

ALPHA Course

ALPHA began as a 10-week introduction for new Christians but has evolved into an evangelism program meeting in tens of thousands of churches in 160 countries. Over 13 million people have attended the ALPHA Course. www.AlphaUSA.org

Anyone can come
Learning and Laughter
Pasta.
Helping one another.
Ask anything.

Principles (reported here from ALPHA publications)

1. **Evangelism is Most Effective Through the Local Church**

The church is comprised of evangelists inviting, cooking, decorating, welcoming, serving, listening, talking and cleaning. When invited by friends to a church, when the invitee turns to Christ at that church, it's natural for these to invite their pre-Christian friends to come hear what they've heard and to continue in their spiritual growth at that church with their friends – old and new ALPHA friends.

2. **Evangelism is a Process**

We do not expect people to respond to the Gospel after the first week. We recognize that people need time to think, watch, listen and talk through their questions and difficulties. Each person is beginning at a different stage. Over 10 weeks, people have time to add to their understanding of God and develop trust in His messengers.

3. **Evangelism involves the Whole Person**

We appeal to the **mind** by conveying the historical facts about God and Jesus as recorded in the Bible. We appeal to the **heart**, calling people to an experiential love relationship with Jesus. We appeal to the **conscience** about man's sin. We appeal to the **will**, offering opportunities to respond, but we do not endlessly exhort or chase after people if they do not return.

4. **Models of Evangelism in the New Testament include...**

Classical Evangelism (we use words)
Holistic Evangelism (we use good works)
Power Evangelism (we use wonders, e.g. as described in the book of Acts)

5. **Evangelism in the Power of the Holy Spirit is Dynamic**

The coming of the Kingdom of God is accompanied by conversions, miraculous signs, healings, visions, tongues, prophecy, casting out evil spirits.

6. **Effective Evangelism Requires the Filling/Refilling of the Spirit**

One of the keys of ALPHA is having a team of Spirit-filled people using every gift they possess to lead others to Christ. Those who come to Christ on the course know that a radical change has occurred in their lives because they have been filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience of God gives them the stimulus and power to invite their friends to the next ALPHA.

Course Schedule

Introductory Dinner

- Invite friends
- Dinner
- **Christianity: Boring, Untrue, and Irrelevant?** (talk 1)

Week 1, Who is Jesus? (talk 2, about Jesus' Diety)

Week 2, Why Did Jesus Die? (talk 3, about Jesus' Death)

- Start weekend signups

Week 3, How Can I Be Sure of My Faith? (talk 4)

- Start Saturday weekend "talent show" signups

Week 4, Why and How Do I Pray? (talk 5/6)

- Finalize weekend count

Week 5, Why and How Should I Read the Bible? (talk 6/5)

- Finalize Saturday night "talent show" acts

Week 6, How Does God Guide Us? (talk 7)

Weekend Away

Who Is the Holy Spirit? (talk 8)

What Does the Holy Spirit Do? (talk 9)

How Can I Be Filled with the Spirit? (talk 10)

How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life? (talk 15)

Week 7, How Can I Resist Evil? (talk 11)

- Promote Celebration Dinner. (Each attendee is asked to pay for themselves and for the guests they are inviting.)

Week 8, Why and How Should We Tell Others? (talk 12)

Week 9, Does God Heal Today? (talk 13)

Week 10, What About the Church? (talk 14)

Celebration Dinner

- Invite friends
- Dinner
- **Christianity: Boring, Untrue, and Irrelevant?** (talk 1)

Weekly Evening Schedule

6:30	Leaders and Helpers meet to pray
7:00	Dinner
7:40	Welcome, announcements, books, joke
7:50	Songs of worship
8:00	Talk
8:45	Coffee, Dessert
9:00	Table Discussion
9:45	Go home

Weekend Schedule

Friday

6:30	Arrival
8:00	Dinner (or light supper)
9:45	Worship, brief introduction to the weekend, short talk on John 15 or a testimony

Saturday

8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Leader's Meeting
9:30	Worship, Talk #8, Who is the Holy Spirit?
10:45	Coffee/Tea break
11:15	Talk #9, What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
12:00	Table Discussion about Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 12
1:00	Lunch
2:00	Free time
4:15	optional refreshments
5:00	Worship, Talk #10, How Can I Be Filled with the Spirit? Prayer Ministry Time
7:00	Dinner
8:30	Talent Show (or free time)

Sunday

9:00	Breakfast
9:30	Leader's Meeting
9:45	Table Discussion, "How do you feel about Saturday?"
10:30	Worship, Talk #15, How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life? Optional Communion Service
1:00	Lunch Depart

Principles for Hosting a Small Group, (84 minute training DVD)

Each small group has a man, woman or couple leading, with 1 or 2 helpers. Add up to 8 guests and you have a group no larger than 12. There's safety for the guests if there's more guests than leaders. The guests might all be atheists, dragged there by a friend or family member.

