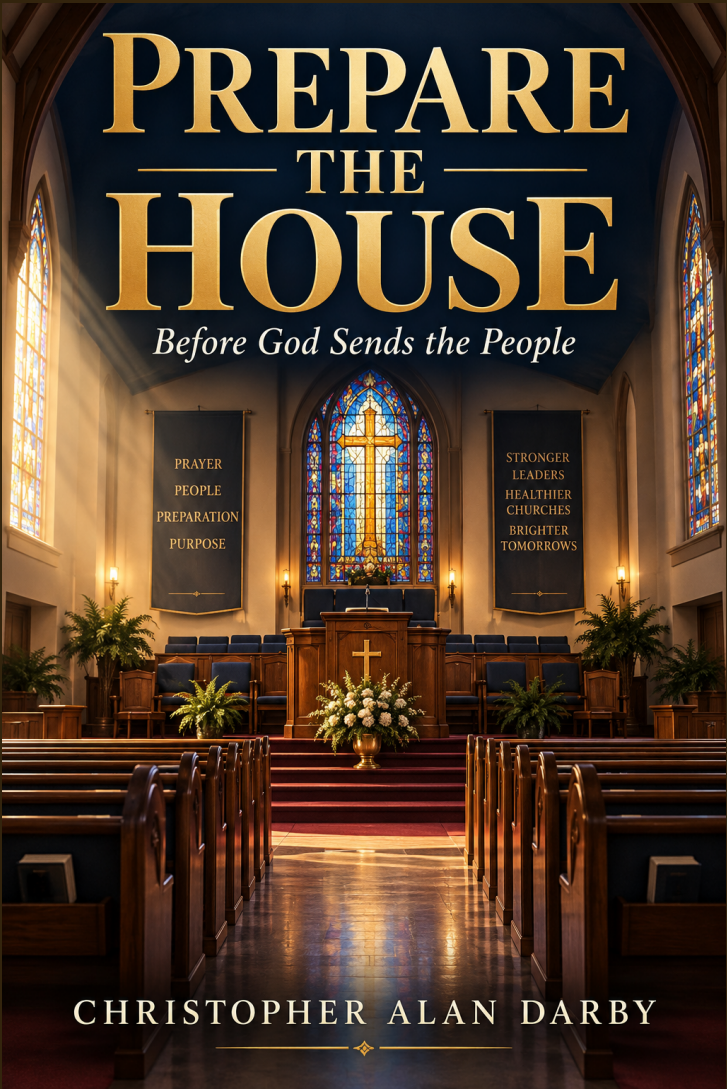


A photograph of a church interior, viewed from the back of the sanctuary looking towards the front. The pews are dark wood with blue cushions. The floor is polished wood. At the front, there is a wooden altar with a cross on top, flanked by two blue banners. Behind the altar is a large stained glass window with a cross design. The ceiling is high and arched.

# PREPARE — THE — HOUSE

*Before God Sends the People*

PRAYER  
PEOPLE  
PREPARATION  
PURPOSE

STRONGER  
LEADERS  
HEALTHIER  
CHURCHES  
BRIGHTER  
TOMORROWS

CHRISTOPHER ALAN DARBY

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# **PREPARE THE HOUSE**

Before God Sends the People

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A practical pastoral guide to preparing the people, systems, worship, leadership, and spiritual culture needed to carry healthy church growth.

Inside this complimentary sample, you will receive the complete first chapter exactly as presented in the book.



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# CHAPTER 1

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## Understanding Divine Assignment

Key Scripture: Jeremiah 3:15



A divine assignment is more than a job description, a church vote, or an opportunity to preach. It is the conviction that God has entrusted a shepherd with a particular work among particular people for a particular season. Jeremiah records God's promise to give His people shepherds after His own heart-leaders who feed with knowledge and understanding. That picture places the emphasis where it belongs: the flock belongs to God, and the pastor serves as a steward.

This changes the way a pastor thinks about growth. The question is not, "How large can I make this church?" The better question is, "What has God assigned this church to become, and are we faithfully preparing for it?" Numbers can tell us something, but they cannot tell us everything. A small congregation may be deeply faithful; a large congregation may be spiritually shallow. At the same time, healthy living things ordinarily reproduce. We should therefore refuse both the idolatry of numbers and the fear of growth.

Calling, gifting, and positioning are related, but they are not identical. Calling answers, "What has God summoned me to do?" Gifting answers, "What grace and ability has God supplied for the work?" Positioning answers, "Where has God placed me to exercise that calling and gifting now?" A gifted preacher may not be assigned to pastor every church that admires his preaching. A capable administrator may be called to serve in a

supporting role rather than the senior seat. Wisdom begins when we stop confusing opportunity with assignment.

Your assignment also shapes your capacity. God often develops the leader before enlarging the work. Capacity is spiritual, emotional, relational, and organizational. A pastor who can preach to five hundred but cannot listen to five hurting people has an imbalance that growth will expose. A church that prays for hundreds of new members but has no reliable way to welcome, teach, contact, and care for them is asking for a harvest without preparing a barn.

Divine assignment produces holy focus. It gives the pastor permission to say no to good ideas that are not part of the present mission. It keeps the church from becoming a copy of the congregation across town. It also creates patience. When you know what God has assigned, you do not have to manufacture somebody else's results.

The first work of preparing the house is therefore discernment. Before changing logos, programs, worship schedules, or advertising, clarify the assignment. Who are we? Why has God placed us here? What needs in this community are we equipped to address? What biblical convictions must never be negotiated? What kind of disciples are we trying to form?

When those questions are answered honestly, growth becomes stewardship rather than competition. We are not gathering people so the pastor can look successful. We are preparing to receive people whom God loves. Every person who enters the house carries a story, a wound, a gift, a question, and a possible future in Christ. The assignment is to shepherd them faithfully.

## PREPARE THE HOUSE PRINCIPLES

- What is a divine assignment?
- How your calling shapes your capacity.

- The difference between calling, gifting, and positioning.
- Why size is not equal to significance-but growth can be a sign of health.

### PASTORAL REFLECTION

1. Where is our church strongest in relation to understanding divine assignment?
2. What is one weakness we should address before asking God for greater growth?
3. What can we change within the next thirty days?
4. Who should share responsibility for this work besides the pastor?

### MINISTRY ACTION STEP

Meet with the appropriate ministry leaders and identify one concrete improvement from this chapter. Assign an owner, a realistic completion date, and a simple way to measure whether the change is helping people.

**CONTINUE THE JOURNEY**

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