

Spring 2026

Happy March! Let me begin with an announcement:

We've come to the realization that we should probably just acknowledge the current reality and make it official—I am shifting this newsletter to a quarterly format. Spring, summer, fall, winter. (You've noticed that I've not exactly been consistent with a monthly format for quite some time!)

Part of this decision is driven by some great news...

With the advent of my Friday videos, we found a much better, more consistent and personal way to stay connected! If you aren't aware, a few years ago I began sending out in our Friday email update a personal video that allows me to do some on-time spiritual fathering week to week. It's been a fabulous success—everyone loves it—and it has replaced one of the major functions of the newsletter: connecting with you. So if you aren't getting those Friday videos, check the close of this letter to find out how.

So we will call this the Spring 2026 newsletter!

By the time you read it, Lent will nearly be over and Easter will be just around the corner. I had a surprising experience during Lent this year. When I asked Jesus if he would have me lay something down for the period of Lent (in which we identify with Jesus's 40 days in the wilderness), I was surprised by what he said. I was expecting some of my "creature comforts"—chocolate, dessert, pride. Jesus suggested "video." Meaning, I have been fasting from most forms of video during the wilderness period of Lent.

I knew the purpose for this immediately. Jesus said it was to clear some "mental real estate," some of my available attention, to give to him. What struck me as strange was that I don't exactly partake of a lot of video in the first place. But as Lent has gone on, I've been astounded at how much of my attention *has* been recovered. That alone has been wonderful; giving it to Jesus has been even more wonderful.

Several years ago, the Center for Humane Technology held a summit for the leadership of the social media and technology world in Silicon Valley. They wanted to voice some concerns about the race to AI. Now, these were highly respected industry people, talking to their own peers. And what they pointed out in the summit was that we had lost "the first round of contact," the race for everyone's *attention*. Social media was released into the world without any sort of restriction, and there's very little debate now that the results have not been positive. Anxiety and depression, for example, rise in direct correlation to the amount of time you spend on social media.

When you have adolescents spending six or seven hours of their day on their phones, checking their devices *more than 400 times a day*, you know we have lost the race for human attention.

What really shocked me—and this was several years ago now—was that during this summit, they warned that the next race would be the race for *intimacy*. Intimacy?! With technology?! I was extremely concerned because intimacy with the human soul is God's domain, the area of his most urgent concerns. We would call it his province, his right.

We lost that race, too.

When you have one third of adults in the UK using an AI companion—and by this I mean an artificial personality created by AI offering artificial daily relationship—the race for intimacy has been lost. And when one third of teenagers using AI companions tell you that they believe their “companion” can think and feel, we have a serious situation on our hands.

*This is not a letter on AI.* There is too much to explain, and so much is changing so quickly that a newsletter would be out of date. I simply want to point out that the “real estate” Jesus was asking me to create for him over Lent was to open up breathing room in my soul for a return to intimacy with him (God’s domain)! When you have children and adults using AI for emotional support, counsel, or even therapy, the serpent is back in the garden.

You are created for intimacy. In our origins, we walked with God in the garden in the cool of the day. And in that beautiful passage in Revelation where Jesus says, “I stand at the door and knock; if you open the door I will come in, and we will eat together,” it is an invitation to return to the garden with him. To linger with him.

The fight over intimacy with the human soul is where the war is now. AI is providing counterfeit relationships with counterfeit personalities to try to fill the human heart’s ache for intimacy. Again, I cannot properly address AI and what is developing in that world sufficiently in a newsletter. I **can** safely say it should not be used without profound guardrails. It is even safer for me to say, *Please do not use AI companions. Please do not let your children use them. It is a counterfeit reality to the core.*

Instead, the people of God ought to be the ones cultivating “intimacy-in-the-garden” stories with God, daily stories they can share with their family, friends, and neighbors. Let us bear witness that God is *available*, that he is the one truly safe and wonderful place to take our search for intimacy.

Offered in love,



John

P.S. To sign up for my Friday videos, head to this page: [WildAtHeart.org/Weekly](https://WildAtHeart.org/Weekly)

P.P.S. Thank you, all of you, who support this beautiful mission for the human heart! I’m reminding you that we need your help this spring, and we are so grateful for it. You can give online, on our app, or in the enclosed envelope. Thank you so much!

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