The leader does not dominate the group by speaking too often, by giving "the answers" or by being the center of the group. Some of the best leaders know *nothing*. The leader's job is to ask open-ended questions to get the guests talking amongst themselves, especially the quieter ones. (Guests do not listen well until they've talked.) The leader is more of a "referee" than a "coach". The leader is not trying to lead the group to a Christian conclusion. The leader draws out the guest's thoughts, feelings, opinions, ideas. The leader asks (1) "What do you think?" and (2) "What do you feel?" and *resists* the temptation to "give the answer". The leader is genuinely interested in what the guest thinks. Two exceptions: if a guest asks a highly technical question or if the group desperately asks for a Christian opinion, then a *helper* might speak or refer the guest to the book, *Searching Issues*, or one of the 7 breakout booklets.

As a general rule, the helpers in the small group say *nothing*, especially if there's a guest who is keeping quiet.

When asking, "What is your relation to Jesus?" it's best to start with someone who is an atheist so all others know it's OK not to give a Christian answer.

The primary aim is for the guests to discuss the meaning of life.

There are six secondary aims:

1. To Discuss. Leaders are not teachers, but are hosts. Let people talk. "How interesting! Do you know I have never heard that before?"
 2. To Model Bible Study. Leaders do not *teach* from the Bible, they ask questions that get the guests looking at the passages in the Bible. If *all* in the group become Christians, then lead a Bible study. Encourage.
 3. Learn to Pray Together. Gradually introduce this. Model with short prayers so the guests feel they can do it, too. "Thank you, Lord, for the weather. Amen." One of the leaders or helpers should NOT pray, unless all guests pray.
 4. Develop lasting friendships with Christians. If a guest does not make 5 or 6 Christian friendships, their old friends might drag them back.
 5. To Learn to Minister to One Another, especially through prayer for healings.
 6. To Train Others to Lead. Guests cannot repeat the course, but can become helpers and new Christians can be helpers and leaders.
- On week 1, start the small group with "The Name Game". Give your name and a positive adjective that starts with the first letter of your first name. The next person has to say the previous name(s) and then add their own. The last person has to say all of the names. Next an ice breaker, such as "2 things on a Desert Island" (cannot be a person – has to be a thing). When that's done, then go around answering, "How did you come to be here at ALPHA?" and/or, "If you could ask God one question and knew He would answer, what one question would you ask?" You might respond, "These are great questions – let's write them down and

make sure by the end of the course we've covered all of these questions – but let's start with _____.”

- On week 2, a common question is about the existence of God and suffering.
- On week 4, after a talk about the Bible, you can focus on people's questions, and ask, “Has anybody here tried reading the Bible? Did you find it boring?” This allows them to say they think it's boring. Encourage them to read, *30 days*.
- On week 5, (after a talk on prayer) the leader might open the group with a short prayer. “Has anybody in the group tried praying?” The leader should NOT ask a *helper* to pray – because the guests may have forgotten the helper is a Christian and the guest may fear, *maybe next week he's going to ask me?*
- On week 6 (after the talk on guidance), the leader might close in prayer. “Does anybody have an experience in the past few weeks that might be God guiding them?”
- On week 7 (after the weekend away), let the group tell about their weekend. Try to start with someone who's positive and open. Might be a good week for the group to start praying together.
- On week 8 (talk is on telling others), we might ask, “Has anybody here told anybody they're doing the ALPHA course? What was the response?”
- On week 9, we're going to ask for healing, so it's very good if the group is familiar with praying out loud before this week. “Did anybody here feel a Word of Knowledge was about them?”
- On week 10, we go around to ask how each person did in the 10 weeks. To encourage honesty, best not to start with the happy answer person. Then ask, “What would you like to do, now?” and then, “Is there anything you want to pray for?” and end the course with prayer.