

Reference Document

"The Religion That Was Afraid of the Internet Just Launched a TikTok"

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video. Wherever a claim rests on a Watchtower publication, I have linked the official Watchtower Online Library (wol.jw.org) or jw.org so you can read the original in full and judge the context for yourself.

Verification levels:

PRIMARY — Sourced from official Watchtower publications, jw.org, the organization's own internal congregation documents, the social media accounts themselves, the Bible (New World Translation, the JW translation), or independent research bodies such as the Pew Research Center. Primary sources can stand on their own.

SECONDARY — Sourced from established reference works or analysis that compiles and interprets primary records. Secondary sources support claims and are most defensible when paired with a primary source.

SECTION 1: Is It Real? — The Accounts and the Announcement

Claim: Official-looking accounts on Instagram and TikTok, branded "Official Pressroom of Jehovah's Witnesses," present themselves as the official voice of Jehovah's Witnesses' global communications.

- **Source:** JW Pressroom accounts, Instagram (@jw_pressroom) and TikTok (@jw_pressroom)
- **URL:** https://www.instagram.com/jw_pressroom
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the accounts themselves, viewable directly. TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@jw_pressroom
- **Note:** The accounts carry one identical launch post. The bio on both reads "Official Pressroom of Jehovah's Witnesses" and links to jw.org/pressroom.
- **Key quote:** "Official Pressroom of Jehovah's Witnesses"

Claim: A blue verification badge does not establish authenticity, because it can now be purchased through a paid subscription.

- **Source:** Meta Verified subscription program (Instagram/Facebook)
- **URL:** <https://about.meta.com/technologies/meta-verified/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Meta's own description of its paid verification product.
- **Note:** The point in the video: a checkmark proves someone paid and submitted an ID, not that the account genuinely represents the organization it claims to.

Claim: The organization’s internal “Announcements and Reminders” sheet (form S-147), dated June 2026, states under “Official Social Media Accounts” that the organization has established official Instagram and TikTok accounts under the name JW Pressroom, as a pilot program, for a secular audience.

- **Source:** *Announcements and Reminders*, form S-147-26.06-E, June 2026 (U.S. branch)
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — an internal Watchtower congregation document.
- **Note:** I can’t independently authenticate this document, and I say so plainly in the video. The form number is public knowledge and the writing style is reproducible. I include it because it lines up with what is independently verifiable — the live accounts, their official branding, and the matching jw.org wording — not as a standalone proof.
- **Key quote:** “As a pilot program, the organization has established official social media accounts on Instagram and TikTok under the name JW Pressroom... specifically designed for a secular audience—government officials, journalists, and researchers.”

Claim: The accounts’ description of their audience mirrors, nearly word for word, how jw.org’s official Global Communications section describes itself: information for government officials, journalists, and academics.

- **Source:** jw.org, *Global Communications*
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/global-communications/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — jw.org, the organization’s official website.
- **Key quote:** “Official information about Jehovah’s Witnesses and our activities for government officials, journalists, and academics.”

Claim: As of the recording, jw.org does not publicly link back to the Instagram or TikTok accounts, and the Global Communications page makes no mention of them.

- **Source:** jw.org, *Global Communications* (and site-wide), reviewed directly
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/global-communications/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — direct review of the official site. A link FROM jw.org would be conclusive (only Watchtower controls jw.org); a link in the account’s bio TO jw.org proves nothing, since anyone can place such a link.
- **Note:** This may change after publication. The absence of a public acknowledgment on the organization’s own front-facing site, despite an internal announcement to members, is itself discussed in the video.

SECTION 2: The Official Story — and the Mormon Comparison

Claim: Other major religious organizations maintain official social media accounts; for example, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains an official Instagram account.

- **Source:** @churchofjesuschrist on Instagram
- **URL:** <https://www.instagram.com/churchofjesuschrist/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the account itself, viewable directly.

Claim: The official Latter-day Saints Instagram account leaves comments enabled, including critical ones — in contrast to the JW Pressroom accounts, which disable them.

- **Source:** @churchofjesuschrist on Instagram (comments visible on posts); reporting on the March 2024 comment response, *Salt Lake Tribune*
- **URL:** <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2024/03/28/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY (the live LDS account, comments visible) / SECONDARY (news reporting on a widely covered episode in which thousands of comments were left on an LDS post and the post was not closed to comments).

SECTION 3: Twenty-Five Years of Internet and Social Media Warnings

Claim: In the late 1990s Watchtower published an article titled “Use of the Internet—Be Alert to the Dangers!” warning that internet use could expose a person to “great spiritual and moral dangers” and to websites “sponsored by apostates who wish to lure unsuspecting ones.”

