

How to Navigate a Fake News World

We live in a 'post-truth' society, amid an epidemic of fake news. In the media world, Jeremiah's words seem to ring true: 'Truth has perished; it is banished from the lips' (Jeremiah 7:28). Why is there so much fake news? What psychological and sociological factors make fake news spread rapidly while truth 'stumbles in the street' (Isaiah 59:14)? How can we respond?

Tony Watkins is a speaker and writer on media and the Bible. He works alongside several organisations including Damaris Norway and the [Lausanne Media Engagement Network](#) (as Network Co-ordinator). He is doing doctoral research on the relationship between the biblical prophets and today's media and regularly lectures at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communications, Norway, and the Norwegian School of Theology. Tony has written, or co-written, several books including *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema* and *Dark Matter: A Thinking Fan's Guide to Philip Pullman*. Tony and his family are involved in Above Bar Church, Southampton, where he is part of the leadership team.

I. Understanding the phenomenon of fake news

A. The changing news landscape

1. The rise of social media
2. The decline in established news media

B. Why we have fake news

1. Power
2. Greed
3. Carelessness

C. How fake news spreads

1. Emotional stimuli

2. Confirmation bias
3. Social proof
4. Information cascades
5. Filter bubbles

II. Identifying the consequences of fake news

A. Loss of truth

B. Social fragmentation

C. Resistance

III. Responding to fake news

A. Develop a passion for truth

1. Live the truth
2. Commit to discovering truth
3. Engage your brain, not just your emotions
4. Resist your confirmation bias
5. Break out of your filter bubble

B. Expose untruth

1. Be critically reflective
2. Challenge false claims and distortions

C. Engage constructively

1. Present a biblical perspective
2. Present a prophetic perspective

Suggested Readings:

Amanpour, C., 2017. How to seek truth in the era of fake news. [video] *TED*. Available at < [ted.com/talks/christiane_amanpour_how_to_seek_truth_in_the_era_of_fake_news](https://www.ted.com/talks/christiane_amanpour_how_to_seek_truth_in_the_era_of_fake_news) >.

Jacobs, A., 2017. *How to think: A guide for the perplexed*. London: Profile Books.

Viner, K., 2016. How technology disrupted the truth. *The Guardian*. Available at < [theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/12/how-technology-disrupted-the-truth](https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/12/how-technology-disrupted-the-truth) >.

Walton, A., 2016. Christians believe in truth: How should we respond to post-truth politics? *Christian Today*. Available at < christiantoday.com/article/christians.believe.in.truth.how.should.we.respond.to.post.truth.politics/101950.htm >.

Watkins, T., 2017. Contending for the truth amidst the fake news epidemic. *Lausanne Global Analysis*. Available at < [lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-07/contending-truth-amidst-fake-news-epidemic](https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-07/contending-truth-amidst-fake-news-epidemic) >.