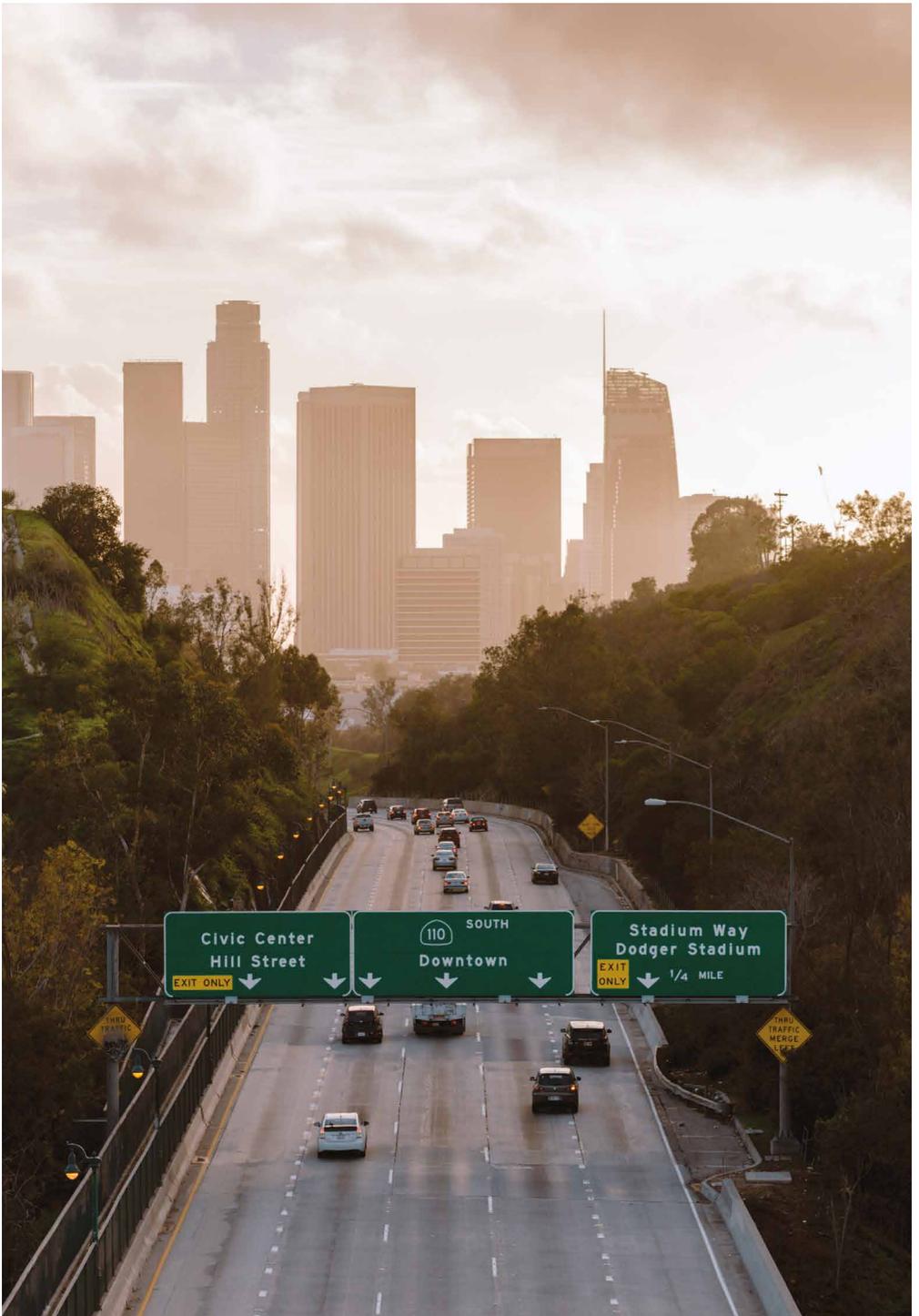


WHY ALPHA?

Alpha and the Local Church





Culture Shift

Where in our churches can people go when they have questions?

American culture is shifting. Increasingly, people are not satisfied to just listen and accept truth. They want to process and discover for themselves, discussing their doubts and wrestling with their questions in order to meet the God who loves them among a community who accepts them. Alpha creates this judgement-free space within the local church, where people can share their point of view, get to know others exploring faith, and experience the message of the gospel and the presence of Christ in a powerful way.

