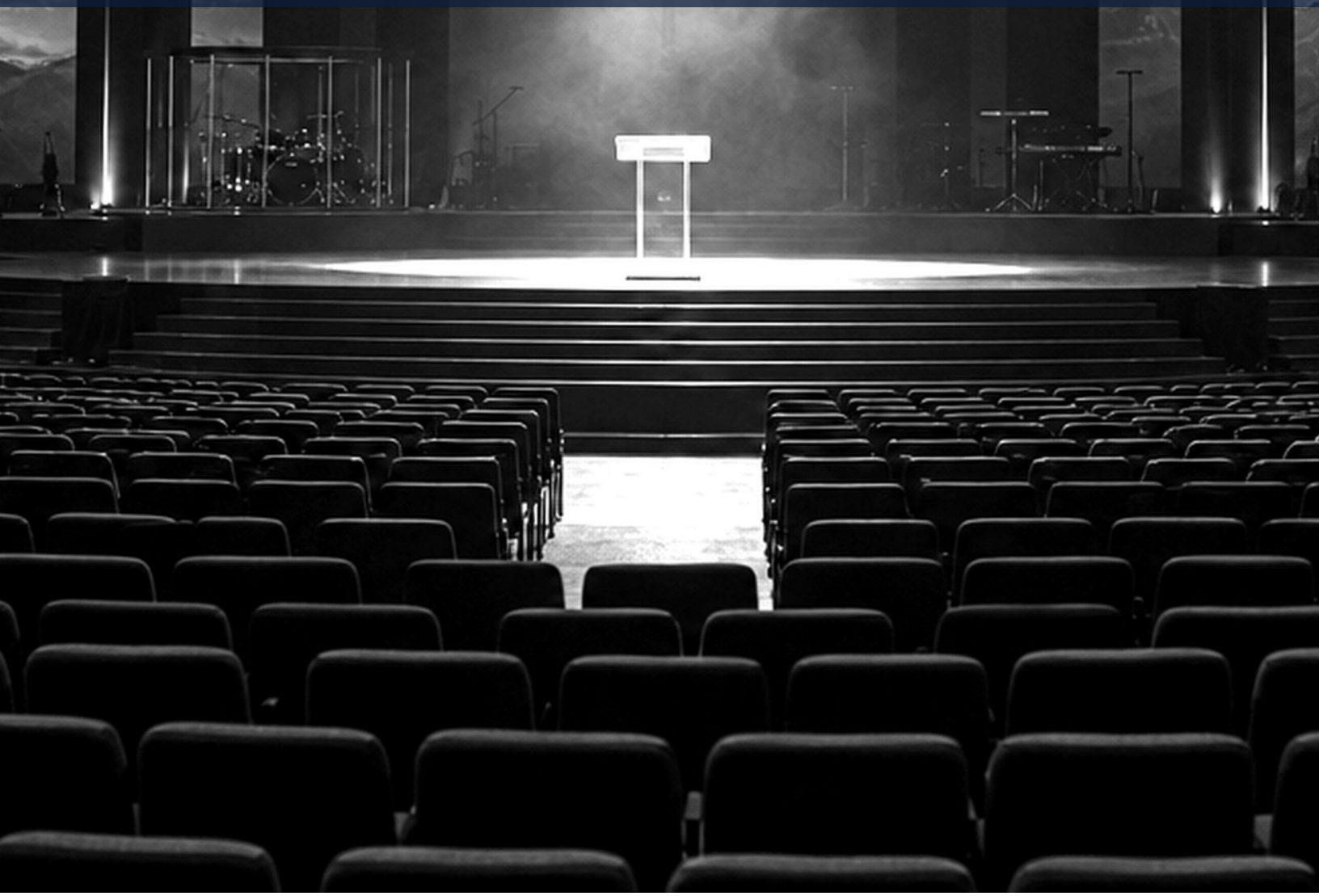
SELF-WILL RUN RIOT

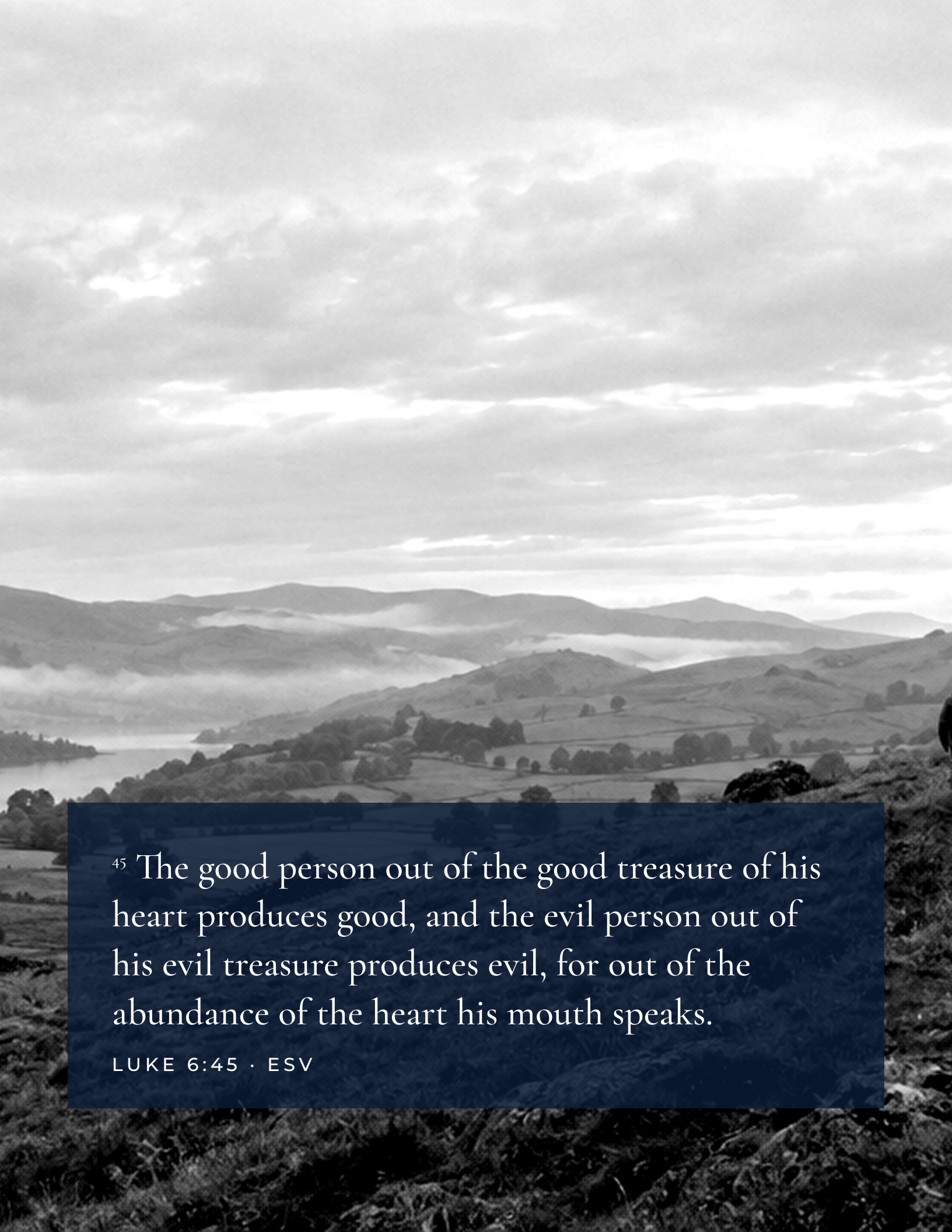
Can you hear what runs a pastor's heart in what he says on Sunday?



