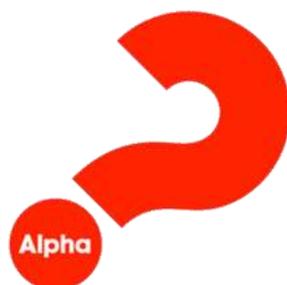


Your Flexible, Friendly Guide to Using ALPHA Material in Small Groups and in One-to-One Conversations



Many people are familiar with Alpha. Since its introduction in 1977 in London, the material has been used in more than 100 countries, in more than 100 languages, by more than 24 million people. It is as popular as ever with attendances at online Alpha doubling during the recent lockdown.

The core material was recently re-filmed as 'The Alpha Film Series' – a super high-production documentary style series to match any award-winning documentary on mainstream TV. It is available on YouTube for you to use in a totally flexible way.

According to our annual surveys, most of our church members would like to feel more confident in how they might share their faith in Jesus. Equally, many people who don't yet come along to church would like to find out about the Christian faith in an easy, open, and honest way. The Alpha material offers an easy way to do both.

Currently, local church members are using this material in both small group and one-to-one settings and within the last month someone has come to a personal faith in Jesus as a result of having watched and discussed the Alpha material in just this way. People who have been Christians for years say that their faith has been refreshed and they have been equipped to share it, and people who are exploring faith have said that they have found the Alpha material extremely accessible and helpful

This short guide gives some ideas that you might like to consider on the next page.

Page 3 then gives the web links you can type/copy into your computer search bar to take you straight to the Alpha Film Series episode. Each session link is accompanied by some discussion questions that you might like to discuss with your group or with an individual you're meeting with, which flow out of the episode you have just watched.

It might be that you'd like to copy page 3 onwards to give to members of your group, if you decide to use some/all of the material here.

Happy reading, praying, dreaming, watching and discussing!



Some easy, top ideas for making the most of the available Alpha material

- **Firstly, allow yourself to think creatively, freely, and without preconceptions. In the past, Alpha has often been run as a centralised ‘course’; with a meal; at church/in a home; by church leaders; at a set time each week; over 10 or so weeks. In this season, we’re inviting you to read on, and consider whatever approach might work for you.....**
- **You might like to use the Alpha material with a friend.** You could send your friend the film links on the next page by email (and the discussion questions too?); agree to watch the film independently of each other; and arrange to meet up together for a coffee or on Zoom/WhatsApp to discuss the film and questions. You don’t need to have all the ‘answers’. It’s just good to listen and to open up conversation with our friends. We can be honest where we don’t know the ‘answers’ and we might be able offer a helpful thought from time to time.
- **You might like to use the Alpha material with your small group.** You could send your group the film link in the week before you meet, to allow people to watch the film in their own time, before meeting together for a discussion of the film and your usual chat/prayer together.
- **You could meet in person or on Zoom.** Meetings in homes are currently restricted to 6 people and those restrictions might become tighter. However, our church buildings are Covid-Secure for larger numbers. They’re warm, light, and accessible. They’re likely to be able to stay open even if restrictions tighten for home settings. And they’re bookable. So, if your group would like to use it to meet – please contact the church office to book it and they can also talk you through the simple risk assessment. Whether you meet in person or on Zoom, it’s always best to see the film in advance of meeting, to avoid congregating around one screen.
- **You might like to test out a few sessions before committing to doing any more.** No problem with that. It’s totally flexible. The first three films on the next page would make an ideal ‘taster’. You could then decide if you want to continue to see the rest of the films, in pages 4-7.



Alpha Film Series

Welcome to the Alpha Film Series! This great series of films offers a flexible way to explore the Christian faith in an accessible way. We'd recommend that you watch the films below one-by-one in your own home and that, following each film, you meet with someone else or a small group – possibly in person or perhaps on Zoom – to discuss the questions together or anything else that interests you from the film. Usually there are no shortage of questions that emerge from the films -the ideas below are just to get the ball rolling.

SESSION ONE*: WHO IS JESUS?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtTnSMNtE44> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- Who would you say Jesus is?
- What do you make of the claim that the historical evidence points to God revealing himself in the person of Jesus? What evidence do you find the most compelling?
- Is there something that Jesus taught/did that stands out for you? Why is that?
- What did you make of the evidence for Jesus' resurrection in the film?

