



SPEAK UP
with Dr. Ron Cantor

AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT

— IT'S RARELY JUST ONE BAD APPLE

7 WAYS CHURCH STRUCTURES PROTECT PREDATORS — INSTEAD OF VICTIMS

When scandal breaks, we blame the individual. But **the system around him** is what lets it happen — again and again. Here is how, and how to change it.

A REPORT BY

DR. RON CANTOR

Companion to the book **WHEN
SHEPHERDS
PREY**



— THE HARDER CONCLUSION

We keep blaming the **bad apple**. The orchard is the problem.

When we talk about clergy sexual abuse, most people picture a "bad apple" — one corrupt individual who somehow slipped through the cracks. But after years of walking with survivors and studying how these scandals unfold, I've come to a harder conclusion.

*It's rarely just the individual. It's **the system around him** that lets it happen, again and again.*

Here are **seven ways** well-meaning church structures end up protecting predators instead of the people they harm — and why none of it is inevitable.

— HOW THE SYSTEM PROTECTS THE POWERFUL

SEVEN STRUCTURES THAT SHIELD PREDATORS

01



BOARDS THAT ANSWER TO THE PASTOR, BUT DON'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO HOLD HIM ACCOUNTABLE

In many churches, the board of directors is composed of **friends, family members, or people the pastor personally appointed.** When the very people responsible for oversight owe their position to the man they're supposed to oversee, real accountability becomes almost impossible.

02



"CONFIDENTIALITY" AGREEMENTS THAT FUNCTION AS SILENCERS

Settlements and severance packages often come with NDAs. They're framed as protecting everyone's privacy — but in practice, **they prevent victims from warning the next church, the next staff member, the next potential victim.** They enable a predator to keep preying on God's sheep,

03



RESTORATION WITHOUT THE VICTIM'S VOICE

"Restoration" sounds biblical — and it is, when done right. But too often it means a private process between the leader and a few sympathetic colleagues, **with no input from the person he harmed, and no real assessment of whether he's actually safe to return to ministry.**

04



GLOWING REFERENCES THAT TRAVEL WITH THE PREDATOR

A pastor quietly resigns "for personal reasons," and six months later he's leading a new church across the country — with a letter of recommendation from his old denomination in hand. **The system protects its own reputation by passing the problem along.**

05



NO REPORTING PATH OUTSIDE LEADERSHIP'S CONTROL

If the only people you can report abuse to are the abuser's friends, colleagues, or appointees, you don't have an accountability structure — you have a closed loop. Healthy churches build in outside, independent channels. Churches should work with trauma-informed advocates who can launch investigations.

06



"GOSSIP" AND "SLANDER" USED TO SHUT DOWN DISCLOSURE

When survivors or whistleblowers speak up, they're often accused of gossiping, being bitter, or attacking "God's anointed." But bringing sexually abusive behavior into the light is not gossip — **it's exactly what Scripture calls us to do.**

"Expose the unfruitful works of darkness." — Eph. 5:11

07



TREATING SCANDAL AS A PR PROBLEM INSTEAD OF A PASTORAL ONE

When the first instinct is to manage the narrative, protect the brand, and minimize "damage" — rather than to care for the wounded and pursue truth — **the system has already chosen**

— THE GOOD NEWS

None of this is *inevitable.*

Healthy biblical eldership, real outside accountability, and a church culture that protects the vulnerable rather than the powerful — **this is exactly what New Testament leadership was meant to look like.** The same structures that can shield a predator can, built rightly, shield the sheep.



PLURAL ELDERSHIP

Shared oversight that sits over the leader, not under him — with the courage and authority to say no.



OUTSIDE ACCOUNTABILITY

Independent reporting channels the leadership can't close, silence, or control.



A CULTURE THAT LISTENS

Where disclosure is honored as obedience to Jesus, not punished as disloyalty.

"If anyone causes one of these little ones to — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for

*them to have a huge millstone hung
around their neck and to be drowned
in the depths of the sea."*

— MATTHEW 18:6

SPEAK UP · TRUTH. DISCERNMENT. FREEDOM.

5

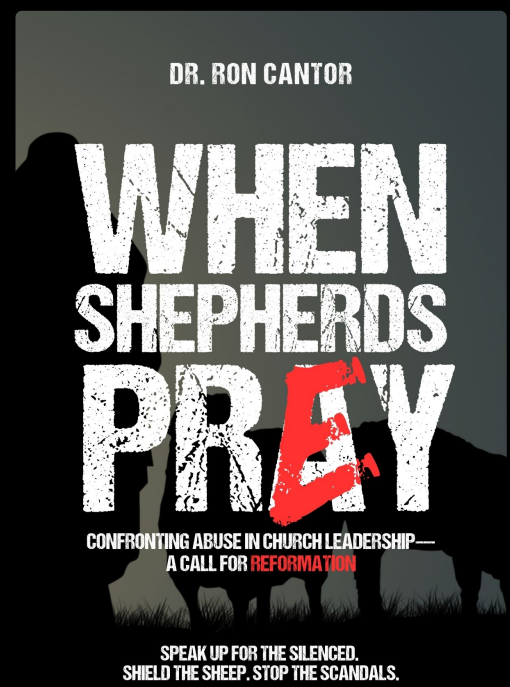
— KEEP GOING FURTHER

GET WHEN SHEPHERDS PREY

In the book, I dig into what healthy leadership looks like in practice — and **how churches and ministries can build structures that protect people, not reputations.**

droron.org/wsp →

A practical guide to protect the sheep and promote healthy, accountable leadership.



SPEAK UP

— with —

RON CANTOR

**SPEAK UP FOR THE SILENCED.
SHIELD THE SHEEP. STOP THE SCANDALS.**

EQUIPPING BELIEVERS TO **RECOGNIZE, RESIST,
AND REPORT** ABUSE IN THE CHURCH.