This simple shift in approach took place more than 25 years ago at Holy Trinity Brompton Church (HTB) in London, the birthplace of Alpha. At the time, pursuit of faith, the effectiveness of the Church, and trust in the Bible had slipped away in this secular, post-Christian city center. People were no longer listening. HTB began inviting people outside the Church to a meal, welcoming them as they were, giving a short talk, and listening more than speaking. Word spread and over time hundreds and then thousands of people began showing up to explore Jesus through Alpha.

While HTB was a strong, theologically-rooted church, they also sensed there had to be more to ministry than what they were experiencing.

The more they prayed, the more they witnessed God's Spirit in powerful ways - alive and active through his people. Prayer and dependence on

God's presence became the soil in which a new culture of evangelism began to grow. God was doing what only he can do, bringing people to himself. HTB experienced exciting revitalization. Every year, thousands of non-Christians continue to come on Alpha at HTB, and millions throughout the world. In a recent study, The Barna Group discovered that 82% of non-Christians described themselves as followers of Jesus after completing Alpha. Alpha is an engine for life transformation.

Alpha is a proven, powerful tool for evangelism, but it is much more than a program for people to explore faith. Alpha creates a culture that blesses the entire church:

- A culture where people far from God are transformed to trust in Christ.
- A culture of hospitality where anyone is welcome.
- A culture of evangelism based on listening in the context of friendship.
- A culture of vibrant expectancy for God to show up and answer prayers.
- A culture of empowerment where new leaders at all levels are consistently developed and deployed.
- A culture of unity around the gospel in churches where division previously existed.

If you are longing to see God do more – Alpha could be the spark of change to help this happen.

“Alpha is a globally proven and effective tool for people to discover and develop a relationship with Jesus.”

What is Alpha?

Alpha is an opportunity to explore life and the Christian faith in a friendly, open, and informal environment. It's a ten-week course run in churches, coffee shops, prisons, homes, or online worldwide. Essentially, Alpha is a safe place to explore life's biggest questions.

Alpha creates an environment of hospitality, where people who might not call themselves a Christian can discover and develop a relationship with Jesus. No two Alphas look the same, but they generally have three key things in common: food, an Alpha talk, and good conversation.

Each talk looks at a different question about Christianity and is designed to facilitate discussion. The talks can be delivered live through downloadable scripts and personalized stories or through one of the globally-produced, documentary style film series options available for free. All of the Alpha training is provided online.

Alpha creates a culture of invitation within your church and is a great front door for people exploring faith.





FOOD

Most sessions start with food, because it's a great way to build community and get to know each other.



TALK

The talks are designed to engage and inspire conversation on big issues around faith. Usually around thirty minutes long, they can be given live or played as a film.



DISCUSSION

This is probably the most important part of any Alpha: the chance to share thoughts on the topic in an honest and friendly small group environment. There's no obligation to say anything, and there's nothing you can't say (seriously).

Alpha explores these questions:

Is there more to life than this?

Who is Jesus?

Why did Jesus die?

How can I have faith?

Why and how do I pray?

Why and how should I read the Bible?

How does God guide us?

Who is the Holy Spirit? *

What does the Holy Spirit do? *

How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? *

How can I make the most of the rest of my life? *

How can I resist evil?

Why and how should I tell others?

Does God heal today?

What about the Church?

**Explored on the Alpha Weekend / Day*

Empowering the Local Church

We train and equip local church leaders to run Alpha. As they do, the lives of guests are transformed and churches are renewed. Often, a new culture of evangelism, hospitality, invitation, and prayerfulness develops. New leaders are released and congregations grow.

ALPHA IS REAL.

Those who run Alpha are encouraged to be open and authentic, as this allows guests to be real themselves. People are welcome to ask questions and look for answers, with no pressure to contribute, and follow up is limited to making sure people know when Alpha is offered the first few weeks.

ALPHA IS RELATIONAL.