SESSION TWO: WHY DID JESUS DIE?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llHqYqIjKVw>

Possible discussion questions

- The film describes sin as 'polluting our lives' and 'the breakdown of a relationship'. How might these images be helpful? How would you describe 'sin'?
- 'Love and justice are not opposed.' How might this help us to understand why Jesus died?
- 'God's not aloof...He suffered himself....He's with us in our suffering...Death is not the end...The story ends well.' Do you find these statements from the film helpful? Why?

SESSION THREE: HOW CAN I HAVE FAITH?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLMYOr2fAoE>

Possible discussion questions

- How would you describe what 'being a Christian' is or 'having faith' looks like? How might the idea of it being a relationship help?
- Was the film helpful when it said that faith is based on facts more than feelings?
- Christian faith is about receiving not achieving. We come as we are. Do you find this helpful?
- Would you say Jesus is outside the door of your life / on the threshold / inside / standing / seated

*Don't worry that the film link is for a video called 'Episode 2: Who is Jesus?'. We recommend that this is your 1st session.

SESSION FOUR: WHY AND HOW DO I PRAY?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RzIBBT2KBg> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- Do you pray? What types of things do you pray for?
- Who do you pray to? (A higher power/Someone well-known or holy/God as a general idea/God the Father/God the Son/God the Holy Spirit/a distant-feeling figure/a close friend?)
- Prayer is communicating with God – like a relationship. If you pray, what do the things you pray for/the way in which you pray reveal about your relationship with God?
- Is there something which helps you to pray (a time/a place/a routine/a book/a specific prayer...)
that might encourage/help the group?
- Can you remember a time/instance when the answer to a prayer was ‘no’/‘wait’? How did that feel?
- Are there things you might like to ask the group to pray about now/this week?

SESSION FIVE: HOW AND WHY SHOULD I READ THE BIBLE?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHXQJ70Kn5A> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- Have you read some sections of the bible? Are there sections of the bible you find helpful / challenging? Did the comments on the film about ‘helpful boundaries’ help?
- If you have read some of the bible, do you find it reliable – why/why not?
- ‘The bible is the revelation of God’ – if we accept that, what does the bible help us to understand about who God is, what he is like, and what he has done?
- Are there things which have helped you to study the bible for yourself?
- Is there a bit of the bible that you would like to read/re-read this week?

SESSION SIX: HOW DOES GOD GUIDE US?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-IIT3BmRoM> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- The video mentioned several ways in which God guides us: his commanding scripture; his compelling Spirit; the counsel of the saints; common sense; and circumstantial signs. How does the idea that God guides us make you feel?
- Have you experienced ‘coincidences’ which might have seemed strange or fortunate, which might have been God’s compelling Spirit at work or a circumstantial sign?
- God’s commanding scripture – have you experienced a particular verse or story from the bible standing out for you in a special way?
- The counsel of the saints – is there a Christian friend who you sometimes turn to for advice? Why do you turn to this particular person?
- Is there an area in which you might like to seek God’s guidance? Is that guidance something that you’d like to ask him for in a moment of quiet now?



SESSION SEVEN: WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObPGogNAI10> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

The Alpha material is sometimes delivered as a course which involves a weekend away. This is referred to a bit in the video. Current circumstances don't allow for a weekend away but we hope you'll enjoy the film and discussion as usual! (The main video content starts at 3:40 in the video time counter)

Possible discussion questions

- Having watched the film, how would you describe the Holy Spirit?
- Did you find it surprising to hear that the Holy Spirit has been at work over such a long period of time? Are there times in the bible that you can remember where the Holy Spirit is at work pointing us towards Jesus? Do we still see that today?
- How does the work/ministry of the Holy Spirit make you feel – excited, concerned, reassured...?
- Has anybody in the group got a story of how they have seen the Holy Spirit at work in any way big or small that they would like to share with the group?
- For personal thought: in the film, the presenter said, 'Sometimes I feel like a dry sponge' – how would you describe your spiritual life: dry, thirsty, over-flowing, a stream, a river.....? Is there something you would like to ask God for that relates to your own spiritual life?