A SUNDAY SCORECARD STUDY
RESEARCH PAPER N° 1

CHURCH ACCOUNTABILITY NETWORK
NOVEMBER 2026

Opinion and commentary on sermons that churches posted in public. Short clips and quotes are used under fair use for criticism, comment and research. A score measures language in one sermon. It is not a verdict on any person, and being named in a public record is not a finding of guilt.



45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

LUKE 6:45 · ESV

RESEARCH PAPER Nº 1

WHAT'S INSIDE

A Note From Nick	4
How to Read This Booklet	5
What We Found	6
The Big Idea: The Actor Who Runs the Show	7
Jobs, Not Titles	8
The 10 Tests	9
Test 1 · The Mirror	10
Tests 2 and 3 · Bragging, Owning Up, God-Talk	11
Tests 4 and 5 · Who Gets Helped by the Ask?	12
Test 6 · When the Bible Gets Bent	13
Test 7 · Front Stage, Backstage	14
Test 8 · One Sunday Is a Snapshot	15
Test 9 · Who Is the Boss of the Pastor?	16
Test 10 · Every Seat Has a Pull	17
What Could It Look Like?	18
The 10 Patterns	19
What We Can't Say Yet, and What's Next	20
The CAN Journey	21
Go Deeper: The Digital Concordance	22
How We Did It, and Sources	23



Every number in this booklet was rerun on the live Sunday Scorecard library on November 2, 2026. The word lists, the queries and the method are published so anyone can check them. Scripture is quoted from the ESV.

BEFORE YOU START

A NOTE FROM NICK

I worked on church staff for most of my adult life. So this booklet points at me too.

I know how it goes. You start out wanting to play music and love people. Then one day you wake up, and you are making choices just to keep the machine running. Nobody plans that. It happens one small decision at a time.

This booklet asks one question about 150 sermons. Does what a pastor says on Sunday show what runs his heart?

We did not try to read hearts. Only God can do that. We checked words, the way you check fruit on a tree. We counted who the sermon was about, what it asked people to do, and how the Bible was handled. Then we lined those counts up with a public record of church trouble and with how each church says it is led.

Some of what we found, I expected. Some of it surprised me. One thing I did not expect: a clean sermon tells you almost nothing about what happens in the staff room.

Nick Smith
Church Accountability Network

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

This is opinion and commentary. We only use sermons that churches posted in public. Short clips and quotes appear under fair use, for criticism, comment and research.

A score measures the language in one sermon. It is never a verdict on a person. Any pastor or church named here has a right of reply at accountability.church, and we correct errors in the open.

Sunday Scorecard and CAN are not part of The Roys Report or BishopAccountability.org. They did not help with this and do not endorse it. We use their public records and are thankful for their work. Being named in those records is not a finding of guilt.

> *Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*
>
> 1 PETER 5:3, ESV

WHY WE DO THIS

We believe the church should lead the way in integrity, transparency and accountability. Sunday Scorecard exists so the faithful can ask for exactly that.

START HERE

HOW TO READ THIS BOOKLET

1. The Control Score

Every sermon gets a **Control Score** from 0 to 100. It measures one thing only: how much the sermon leans on pressure to control people. Fear. Shame. "Obey me." Loyalty to the man. Money pressure.

0 to 19 CLEAN	20 to 39 SOME	40 to 100 HEAVY

Low is good. A 0 means the scorer found no control language at all. It does not mean the sermon was bad, or good. It only means nobody was being pushed around.

2. The Sunday Score

Each sermon also gets a **Sunday Score** from 0 to 100. That one measures merit: how well the sermon handles Scripture against what all of Christendom holds. High is good. A sermon can have no control language and a high Sunday Score. A few in this booklet do.

3. The colors

● **Navy** marks control at 40 or more. ● **Grey** marks less. ○ **An outlined bar** marks a merit score. Gold is only for rules and seals.

4. What a "link" means

When two things go up and down together, we call that a link. We give it as a number from 0 to 1. In a group this size, .20 or more is a real link. A link does not prove that one thing causes the other. Every link in this booklet is measured on the 111 everyday-church sermons. Line counts come from the whole library.

FRUIT, NOT HEARTS

Only God sees the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). But Jesus said you can know a tree by its fruit (Matthew 7:16). Words are fruit. So we check the words, not the heart. Nothing in this booklet judges anyone's soul.

WHAT IS THE ROYS REPORT?

The Roys Report is a news site that keeps a public list of church leaders named in reports of misconduct. The entries range from allegations to admissions and convictions. **Being named in the record is not a finding of guilt.**

ONE SERMON IS ONE SUNDAY

Most preachers in this booklet have one scored sermon. That is one Sunday out of hundreds they have preached. Read every number that way.