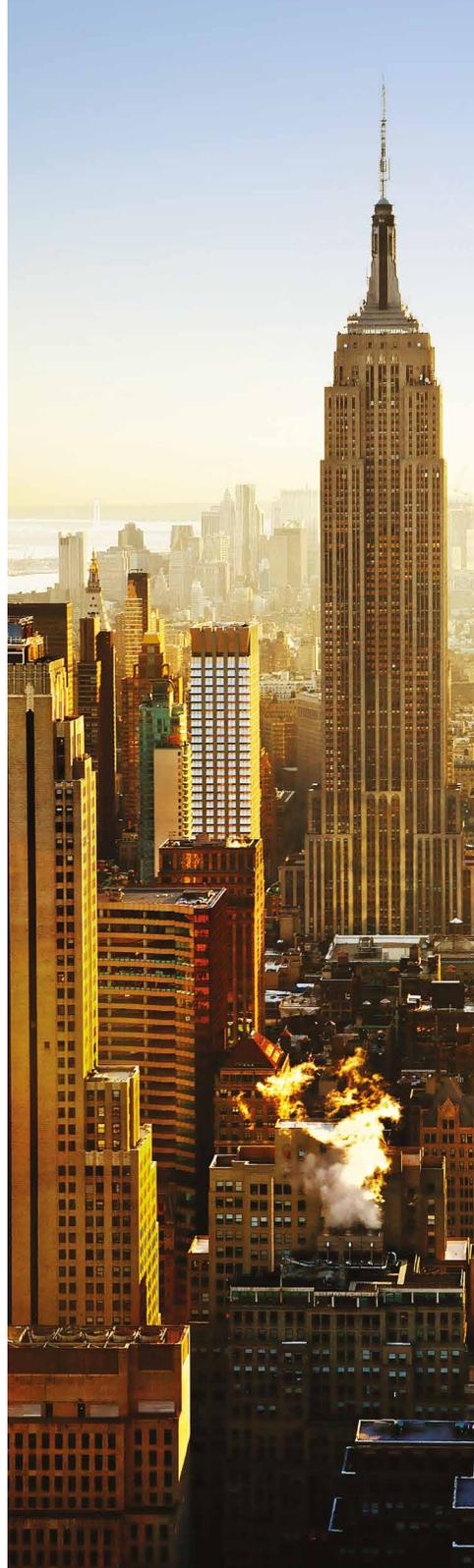
Alpha is based on real friendships that are built over a few weeks and often last for years afterwards.

ALPHA IS RELIANT.

On Alpha, we are reliant on the Holy Spirit, because we realize that it is only God who changes people's lives – we just introduce him. If we continue to build relationships and encourage people to freely explore their questions, lives will be powerfully changed.

ALPHA IS REPRODUCIBLE.

Alpha empowers ordinary people to be a part of this extraordinary work. Alpha can be run by anyone and in any context, in collaboration with the local church.





“Alpha is both wise and deep. It offers an unapologetically solid gospel presentation with a safe space for dialogue, leaving room for God, by his Spirit, to change people’s hearts and lives. If you want to mobilize your church to reach out, this program will help!”

Danielle Strickland,
Social Justice Advocate



“I realized (Alpha) is one of the greatest evangelistic tools a church could use... because there is this underlying dependence on God to transform.”

Pastor Harvey Carey,
Senior Pastor at Citadel of Faith, MI



“Alpha does something that is really, really rare in our culture. It provides a safe space for people to ask whatever questions they have without fear of judgment.”

Jon Tyson,
Church of the City, NY



“We have been doing Alpha for over 10 years at New Life. Alpha is the best way I know that allows a local church to effectively keep outreach and evangelism as a top priority.”

Pete Scazzero,
Author of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* and
founder of New Life Fellowship Church, NY



“Young people right now are open to relationships. Alpha and Alpha resources give us a chance to have these better conversations and to really peel back the layers so that young people understand that Jesus meets their needs.”

Kara Powell,
Executive Director, Fuller Youth Institute

Uniting the Church

Alpha runs across all major Christian denominations, including evangelical churches, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and all mainline Protestant traditions.

Alpha invites people to explore the basics of Christianity within a local church or parish, regardless of faith or background.

