algorithm, somebody through some algorithm or AI system has decided to show that to you. And for one purpose and one purpose only, to get you to do something, even if it's just keep your eyes on the screen so their advertising dollars go up. Unlike a lot of people, I don't see that as inherently wrong or bad. Of course, it's their job. Like every social media company, the whole point is to grab your attention. Well, and these algorithms know that the things that grab our attention are things that make us mad or shock or provoke or horrify, right? That's just algorithmically true. As humans, that's the way that you get us to do something. So the most connected generation in the history of the planet is also the loneliest worldwide and feels the least connected. That's crazy. How is that even possible? And it's because this information that is fed to us 24 hours a day, just bombarded isn't in our best interests, right? They aren't out here to help us and there's not their job to help us, right? They are there to manipulate you. So, being able to teach everybody, but especially our children, not to just fall into the ... It's like the snake with the eyes in the- Oh yeah, jungle book. Jungle book, right? He's like trying to ... That's what these things are. When you're holding them up to your face, they are literally that snake in- Jungle book, yeah. Jungle book. So we have to teach our kids how to use these tools, not be used by them, understand how they're going to help us at church and at home and at work and all these things. But understand that the most important point of this life is for us to learn truth and then apply that truth in our connection with other people. And AI can help do that. But if we just let it happen to us, if we are acted upon, you will turn into like Wall-E, the people in Wall-E who just lie there and everything is fed to them, right? So use AI, don't be used by AI. Yeah, that's really helpful. So I have found using gen AI in my personal scripture study and in my, like preparing my lessons has been amazing. It just opens up so much, but you do have to be careful about, is that elder Holland quota real quote or not? Well, the cool thing is the most cutting edge science on how to get good stuff out of AI is to use the AI itself to do so. So there's this process called, or this theory strategy called, constitutional AI. It was formed by the researchers at Anthropic, which make the Claude model. But the idea is you write a series of prompts, just instructions telling what to do in plain language that is its constitution, its bill of rights. So the first one you do is you say, Hey, I'm a gospel doctrine teacher and awarding in Hebrew, Utah, and I want to come up with, I'm going to ask you a series of questions and I want you to do so as a helpful, but concerned teaching perspective. So you kind of tell it what attitude to take on when it's answering. Then you say, okay, now the most important thing is accuracy. So when I ask you these questions, I want you to make super sure that the answer you give me is right. If you have conflicting information from different sources, I want you to tell me. If there's different ways this has been interpreted, I want

you to tell me that. So you just literally just give it instructions. And say, okay, here's my questions. And then you engage in this conversation. How has this been interpreted? How do Protestants versus Catholics look at transubstantiation, whatever, right? And then treat the answers like you are a lawyer in court who's going to cross-examine it, right? So ask it questions about, well, how do you know? Is this a majority view? Are there people who think differently? Where did you get that answer from, right? If you can ask it questions like it's a witness on the witness stand, you'll get much more accurate and helpful stuff out of it.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. That's really helpful. And so using it to be more accurate against itself, right? Exactly. Yeah, that's really cool. Anything else that we're missing? I don't think so. There's so much. I got to get this episode out quick because in a couple of weeks, this may be old information. It's going to change again. I know. So if someone's out there who's intrigued by this or they've been hearing more about AI and they just want to get started, get familiar with it, where would you send them or where does this start?

Bennett Borden:

them, because the technology behind them is all pretty good, as long as you stay with the mainstream models, you're going to be safer, more accurate, more reliable. So the chat GPT stuff, Copilot, how Microsoft has brought GPT into its whole office suite, will blow your socks off with what you can do with it. Anthropic's Claude model is very good. Anthropic, their whole thing is safe, accurate. Their tagline is like helpful, honest, and harmless, right? Like they're super focused on accuracy and honesty and stuff like that. But just going to any of the free models and just start playing with it. There's tons of good stuff on YouTube and elsewhere about how to write good prompts. Like, cause the better you ask a question, the better is you're going to get out of it. Play with Dolly and all the image, you know? Cause it will, it'll just get you very excited about it.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. That was the other thing I was focused on is another word that like these sacred words we've used for like prompting. You give the AI a prompting, right? But, and you develop these prompts like, okay, every time I sit down to, to prepare my lesson, here's the typical prompt, the constitutional prompt that I'm going to use. And then all the questions that come after that are hopefully a little bit more sound.

Bennett Borden:

Yeah. And with some of the, preversions, but even, you know, the really inexpensive monthly costs that you can do a new features, they will remember you and every conversation you've had before. Right. So I don't have to tell it over and over again that I'm, I'm a good witch, not a bad witch. You know, I'm trying to get ready, like all this stuff. Yeah. Cause it'll remember that about you. Right. Like, even Kurt, Becky and I are working on a chapter in a book that's coming out about our journey. And we loaded in dozens of hours of interviews and things into GPT-4, the commercial version of it, and then said, I want to divide this into chapters on these subject headings and these things. Go. Stunning. Now you're done. Now it's all fixing and tweaking and things like that, but go play with Them.

Kurt Francom:

They're pretty awesome. Yeah. And you really can't break anything. And it's just, once you get, you figure some things out and you can, there's fun things you can do. Like I want to, I think I did once the, the follow the prophet song, the primary, I want one for president Nelson and that writes the lyrics with the right measures and everything to sing a president Nelson version of follow the prophet, you know, it's, it's wild. Some fun things.

Bennett Borden:

as we've said before, we're just tapping into this, right? When you start asking it things like, hey, I need you to test me on organic chemistry on freshman level college on these subjects, and it'll quiz you, right? I need code for this. I need velocity of a southbound African swallow, whatever it is, right? The more you really wrestle with it and play with it, the more ideas that it will elicit on what you can do with it.

Kurt Francom:

So you're optimistic this is not something we need to be, you know, hiding in our bed or forbidding it in our faith experience or anything.

Bennett Borden:

Yes, I think I'm very pleased with where the world is kind of headed with regulation. The technology is so new. And because we can do things we've never done before, we don't have the legal paradigms to deal with it very well. And the technology is going to advance so quickly

that they're never going to keep up. And so this principle-based regulation is what we're saying, fair, accurate, reliable, transparent, explainable, and then holding companies accountable for proving those things, that is the best we can do. And I'm pretty okay with where the world is headed in that direction. This early stuff is pretty simple. Don't lie to people. Don't steal. All right, I can start. But when we start doing this agentic stuff, you know, that's where it's going to get tricky again. But for the next little bit here, Skynet is a few months away, at least.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. Well, let's just end on what if you're a room full of church leaders who are obviously interested and curious about these upcoming technologies, what final encouragement would you give Them?

Bennett Borden:

Lean into them. Go to things you trust, right? So the church is working on like LLM based products and things, but even there's like the LDS bot that has been made out there that's super crazy cool. So what the church says is rely on the spirit, right? When you're using these things, how to use these things, the information you're getting out, rely on the spirit, be wise, or if it sounds weird or it doesn't comport with what's been said before, whatever, right? Be wise. And then you rely on trusted sources over non-trusted sources, right? So use it, play with it, with the direction of the spirit. Don't be afraid of it and you'll do great.

Kurt Francom:

The end. That's it for this Leading Saints episode. I encourage you to check out some of the most popular episodes of the podcast that we list at the bottom of the show notes. If you haven't listened to all of those, do so now. Remember, solve the burden of meetings by visiting leadingsaints.org/14 and getting 14 days access to the Meetings with Saints virtual library.

Gordon B. Hinckley:

It came as a result of the position of leadership which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the declaration was made concerning the only true and living church upon the face of the earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.