SESSION EIGHT: WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC4QDWUWK0> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- The film said some interesting things about the Holy Spirit and his work. Let's look at some them here. 'The Holy Spirit is a relationship, a person'. How does the fact that the Bible describes God's Holy Spirit as a person make you feel – surprised? Reassured? Challenged?....
- The Holy Spirit 'makes all Jesus has said and done come alive, today'. Would you say that what Jesus has said and done feels alive for you? Does it feel more alive in your head...or your heart...or both? Would you like Jesus' life and work to come alive for you in a new way?
- When a baby's born, 'it's just the start'. Following Jesus is a journey. As you look at your encounter with the Christian faith and person of Jesus, whether that's recent or long-standing, can you see a 'journey' of growth and development?
- For followers of Jesus, the film says, 'You have been adopted into God's family', 'You belong', 'You've come home'. How does this make you feel? What impact does it have on daily life?
- Look up Galatians 5:22-23 in the bible or online – a list of some of the characteristics of God's Spirit. Which ones might you feel stronger in? Do you feel weaker in some? Do you want to ask God's Spirit to grow these weaker fruits more strongly in you?



SESSION NINE: HOW CAN I BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkbqQB32esM> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- How would you answer the question, 'what is the deepest human need'?
- 'Whatever the Holy Spirit touches, the Holy Spirit changes'. How does this make you feel? Are there things about the world/about the church/about you that you would like God to change?
- Nicky Gumbel mentioned five groups of people. Did one of these groups stand out for you/might describe you? Longing – I want to welcome the life and power of God; receptive – I'm open but not enthusiastic; hostile – I'm atheist; unlikely – I'm not religious; uninformed – I've never heard all this stuff before. Whichever group you might put yourself in, the offer of the fulness of God's life revealed in Jesus is open to us all. Are there ways in which you've experienced that in your own life? Would you like to know that fulness of life?
- In the film, Tim Hughes says, 'Worship involves all of our beings....There's not one style of worship that is greater than another. What's important is that people praise God in a way which is real and honest'. The film also makes quite a lot out of speaking in tongues but this is not every Christian's experience and doesn't make someone a greater Christian. How do you express your worship of the one/those you treasure?

SESSION TEN: WHY AND HOW SHOULD I TELL OTHERS?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eehkK-IJOfM> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- Have you heard some good news recently?
- Our world is used to hearing things in short soundbites. Often, that's really helpful. How would you summarise what the Alpha material has shared about the Christian faith in one (short) sentence? (If you had more time, what are the bits of that sentence that you might like unpack in more detail? What would you say?)
- Telling others about what we believe 'is an act of love' and obedience. Is it possible to keep good news to yourself? Can faith be private?
- Did you resonate with Nicky Gumbel when he talked about struggling with feelings of fear or insensitivity when he thought about talking about faith? What might help you to feel more confident?
- How we live life speaks volumes. Does sharing what we believe always involve words?
- If you would call yourself a Christian, have you ever prayed for opportunities to share your faith with someone specific in a natural and non-scary way? Is that something you could do this week? Who would you pray for?

SESSION ELEVEN: WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?

Film internet link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue80NmOnJCQ> (Remember, you might have to watch a brief automatic advert on You Tube before you get to this film)

Possible discussion questions

- Nicky Gumbel said that when he was growing up the two words he would have used to describe the church would be 'boredom' and 'buildings'. As he grew, the words became 'friends', 'family' and 'home'. What words would you use to describe the church?
- The film said, 'the church is not a building'. How do you react to that statement?
- 'Small groups are a microcosm of the church'. If you are part of a small group, why do you like it?
- 'You can't be a Christian alone'. In your experience of being part of or looking in at a church, how well do you think the church does when it comes to 'being family'? (What would say your role is within that family? If you're not sure, what might help you to discover that role?)
- Church should be where we are 'restored, refreshed, and reenergised'? 'It isn't a museum that displays perfect people, it's a hospital where the broken are mended'. Does the church do that in your experience? How might you help it to do that even better?
- Did you find some of the figures about church growth surprising?
- Is there something that you want to go and do as an individual or as a group as a result of this film/having looked at the Alpha material together?