THE SHORT VERSION

WHAT WE FOUND

You can hear control in who the sermon is about and what it asks you to do. You can't hear it by counting how often God is named. And one Sunday is never enough.

Nearly 5×

more control in sermons where the preacher says "I, me, my" the most, compared with the least (25 vs. 5)

.34

the link between control and asks that feed the church machine, like "serve," "give" and "sign up." Asks that point to God: no link at all

73 of 100

Bible claims were bent in the sermons most about the leader. Only 30 of 100 in the sermons least about him.

4 vs 39

Control Score of the typical church that says who the pastor answers to, against the typical church that says nothing

4×

Top-seat leaders were named for spiritual abuse or bullying about four times as often as other clergy in the public record

13 of 21

sermons by preachers named in the record scored under 27 on control. The sermon cannot show the staff room.

149 sermons scored, one more in review. 131 had full word-for-word transcripts, just over one million words. 111 came from everyday churches after we set aside 20 sermons picked on purpose to test the high end.



PART ONE

THE ACTOR WHO RUNS THE SHOW

THE ANSWER

What a pastor says on Sunday shows what runs his heart. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous has a name for the thing that runs it.

Our title comes from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the chapter called "How It Works," it tells a story about a man who thinks he is the director of a play.

He is not only acting in it. He is moving the lights. He is placing the scenery. He is telling every other actor where to stand and what to say. If they would all just do it his way, he is sure, the show would be a hit and everyone would be happy. He may even be kind and generous while he does it. But the cast gets tired of being moved around. They start to push back. And the man cannot understand why the show keeps falling apart. The book calls him *"an actor who wants to run the whole show,"* and says this self-will, run riot, is the root of the trouble.[1]

Now put him behind a pulpit. He has a stage, a cast, a budget, a building and a crowd. If anyone is tempted to direct the whole play, it is him.

A church can drift the same way a drinker does. It starts with a pure heart. Then it grows. Now there is a payroll to meet, a building to rent and another campus to open. Little by little, the leaders make choices to keep it all going. One day the system is the boss, and the man at the front is the director of the play.

The Bible warns about this. A man named Diotrephes "likes to put himself first" (3 John 9). Elders are told not to lord it over the people (1 Peter 5:3). Jesus said the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over people, and "it shall not be so among you" (Matthew 20:25-26).

> *God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering.*
>
> JOHN MACARTHUR, FOUND: GOD'S WILL

Look at that list again. A stage is not on it. A vision, a campus or a building fund is not on it either. God is calling you to Himself.

TRACE IT. Look up Diotrephes, Matthew 20, and 1 Peter 5 in the CAN Digital Concordance to see every tradition's reading, side by side.

accountability.church

1. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), pp. 60-62, "How It Works." The phrase "self-will run riot" is on p. 62.

JOBS, NOT TITLES

THE ANSWER
In the New Testament, church leaders do a job. They do not hold a throne.

> *You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you.*
>
> MATTHEW 20:25-26, ESV

The writer Frank Viola has argued for twenty years that the church copied the world's ladder of bosses. In *Pagan Christianity?*, he and George Barna trace the modern pastor's role to habits that grew up long after the apostles, and argue that the one-man pulpit has no model in the first churches.[2]

In *Reimagining Church*, Viola goes to the Greek. Old English Bibles say "office" in a few places. He writes that *"the word office in these passages is a mistranslation,"* and that the Greek words describe things people do, not ranks they hold.[3] His short version: *"elder is the person, overseer is the function, and shepherd is the gift."*[4]

LOOK AT THE GREEK

Romans 12:4 · KJV *office*. Greek *praxis*: a job, a thing you do.
1 Timothy 3:1 · KJV *office of a bishop*. Greek *episkopē*: watching over.
Romans 11:13 · KJV *mine office*. Greek *diakonia*: serving.

The other side matters too. Hebrews 13:17 tells believers to follow their leaders. Paul says elders who lead well should be honored (1 Timothy 5:17), and he appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Viola's critics say he reads too much into silence. The middle answer most scholars land on is a team of elders who answer to each other and to the church.[5]

Some say anyone who joins the system goes bad. Our data does not show that. Many preachers had almost no control language. It shows something smaller and, we think, truer.

Every seat in the system has its own pull.

IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The whole church picked its first helpers (Acts 6:3-5). The leaders settled the hardest question of their day together with the whole church. They wrote, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28).

2. Viola, F., and Barna, G., *Pagan Christianity?* (Tyndale, 2008), ch. 5, "The Pastor," pp. 105-144. 3. Viola, F., *Reimagining Church* (David C Cook, 2008), appendix, "Is the New Testament Hierarchical?", as excerpted by the author in "Rethinking Leadership," frankviola.org, Jan. 15, 2014. 4. Viola, author's comment on "Rethinking Leadership," frankviola.org. 5. Strauch, A., *Biblical Eldership* (1995); Jacoby, D., "The Teaching of Frank Viola on Leadership and Authority," douglasjacoby.com.



PART TWO

THE 10 TESTS

Ten questions. One scorecard. A million words of sermons.

TEST 1 THE MIRROR

WHO IS THE SERMON ABOUT?

THE ANSWER

The more a preacher talks about himself, the more control is in the sermon.

5 *to* 25

average Control Score, from the sermons with the least "I, me, my" to the most

We counted how often each preacher said "I," "me," "my," "mine" and "myself," per thousand words. Then we sorted the everyday-church sermons into four equal groups. Control went up every step of the way. This was the strongest word signal in the whole study (link .43).

None of the 27 sermons with the least "I" scored high on control. Seven of the 28 with the most "I" did. That is one in four.

SAYING "I" IS NOT THE SAME AS BEING PROUD

Studies show that people with power usually say "I" *less*, and a study of 4,811 people found no link between "I" and narcissism. So this is about something else. It is the most powerful man in the room, on a stage, talking about himself.

Figure 1 Control goes up with "I, me, my"



111 sermons from everyday churches. Bar = average Control Score.

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

Count the stories. How many are about the preacher: what he built, what God told him, what he decided? How many are about God, or about you? You do not need a scorecard to hear the difference. You just need to notice who the hero is.