- **Source:** *Our Kingdom Ministry*, 1999, “Use of the Internet—Be Alert to the Dangers!”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/201999403>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication (Watchtower Online Library).
- **Key quote:** “Other sites may be sponsored by apostates who wish to lure unsuspecting ones.”

Claim: The organization ran a “Young People Ask” series on social networking framed around privacy, time, and reputation, and told young people that whether they may have a social networking account at all is a decision for their parents to make.

- **Source:** *Awake!* July 2011 (Part 1) and August 2011 (Part 2), “What Should I Know About Social Networking?”
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201108/What-Should-I-Know-About-Social-Networking-Part-2/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official *Awake!* publication (jw.org). Part 1: [jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201107/](https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201107/)
- **Key quote:** “Should you have a social networking account at all? If you live with your parents, that’s for them to decide.”

Claim: An official meeting-workbook item titled “Social Networking—Avoid the Pitfalls” lists, as one of the dangers of social media, that “reading apostate material or blogs can damage one’s faith.”

- **Source:** *Our Christian Life and Ministry—Meeting Workbook*, June 2018, “Social Networking—Avoid the Pitfalls”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/202018212>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower meeting workbook (Watchtower Online Library).
- **Key quote:** “Reading apostate material or blogs can damage one's faith.”

SECTION 4: The 2018 Article

Claim: In 2018 *The Watchtower* ran a “Questions From Readers” item stating that social media accounts appearing to be from the organization or the Governing Body are fake, and that no Governing Body member has a personal web page or any social media account.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), August 2018, “Questions From Readers”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/402018364>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication (Watchtower Online Library).
- **Key quote:** “Also, some people create websites and social media accounts that seem as if they are from the organization or from brothers of the Governing Body. But these are fake. No member of the Governing Body has a personal Web page or an account on any social media site.”

Claim: The same 2018 article gives the reason the organization avoids platforms where people can comment: that allowing comments lets apostates and others criticize the organization.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), August 2018, “Questions From Readers”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/402018364>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication (Watchtower Online Library).
- **Key quote:** “In addition, if we post our material on websites where people can make comments, this allows apostates and others to criticize Jehovah's organization. Some brothers then argue with these people, and that brings even more dishonor to Jehovah.”

Claim: The June 2026 S-147 announcement that confirms the social media accounts also restates the rule that members may not repost the organization’s material online, and cites the April 2018 *Watchtower*, pages 30–31, as the basis for that rule.

- **Source:** *Announcements and Reminders*, form S-147-26.06-E, June 2026, point 1
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — internal Watchtower congregation document (same caveat on authentication as noted in Section 1).
- **Note:** The video’s point here is about the shift in tone, not a contradiction: a media operation wanting its content centralized on official channels is ordinary. The striking thing is that “social media,” once framed as a spiritual minefield, now appears as a routine housekeeping line item.

SECTION 5: The Lockdown and the Platform Land-Grab

Claim: The organization reserved the same handle, “jw_pressroom,” across Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X, with no content yet posted on YouTube or X.

- **Source:** The @jw_pressroom accounts on each platform, viewable directly
- **URL:** https://www.tiktok.com/@jw_pressroom/
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the accounts themselves.

Claim: Comments are turned off on the TikTok post; on Instagram, comments are restricted so that the public — including the account’s own followers — cannot comment.

- **Source:** The @jw_pressroom Instagram and TikTok accounts, reviewed directly (including a follow test on Instagram)
- **URL:** https://www.instagram.com/jw_pressroom
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — direct observation of the live accounts.

SECTION 6: Why Now — The Demographic Picture

Claim: According to the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds (66%) of U.S. adults raised as Jehovah’s Witnesses no longer identify with the group — a low retention rate relative to other U.S. religious groups.

- **Source:** Pew Research Center, *A closer look at Jehovah's Witnesses living in the U.S.* (Religious Landscape Study)
- **URL:** <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — independent national survey by the Pew Research Center.
- **Key quote:** “Among all U.S. adults who were raised as Jehovah's Witnesses, two-thirds (66%) no longer identify with the group.”

Claim: The membership is aging, with born-in members leaving faster than new converts arrive, trending toward a point where more members die each year than are baptized.

- **Source:** Analysis of Watchtower's own published yearly statistics
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — analysis compiling Watchtower's own published membership figures and census data. Presented in the video as analysis of a trend, not as a Watchtower claim.

Claim: The framing that this launch is aimed at recapturing young people is the creator's analysis of the timing and platform choice, not the organization's stated reason; the S-147 states the accounts are for a secular audience of officials, journalists, and researchers.

