

“What is truth?”

“Fake News” is a term popularised by President Trump, but was coined by his political opponent in the 2016 electoral race to the White House. Hilary Clinton commented that certain social media items were actually “fake news” – not real – untrue. Many of these stories trending at the time seemed to originate in the town of Veles in Macedonia. Teenagers were re-posting, re-tweeting striking, eye-catching headlines. These stories were composed to be so by Christopher Blair – a blogger in the US. He made up stories, posted them online, attracted many followers and grew rich through the advertising on his websites. His intention was to show the stupidity, as he put it, of those who read and accepted his articles – they are clearly labelled as satire on his websites.

“Just because it’s trending, doesn’t mean it’s true.”

Maarten Schenk is a Belgium fact checker. His job is to check the truthfulness of stories that emerge on social media websites. His is a full time job and wholly inadequate. He says hundreds of such people are needed, so vast is the material being published daily. He suggests 8 things we can do to check the truthfulness of stories we read online:

1. Consider the source
2. Read beyond the headline
3. Check the authors
4. Assess the supporting research
5. Check the date of publication
6. Ask if it is a joke
7. Review your own biases
8. Ask experts

I trust we are people who want to live by the truth, not content to believe something just because someone else says it is so. We should research the facts.

The problem comes when standing by truth is costly (all our friends believe something else), or when believing the fake news is fun, or when accepting the truth will require us to change what we believe and the way we live our lives.

Christians believe the Bible to be truth. Jesus claimed to be the truth. There are however not a few people who loudly proclaim the opposite. They would say the Bible is “fake news”! Who is right? Given the seriousness and beauty and awesomeness of what the Bible claims it is only wise to carefully evaluate *for ourselves* what we think the Bible is. We can do this by asking the same set of questions given above.

This is what Lee Strobel did when his wife became a Christian. He was an avowed atheist. He used all his investigative skills, honed from his time as an award winning journalist for the Chicago Tribune Newspaper, to see if the resurrection of Jesus Christ was true. If it wasn’t Christianity would be a fraud. After 2 years he concluded:

“In light of the avalanche of evidence I found, it would take more faith to maintain my atheism than to give in to Christianity.”

Will *you* give the Bible serious thought for yourself, or will you merely listen to fake news?

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