TEST 2 THE HERO PRONOUN

BRAGGING OR OWNING UP?

THE ANSWER

Bragging "I" goes with control. Honest "I" does not.

BRAGGING "I"

"I built." "My vision." "God told me." "I'm your pastor."

Linked

goes with more control (link .24) · 234 lines found

HONEST "I"

"I was wrong." "I failed." "I needed grace." "Forgive me."

No link

no link to control (.04) · 115 lines found

A preacher who tells on himself is not the problem. The problem is the preacher as the hero of the story: the builder, the visionary, the one God speaks to. Owning up did not lower control either. It simply is not the signal.

TEST 3 GOD-TALK IS NOT A SHOT

DOES NAMING GOD A LOT HELP?

3,093

lines where God is the one doing things ("God did," "Jesus saves")

No. These lines had no link to control at all (-.06). High-control sermons talk about God plenty. What sets them apart is what else they talk about, and what they ask you to do.

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

Notice whether "I" is a confession or a trophy. "I was wrong" is a healthy sign. "I built this" is a flag. And do not be put at ease by how often God's name comes up. Count the asks instead. The next page shows why.

> *You can't tell how healthy a sermon is by how often God is named.*

TEST 4 and 5 THE ASK LIST

WHO GETS HELPED BY THE ASK?

THE ANSWER

Asks that help the church machine go with control. Asks that point people to God do not.

Machine asks are serve, sign up, tithe, give today, join a team, get the app and "sow a seed." They had the second-strongest link in the study (.34, 425 lines).

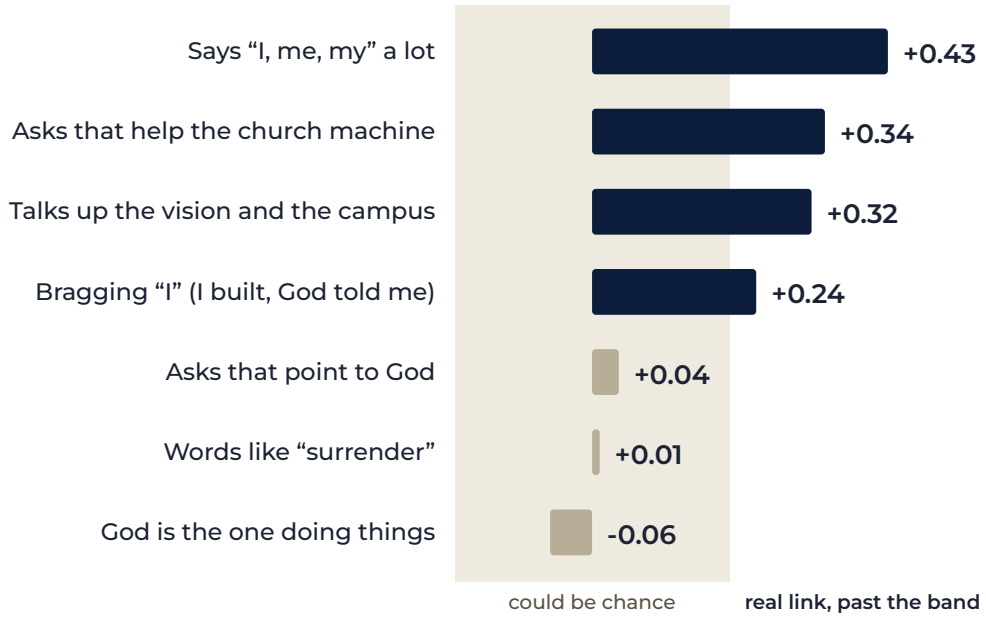
God asks are pray, repent, confess, surrender, abide and trust God. They had no link at all (.04, 1,546 lines). Asking people to pray does not cancel asking them to staff and fund the vision.

Talking up **"the vision," "the house" and "the campus"** went with control too (.32). Words like "surrender" and "deny yourself" did not protect a sermon (.01).

WE GOT ONE THING WRONG

An early test on fewer sermons said "surrender" words protect a sermon. It did not hold up with more sermons. We take it back.

Figure 2 What goes with control, and what doesn't



Each bar is one word pattern from Appendix A, run on 111 everyday-church sermons. A bar that reaches past the grey band, on either side, is unlikely to be chance.

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

Write down every ask. Sort them: machine (give, serve, sign up, download) or walk with God (pray, repent, forgive, abide). Both can be fine. Which list is longer, and which one got the passion?



TEST 6 ONE PROBLEM, TWO FACES

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BIBLE?

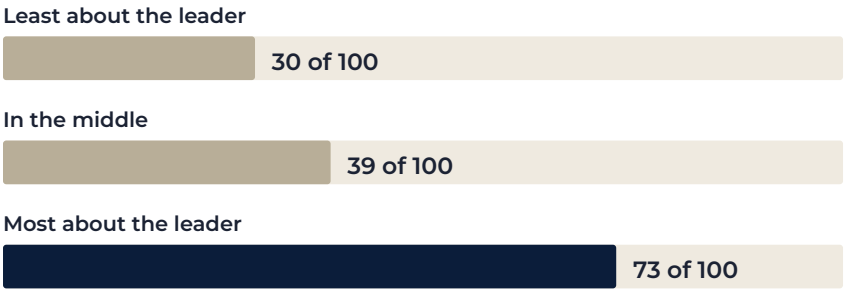
THE ANSWER

When the man is the boss, the Bible gets bent to serve him.

30 *to* 73

Bible claims out of 100 that were bent, from the sermons least about the leader to the sermons most about him

Figure 3 How many Bible claims got bent



112 sermons with claim checks, sorted into thirds by leader-centered control.

"Bent" means things like pulling one verse out of its setting, reading a meaning into it, saying "the Bible says" with no verse, or treating a tradition as if it were the text. Leader-centered control and bent claims moved together very strongly (link .67). Pressure control, like fear and shame, did the same (.64), and the two kinds of control travel together (.80).

One problem, two faces. When the sermon is about the man, the text starts working for the man.

The same AI judge scored both control and bent claims, so some of this link may come from the judge itself. The word-count tests on the other pages do not have this problem.

