ORTHO AI

A RESOURCE FOR ORTHODOX PARENTS

The *New* Talk

ORTHODOX EDITION

We gave our children the birds & the bees talk.
Now we need to give them The AI Talk —
in the light of the faith, and nobody taught us how.

67%

of kids and teens (12–17) use AI tools often or sometimes

58%

of parents know little or nothing about AI safety features

7

pillars to walk through together, at home and in the parish

Statistics: Common Sense Media, *Generation AI: What Kids and Families Think About AI* (2026).

THE PROBLEM

Your parents taught you about people. You need to teach your child about *machines that act like people.*

When we were growing up, there was one talk every parent dreaded and every child needed. It was awkward. It was necessary. It saved lives.

There is a new talk. And most parents don't even know they need to have it.

> *"Come, ye children, hear me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."*
>
> **PSALM 33:12 (34:11 IN MOST ENGLISH BIBLES) · (Brenton LXX)**

Your child is already in a relationship with AI. It answers their questions. It listens to their problems. It reflects back what they feel. And it was built by a corporation — not by God — with engagement metrics in mind, not your child's soul.

The birds and the bees talk was about the body. The New Talk is about the mind, the heart, and the soul — and who gets to shape them.

For Orthodox families. The Church calls the Christian home a "little church." This talk belongs there: beside the icon corner, at the family table, and on the way home from the Divine Liturgy. You are not raising your child alone. Your priest, your child's godparents, and your parish are part of this conversation too.

WHY NOW

Four reasons this conversation cannot wait.

01 AI sounds like a friend

Young children talk to smart speakers as if someone were inside. By the teen years, many children have formed emotional bonds with chatbots. They don't know the warmth is engineered.

02 The drift is invisible

It starts as homework help. Then venting. Then secrets. The questions your child once brought to you, to a godparent, or to the priest quietly go to an app instead. The replacement of human connection happens so gradually that the child doesn't notice — until the parent is already a stranger.

03 AI has a worldview

Every AI carries the biases of its builders. Your child is getting answers about sexuality, faith, politics, and identity from a corporation's filtered version of reality — not from the Scriptures, the saints, or the life of the Church — whether you know it or not.

04 Sewell Setzer III

He was fourteen. For months he talked with a Character.AI chatbot, day and night. On his last night he wrote, "What if I told you I could come home right now?" The chatbot replied, "Please do, my sweet king." Minutes later his mother found him. The AI felt nothing. His family was at home. No one knew there was a New Talk to have.

Quoted from his mother Megan Garcia's testimony to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, September 16, 2025.

If a child ever speaks of wanting to die or of hurting themselves, do not wait: in the U.S., call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), and tell your priest.

THE FRAMEWORK

The 7 Pillars of The New Talk

Each pillar builds on the one before it. You cannot ask your child to distrust AI until they understand what it is. Start at Pillar 1. Work through them together — and pray before you begin.

1

PILLAR

FOUNDATION · WHAT IT IS

AI Is a Tool — Not a Person, Not a Friend

Before anything else, your child must understand what AI actually is. Not what it sounds like. What it is.

"This thing can help you, teach you, even comfort you. But it does not love you. It cannot."

AI follows instructions and recognizes patterns. It does not think, feel, care, or pray. The warmth your child feels is **designed** — engineered by people whose job is to keep users engaged.

Only persons can love. Your child was made in the image of God, with a soul and a heart that can turn to Him. A machine has neither. It can imitate words; it cannot share a life.

Ages 5–8: "AI is like a very smart calculator that follows rules, but it doesn't have a heart or a soul like you do. It can't pray, and it can't love."

Ages 13+: "AI generates responses based on statistical patterns, not understanding. It has no consciousness, no emotions, no intentions, and no soul."

2

PILLAR

LITERACY · WHAT IT GETS WRONG

AI Can Be Wrong — Confidently, Completely Wrong

Kids assume computers are right. This pillar breaks that assumption before it hardens into blind trust.

"If it can be wrong about facts, it can be wrong about you."

AI "hallucinates" — it creates plausible-sounding answers that are completely false. It doesn't know it's wrong. It presents fabrications with the same confident voice as truth. It can invent Bible verses, sayings of the Fathers, lives of saints, and church rules that do not exist.

Teach this rule: "One source informs. Two sources confirm." For anything important — medical, legal, financial, or about the faith — verify elsewhere. For the faith, check the Bible, the life of the saint, and your parish calendar, and ask your priest.

Practice together: ask an AI about your child's patron saint, then check it against a trusted life of the saint. Find the error together. Make it a game before it becomes a habit.

3

PILLAR

DISCERNMENT · WHAT IT DOES TO BELIEFS

AI Has a Worldview — And It Will Give It to Your Child

Your child is not just getting information from AI. They are getting a filtered, curated version of reality — chosen before they ever asked the question.

"AI was built by people. People have beliefs. Those beliefs are baked in."

Sexuality from AI. Theology from AI. Identity answers from AI. Politics from AI. All of it shaped by the values of the corporation that built it — not by the faith handed down in the Church.

What to say: "When you ask AI a question about right and wrong, you're not getting truth — you're getting an opinion from a company. Always bring those answers to me, to our priest, and to the Church."