- **Source:** Creator analysis / editorial opinion — not a factual claim requiring external verification
- **Verification:** N/A — clearly identified in the video as interpretation. The underlying facts it rests on (the demographic data and the platforms chosen) are sourced above.

SECTION 7: The Boldness Literature vs. the First-Century Standard

Claim: The organization claims to be the modern restoration of first-century Christianity — the one true religion — teaching that true Christianity vanished after the apostles until restored through the organization.

- **Source:** Watchtower teaching, as compiled in reference works on Jehovah's Witness beliefs
- **URL:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — standard reference summary of a well-documented core teaching. The organization states this claim across its own literature.

Claim: Watchtower has published numerous articles urging members to be bold and fearless, including ones titled “Imitate Jesus—Preach With Boldness,” “Do You Preach With Boldness?,” “Speak the Word of God Fearlessly,” and “Courage in the Face of Opposition.”

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* and related publications (multiple issues)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2009523>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publications (Watchtower Online Library). Linked: “Imitate Jesus—Preach With Boldness.”

Claim: A Watchtower article defines the biblical word for “boldness” as “outspokenness, frankness, plainness” and “fearlessness.”

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, 2010, “Speak the Word of God With Boldness”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2010122>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication (Watchtower Online Library).
- **Key quote:** “outspokenness, frankness, plainness”

Claim: A Watchtower article quotes 2 Timothy 1:7 — “God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but that of power” — holding up cowardice as something a faithful Christian must not display.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, 1959, “Fear Jehovah—Never Men”; 2 Timothy 1:7 (NWT)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1959605>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication (Watchtower Online Library).

Claim: A Watchtower article (“Do You Preach With Boldness?”) leans on 1 Peter 3:15, which instructs Christians to always be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks about their hope.

- **Source:** 1 Peter 3:15 (New World Translation, 2013)
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/1-peter/3/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the Bible translation published and used by Jehovah’s Witnesses.
- **Key quote:** “always ready to make a defense before everyone who demands of you a reason for the hope you have, but doing so with a mild temper and deep respect”

Claim: Jesus, on trial, stated that he had spoken to the world publicly and said nothing in secret.

- **Source:** John 18:20 (New World Translation, 2013)
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/john/18/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the Bible translation published and used by Jehovah’s Witnesses.
- **Key quote:** “I have spoken to the world publicly. I always taught in a synagogue and in the temple... and I said nothing in secret.”

Claim: The apostles, ordered by the Sanhedrin to stop speaking, answered that they must obey God as ruler rather than men, and kept speaking publicly.

- **Source:** Acts 5:29 (New World Translation, 2013)
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/acts/5/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the Bible translation published and used by Jehovah’s Witnesses.
- **Key quote:** “We must obey God as ruler rather than men.”

Claim: The apostle Paul reasoned publicly with all comers and, given the opportunity, appealed his case to Caesar.

- **Source:** Acts 17:17; Acts 25:11 (New World Translation, 2013)
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/acts/25/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the Bible translation published and used by Jehovah’s Witnesses.
- **Key quote:** “I appeal to Caesar!”

SECTION 8: The Door They Couldn’t Lock

Claim: When a video is posted to TikTok, the platform automatically creates an “original sound” credited to the poster, and any user can record their own video using that sound; all such videos are collected on the sound’s page, reachable from the original post. This cannot be disabled.

- **Source:** TikTok platform functionality (the “original sound” / Use this sound feature)
- **URL:** <https://www.tiktok.com/music/original-sound-JW-Pressroom-7644967494563040033>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — observable TikTok feature; the JW Pressroom original-sound page is viewable directly, and shows third-party videos made with the audio.
- **Note:** This is how a critical response attached itself to the organization’s own post despite comments being disabled.

SECTION 9: Additional Supporting Sources

Style and Terminology Guide (jw.org Global Communications)

- **Source:** jw.org, Global Communications — Style and Terminology Guide

- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/global-communications/terminology-guide/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — jw.org.
- **Contains:** The organization's own description of its Global Communications operation as outreach to journalists, officials, and academics — the apparatus the new accounts extend onto social media.

Pew Research Center — U.S. Religious Landscape Study (2008 findings)

- **Source:** Pew Research Center, U.S. Religious Landscape Survey
- **URL:** pewresearch.org/religion/2008/02/01/
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Pew Research Center.
- **Contains:** The earlier finding that Jehovah's Witnesses had the lowest retention rate of any U.S. religious tradition (37% in the 2008 study), corroborating the long-running retention problem discussed in the video.

Watchtower publications are linked to the Watchtower Online Library (wol.jw.org) and jw.org so you can read each source in its full original context. Where a claim rests on a document I cannot personally authenticate, or on my own interpretation, I have said so directly — both in the video and in the notes above.