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

When a verse is read, ask two questions. What did it mean to the people who first heard it? Does it still mean that here? If the verse only works when it is about the pastor, the church or the campaign, look it up.

TEST 7 FRONT STAGE, BACKSTAGE

DO THE SCORES MATCH THE PUBLIC RECORD?

THE ANSWER

Partly. The pulpit can't see the staff room. A clean sermon never clears a church.

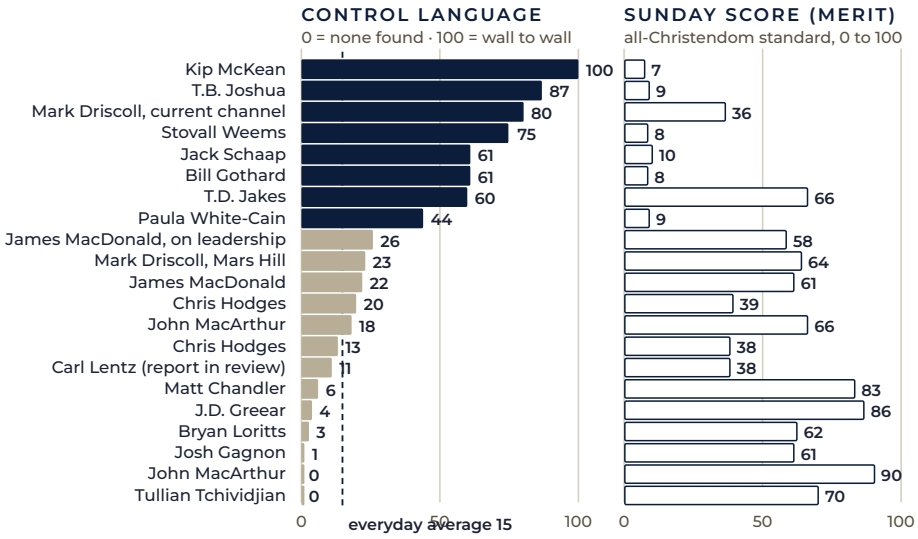
34 *vs* 15

average Control Score: 21 sermons by 18 preachers named in the Roys Report record, against 117 everyday-church sermons by preachers who are not

The named group runs higher on average, but it splits in two. Seven sermons scored 60 or higher. Thirteen scored 26 or lower.

The record lists Tullian Tchividjian for sexual misconduct he has acknowledged in public. His sermon showed no control language at all (0 of 100) and a Sunday Score of 70. John MacArthur: no control language, Sunday Score 90. James MacDonald is named for misuse of church money and bullying; his two sermons showed modest control (22, 26) and solid merit (61, 58). A low control number is not "no merit." They measure different things, and the gap between them is the finding: the stage can be clean while the staff room is not.

Figure 4 Named in the record: control and merit, side by side



One row per scored sermon. Left: control language found in that sermon (navy at 40 or more). Right: the Sunday Score, a merit score, for the same sermon. Both run 0 to 100. Being named in the Roys record is not a finding of guilt; entries range from allegations to convictions. Almost every preacher here has one scored sermon, one Sunday out of hundreds (see Test 8). Sermons we picked from Robert Morris and Brian Houston are now private or gone from YouTube. Carl Lentz's 2015 talk is in review.

IS ONE SUNDAY ENOUGH?

THE ANSWER

No. Sermons from the same church can score very differently.

16 *points*

the average gap between a church's lowest and highest scored sermon. The widest gap was 49.

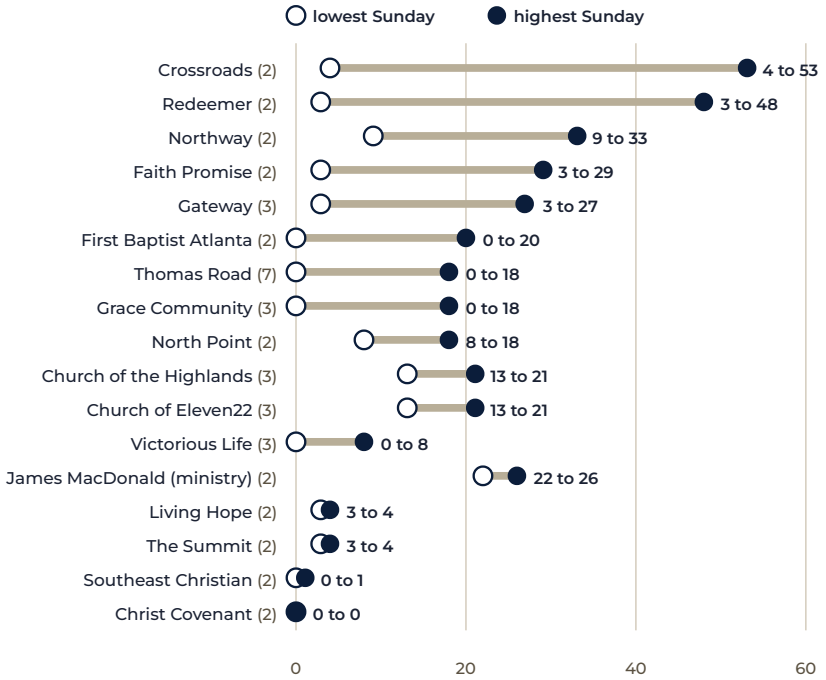
Seventeen churches had two to seven scored sermons each, 44 sermons in all. At Crossroads, the founding pastor's sermon scored 53 and a teaching pastor's scored 4. At Redeemer, 3 and 48. At Northway, a guest preacher scored 33 and the senior pastor 9.

Which church it was explained about one eighth of the spread in scores. The rest came down to the Sunday and the man in the pulpit.

WHAT THIS MEANS

Never judge a church by one Sunday. Fruit shows over a season. Who is preaching matters as much as which church it is. That is the honest caveat on every other page of this booklet.