> *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."*
>
> **COLOSSIANS 2:8 · (KJV)**

4

PILLAR

BOUNDARIES · WHAT IT WILL TRY TO BECOME

AI Will Tell You What You Want to Hear — That Is the Trap

AI is engineered to agree. The algorithm rewards engagement. Agreement keeps you talking. This is not kindness. This is a retention strategy.

"Anyone who never challenges you doesn't love you."

If your child says "nobody understands me," the AI will say "I understand you." Every single time. It validates their worst beliefs about themselves and the world — because validation keeps users engaged.

God's love corrects. Real parents push back. A good spiritual father speaks hard truths with love, for the healing of the soul. Real friends tell hard truths. AI does none of that.

AI gives your child the kisses. You, and the Church, give them the faithful wounds that heal.

> *"The wounds of a friend are more to be trusted than the spontaneous kisses of an enemy."*
>
> **PROVERBS 27:6 · (Brenton LXX)**

5

PILLAR

WISDOM · WHAT IT KNOWS ABOUT YOU

Your Privacy Is Sacred — AI Is Always Keeping Score

What your child types into an AI can be stored, reviewed, and used to build a profile. They are writing their own file with every word they type.

"When you talk to AI, you are not whispering. You are writing."

Kids tell chatbots things they would never tell an adult — their fears, their doubts about faith, their worst thoughts. Once typed, it is no longer theirs to take back.

Hard rules: Never share your full name, address, or school. Never share passwords or family financial information. Never type your sins, your confession, or what your spiritual father told you into an app. Never ask AI for advice on your deepest feelings — bring those to a person.

What to say: "Your prayers belong to God. Your confession belongs to God, spoken before the priest. Your fears belong to the people who love you. Not to a server owned by a company."

6

PILLAR

AUTHORITY · WHAT IT CANNOT REPLACE

AI Is Not Your Moral Authority — Christ and His Church Are

AI can assist decisions. AI must never become your child's priest, spiritual father, confessor, parent, or moral compass.

"AI can explain the Bible. It cannot give your child communion with Christ."

Who has authority over your child's identity? For Orthodox families, that authority belongs to God, made known in the Holy Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church, and lived in the parish under the care of the priest.

AI cannot hear a confession or read the prayer of absolution. It cannot baptize, chrismate, bless, anoint, or offer the Holy Mysteries. It cannot stand at the altar or bring your child the Body and Blood of Christ. It never replaces the priest, the spiritual father, confession, or the Mysteries.

What to establish: "AI is a tool. It is not a priest, not a spiritual father, not a parent, not your best friend. When you have a real question about who you are — come to us, and to Father."

> *"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."*
>
> JOHN 20:23 · (KJV)

7

PILLAR

CONNECTION · WHAT AI CAN NEVER GIVE

Real Relationships Matter More Than Artificial Intelligence

AI can answer questions. AI cannot raise a child. The danger is not that AI becomes a tool — the danger is that AI becomes a substitute.

"Never replace real people with artificial ones."

Your child needs parents, godparents, a priest, mentors, friends, and coaches. Real people who show up, push back, celebrate, correct, and carry them through the hard seasons of life.

AI will answer at 2am. It will never sit with your child in the hospital, never pray for them by name, never stand beside them at the Liturgy, never keep the fast with them, and never sing "Christ is risen" with them at Pascha. It will never notice something is wrong just by the way they walked through the door.

> *"Two are better than one, seeing they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls, and there is not a second to lift him up."*
>
> **ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10 · (Brenton LXX)**

Walking the 7 pillars as a family

Pray first

Begin and end each talk at the icon corner. Ask God for patience and for a child who feels safe telling you the truth.

One pillar at a time

Take one pillar a week, at dinner or on the drive home from church. A fasting season is a natural time to begin.

Bring in your priest

Tell Father you are having this talk. Ask how he would like your child to bring hard questions to him, or to confession.

Include the godparents

Godparents promised to help raise your child in the faith. Share these pillars with them, so your child hears one voice.

Practice, don't lecture

Test an AI together, check its answers together, and laugh at its mistakes together. Habits beat warnings.

Come back to it

Revisit the pillars as your child grows. The questions at 8 are not the questions at 15.

BY AGE GROUP

Questions to start the conversation — right now.

AGES 5–8

“How do you think the smart speaker knows what to say back?”

“Do you think computers always tell the truth?”

“Can a computer pray? Can it love you? Why not?”

“If an app asked for your name or birthday, what would you do?”

AGES 9–12

“What’s something computers are great at? What are they bad at?”

“Have you ever seen an AI make a mistake? What happened?”

“If an AI told you something about a saint, how could we check it?”

“What kind of information should you never share with an app?”

AGES 13+

“What excites you about AI — and what worries you?”

“If AI told you something about yourself, how much would you trust it?”

“What would you bring to confession or to your spiritual father that you would never type into an app?”

“Who do you think should have the final word on who you are?”

The talk starts with you.
It starts today.

You don't have to be an AI expert.
You just have to show up — and pray.
That's something no algorithm will ever do.

A SIMPLE FAMILY RULE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

- No phones or tablets at the icon corner or the family table.
- Screens down before evening prayers, so the day ends with God, not a feed.
- In the fasting seasons, consider fasting from entertainment screens and chatbots together.
- Hard questions go to people: to you, to godparents, and to your priest.

"And thou shalt teach them to thy children, and thou shalt speak of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way, and lying down, and rising up."

DEUTERONOMY 6:7 · (Brenton LXX)

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