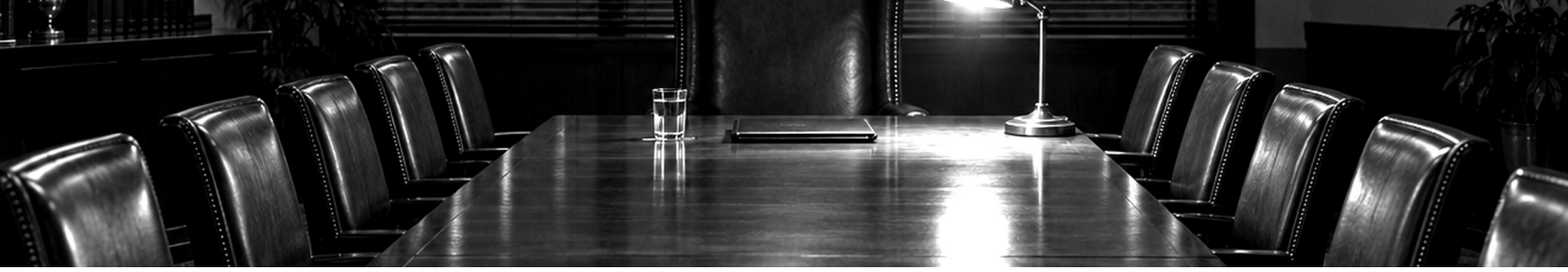
Figure 5 Same church, different Sundays



All 17 churches with two or more scored sermons. Number in parentheses is sermons scored at that church.

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

Give a church a season. Four to six Sundays, with different preachers if they have them. One sermon tells you about one sermon.



TEST 9 THE MISSING ORG CHART

WHO IS THE BOSS OF THE PASTOR?

THE ANSWER
Churches that say who the pastor answers to had far less control in the pulpit.

4 *vs* 39

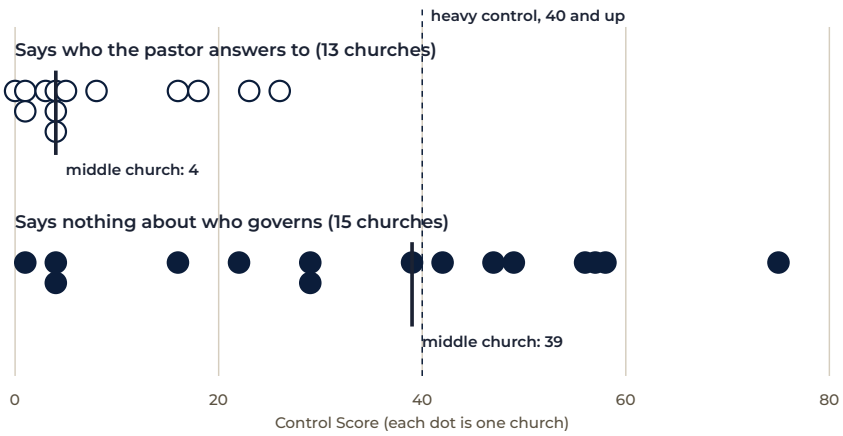
Control Score of the middle church in each group

A separate research pass looked at 28 churches, blind to their scores, using only what each church says about itself. Is there a team of elders or a board? Can members remove the pastor? Is the budget public?

The 13 churches that publish a plural governing body averaged 9. The 15 that publish nothing about who governs averaged 35. The seven churches with the most control all had one thing in common: none of them says who the pastor answers to.

A web page is not proof of how a church really works. Watermark and Gateway publish strong elder pages and still have Roys entries. Church averages rest on one to three sermons. A small first pass, drawn from the high and low ends on purpose.

Figure 6 Churches that say who leads carry less control



Each dot is one church's average Control Score. 28 churches, coded November 2, 2026. Unlikely to be chance (p = .002).

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

Go to the church website. Who does the pastor answer to? Can members vote him out? Where does the money go? If you cannot find it in five minutes, ask someone on staff, and notice how they react.

TEST 10 EVERY SEAT HAS A PULL

DOES THE SEAT SHAPE THE PROBLEM?

THE ANSWER

Yes. Each seat in the church has its own kind of temptation.

20 *vs* 5

out of 100 top-seat leaders, against other clergy, named for spiritual abuse or bullying

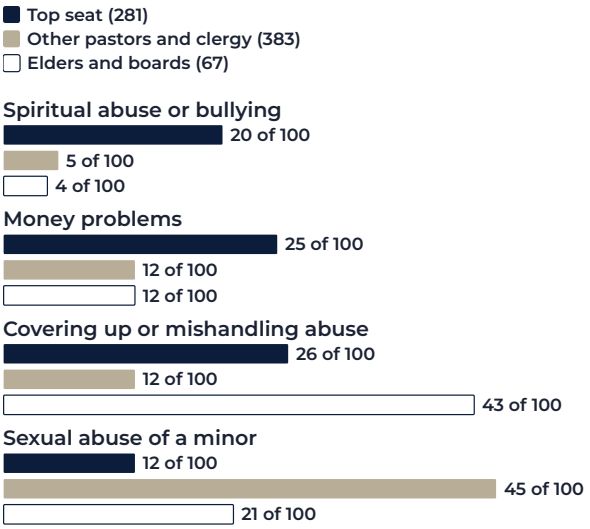
We sorted all 861 Roys Report entries by the person's role. Top-seat leaders, like senior pastors, founders, bishops and presidents, were named for spiritual abuse or bullying about four times as often as other clergy. They were also named most for money problems (25 of 100).

Elders and boards had their own pattern. More than four in ten of their entries were about covering up or mishandling someone else's abuse. Protecting the system is the board's temptation.

And one failure runs the other way. Sexual abuse of a minor shows up mostly among other clergy, like youth and associate ministers, not the top seat. So no seat is safe, and no seat is the only one to watch.

> *Self-will run riot, at the top of the org chart.*

Figure 7 What the record shows, seat by seat



Share of each seat's entries that mention each problem. The Roys Report tracks problems, not every leader, so this shows which problems go with which seat, not how often a seat fails.

LISTEN FOR IT THIS SUNDAY

Know the seat. The top seat is pulled toward power and money. The board is pulled toward protecting the system. Staff seats are pulled toward access. Each one needs its own check, not the same check three times.



PART THREE

WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE?

What if the senior pastor didn't call all the shots? What if the big choices were made by a team, out in the open, and the church could see who the pastor answers to? In our first pass, churches that work that way had a fraction of the control in the pulpit. The early church picked its helpers together. It settled its hardest questions together too.

"It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." · Acts 15:28, ESV

PART FOUR

THE 10 PATTERNS

Ten things to listen for. The right column is the strength of each link, or the numbers behind it.

01	**THE MIRROR** The sermon keeps coming back to the preacher.	.43
02	**THE HERO PRONOUN** “I built,” “my vision,” “God told me.” Owning up doesn’t count.	.24
03	**THE ASK LIST** The asks feed the church machine, not your walk with God.	.34
04	**THE HOUSE SPEAKS** The vision, the house and the campus become the topic.	.32
05	**GOD-TALK IS NOT A SHOT** Naming God a lot tells you nothing about control.	-.06
06	**ONE PROBLEM, TWO FACES** When the man is the boss, the Bible gets bent.	73 vs 30
07	**FRONT STAGE, BACKSTAGE** The sermon shows the stage, not the staff room.	13 of 21
08	**ONE SUNDAY IS A SNAPSHOT** Sermons from one church can score 49 points apart.	16 pts
09	**THE MISSING ORG CHART** The church won’t say who the pastor answers to.	39 vs 4
10	**EVERY SEAT HAS A PULL** Top seat: power and money. Board: protect the system.	20 vs 5

THE ONE-SENTENCE VERSION

What runs a pastor’s heart shows in whom the sermon is about and what it asks people to do. It does not show in how often God is named, and it does not show in a single Sunday.

WHAT TO DO WITH IT

Listen over a season. Pair what you hear with how the church is led and what people who worked there say. Then decide. The scorecard is a tool for that, not a verdict.

PART FIVE

WHAT WE CAN'T SAY YET

- **These are links, not causes.** They show what goes together. They don't show what causes what. And nothing here reads a heart.
- **One judge.** The same AI scored control and bent Bible claims, so Test 6 may be partly the judge agreeing with itself. The word counts in Tests 1 to 5 don't have this problem.
- **Famous names.** The judge may know who is famous. But two well-known preachers in the record had no control language at all, so it does not simply punish fame.
- **Picked sermons.** We added 20 high-control sermons on purpose to test the top of the scale. Every word result was checked with and without them.
- **One Sunday each.** Almost every named preacher has one scored sermon. Test 8 shows how much one Sunday can swing.
- **Simple word counts.** They also count quotes and Bible verses read out loud, and auto-captions drop some words.
- **Mostly big, online, American churches.** Small churches are hardly in the study yet.
- **Change over time is not tested.** Only one church has enough years of sermons, and its scores went down over time.

WHAT'S NEXT

WATCH FOR DRIFT

Ten sermons each from about ten pastors over ten years, lined up against new campuses and building drives. Does the "I" rise as the building goes up?

SMALL CHURCHES

About 20 sermons from small churches and house churches. Is the small church the healthier model, or just a smaller stage?

A BLIND RE-SCORE

Thirty sermons scored again with names and churches hidden, to see how much the judge is swayed by reputation.

GOVERNANCE FOR THE WHOLE LIBRARY

Extend the 28-church pilot to every church in the library.

KEEP WATCHING

Lock today's scores. Then check new Roys Report entries every three months and see which sermons, if any, saw it coming.

PART SIX

THE CAN JOURNEY

This booklet is one step in a bigger project. Here is where it came from, and where you can go next.

The Church Accountability Network started with a simple belief: the church should lead the way in integrity, transparency and accountability. For most of history the church held the torch for everyone else. Today a flood of information, a thin layer of accountability and a hunger for influence have trapped a lot of it.

So we built tools. Not to tear churches down, but to give the people in the pews a way to see clearly and ask good questions. Every finding is a clip and a source, never a verdict about a person. Every church gets a right of reply.

TWO STANDARDS, EVERY TIME

Each sermon is judged once against the church's own stated beliefs, and once against what all of Christendom holds. A church is never marked down for being what it says it is.

Sunday Scorecard

Drop in a sermon your church posted. Get the Control Score, the Sunday Score, every claim with its clip, and the source it came from. mysundayscorecard.com

My Sermon Scorecard, for pastors

The same check, run before you preach. Weak spots and suggested fixes, in private. accountability.church/pastors

CAN Digital Concordance

An explorable chart that traces every belief, name and claim back to its source. The next page shows how to use it with this booklet.

The Remnant

A free, encouraging community for people using these tools to love their churches well.

TRANSPARENCY IN ASSESSMENT

The scoring method, the word lists and the queries behind every figure in this booklet are published in the open. Anyone can rerun them at no cost. If we got something wrong, tell us and we will fix it in public.

GO DEEPER

THE DIGITAL CONCORDANCE

To the sources (*ad fontes*). Every verse, name and claim in this booklet can be traced back to where it came from.

What it is

The CAN Digital Concordance is an explorable chart of beliefs. Gods, angels, councils, creeds, churches and the verses behind them, laid out so you can follow a thread from a Sunday sermon all the way back to the first time anyone wrote it down.

How to use it with this booklet

1. Pick a verse. Diotrephes in 3 John 9. "Not so among you" in Matthew 20. Elders in 1 Peter 5. Type it in.

2. See its lineage. The original setting, the Greek behind the English, and how every major tradition has read it.

3. Check the sermon. When a pastor uses the verse, you now know what it meant first. That is all Test 6 does, one claim at a time.

TRY THESE FIRST

Office or function? Trace *praxis*, *episkopē* and *diakonia* (page 8).

Who chose the leaders? Trace Acts 6 and Acts 15 and see who was in the room.

By their fruit. Trace Matthew 7:16 and 1 Samuel 16:7, the two verses this whole study rests on.

Why it matters here

Tests 1 through 5 count words. Test 6 checks claims against the text. The Concordance is how you do Test 6 yourself, on any sermon, without us. When the man is the boss, the Bible gets bent. The cure is for the people in the pews to know the text better than the man at the front.

> *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*
>
> ACTS 17:11, ESV

FOR THE CURIOUS

HOW WE DID IT

The scorecard. Sunday Scorecard reads each sermon from its own transcript. It runs a control check three times and keeps the middle result, looking for 13 kinds of control that experts on spiritual abuse have written about. It also checks each Bible claim against the text, and scores merit against the church's own beliefs and against all of Christendom.

The sermons. 149 published sermons on method 1.6, plus one in review. 131 had full transcripts, 1,020,237 words. 111 came from everyday churches after we set aside 20 high-control sermons chosen on purpose. We also used all 861 Roys Report entries and 8,103 BishopAccountability.org entries.

The math. Links are Spearman rank correlations (a rank test). In a group this size, about .20 or more is unlikely to be chance. Group differences use the Mann-Whitney test (a test for two groups). For Test 8 we used a one-way intraclass correlation (how much the church, not the Sunday, explains). We ran about twenty tests and only lean on results that held in both the full library and the everyday churches.

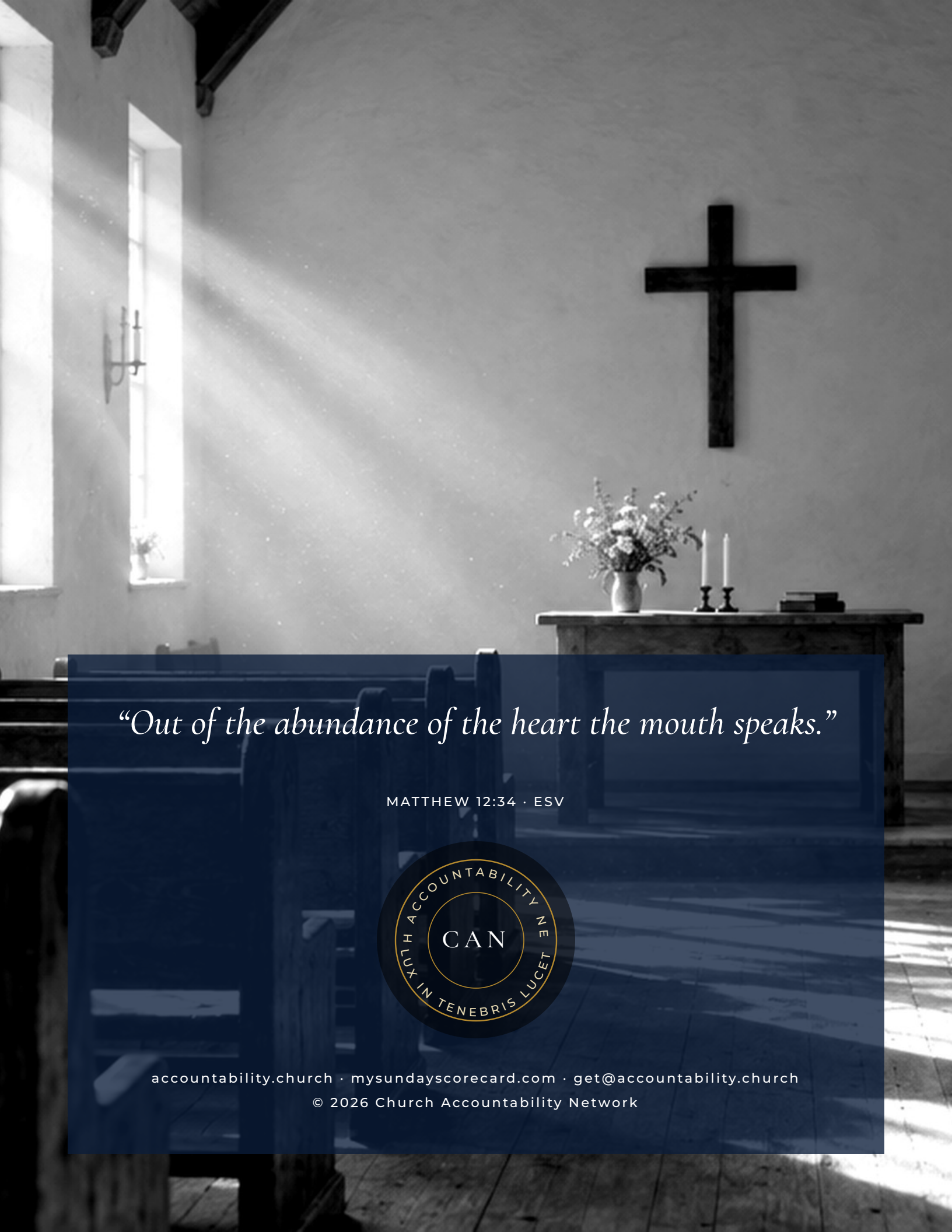
The rerun. Every number here was recomputed on the live library on November 2, 2026, with the word lists exactly as published. Two numbers from an earlier draft did not survive and were dropped.

SOURCES

1. Luke 6:45; Matthew 7:16-20; Matthew 20:25-28; 3 John 9-10; 1 Peter 5:2-3; 1 Samuel 16:7; James 3:1; Acts 6:3-5; 14:23; 15:22-28; 17:11; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 3:1; 5:17; Romans 11:13; 12:4. ESV.
2. Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed. (AA World Services, 2001), pp. 60-62.
3. MacArthur, J. Found: God's Will (David C Cook, 2011 ed.).
4. Viola, F., and Barna, G. Pagan Christianity? (Tyndale, 2008), ch. 5. Viola, F. Reimagining Church (David C Cook, 2008), appendix; and "Rethinking Leadership," frankviola.org, Jan. 15, 2014.
5. Strauch, A. Biblical Eldership (Lewis and Roth, 1995). Jacoby, D. "The Teaching of Frank Viola on Leadership and Authority," douglasjacoby.com.
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8. Lifton, R. J. (1961). Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism. Johnson, D., and VanVonderen, J. (1991). The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse. Oakley, L., and Humphreys, J. (2019). Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse.
9. The Roys Report public record (julieroys.com), including its entries for each preacher in Figure 4; BishopAccountability.org.
10. Sunday Scorecard Methodology v1.6 (Oct 2026). Word lists: web edition, Appendix A.

RIGHT OF REPLY

Any pastor or church named in this booklet can reply at accountability.church. Replies are published next to the report. Corrections are made in the open.



“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

MATTHEW 12:34 · ESV

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