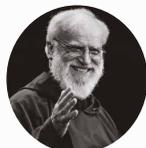




“Alpha is one of the best things happening in the Church today. For so many parishes, there is no event or program that we can be free to invite people to. But Alpha for Catholics gives us the chance to be the kind of missionary disciples that God has called us all to be. If any parish is looking for a place to be welcoming and engaging, they must offer Alpha for Catholics.”

Father Mike Schmitz,

Roman Catholic Diocese of Duluth, MN



“I especially appreciate the ecumenical spirit of Alpha: there is no pressure on anybody to join a different denomination, but just to join Jesus.”

Father Raniero Cantalamessa,

Preacher to the Papal Household



“Over the years, I have come to appreciate the profound effects that Alpha has had on so many people. Alpha provides a warm, welcoming environment where people can grapple with the deep questions of life: where do I come from; what difference can I make; where am I going; how can I find my purpose and meaning for my life, etc. Since these questions are human questions, all people are welcome.”

Bishop Eduardo Nevares,

Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, AZ



Global Impact Study

Over 200 churches across 11 countries and all major denominations participated in our first ever global Alpha study in 2016, conducted by the Barna Group, a US-based research company.

Countries and churches were selected from across the world to reflect a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds that is representative of Alpha's reach. 670 Alpha guests and 278 church and course leaders participated in an online survey. We were hugely encouraged to see the specific, significant impact that Alpha is having worldwide.



Church Impact



93% of church leaders will definitely recommend Alpha to another organization.



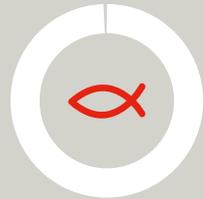
95% of church leaders say Alpha is an effective tool for evangelization.



96% of church leaders say Alpha is an effective tool for discipleship.



99% of church leaders say Alpha has created a safe place for people to come and ask questions about the Christian faith.



99% of church leaders say Alpha has been successful at drawing people to Jesus.

Statistics are based on the Alpha Global Impact study conducted by Barna Research in 2016.

Guest Impact

After Alpha...

82% of non-Christians described themselves as followers of Jesus.

78% of Christian, non-active church goers became more committed to regularly attending a Christian church service or Mass.

91% of Christian, regular church goers have a more intimate relationship with Jesus.

Although becoming a follower of Jesus does not necessarily equate to conversion to Christianity, a variety of data points demonstrate significant spiritual impact, and even radical life change. For example, 88% of non-Christians became more committed to growing their knowledge of the Bible after Alpha, and 80% became more committed to sharing their faith in Jesus with others.

Changes in views after Alpha

for guests who described themselves as non-Christian before Alpha:

Agree Disagree

"I am not interested in learning about Jesus and exploring his teachings"

"Faith and religion are not very important to me"

Before 46% 53%

Before 56% 44%

After 7% 93%

After 28% 72%

Changes to commitment levels after Alpha

for guests who described themselves as non-Christian before Alpha:



88%

of guests were more committed to having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.



88%

of guests were more committed to growing their knowledge of the Bible.



80%

of guests were more committed to sharing their faith in Jesus with others.



69%

of guests were more committed to serving in church.

Readers should note that the guests who completed the survey were likely those who continued until the end of the course, and therefore, the results may not represent those who dropped out. The guest retention rate of Alpha for the churches who took part in this study was 78%, as measured by the number of guests at the last week of Alpha compared to the first week.

Alpha has been filmed in many different formats, so you can find the one that works best for you. Here are three options.

i. Alpha Film Series

Alpha reimagined for a new generation. Nicky Gumbel and two new presenters, Toby Flint and Gemma Hunt, walk us through the traditional Alpha material in a way that everyone can relate to. The crew have been all around the world, filming in Canada, UK, France, Hong Kong, Israel, Kenya, and Chile. The episodes feature inspiring stories and interviews, as well as visual illustrations and motion graphics.



ii. Alpha Youth Series Refresh

The Alpha Youth Series Refresh is an updated version of the Alpha Youth Series, including more relevant stories, student interviews, and visuals that better represent our current cultural moment and resonate with this generation of students and young leaders.

This series is youthful, fun, dynamic, and cinematic, for a 13-18-year-old audience, increasing the impact and reach of Alpha Youth over the coming years.



iii. Chinese Alpha Film Series

The Chinese Alpha Film Series is Alpha's first fully contextualized version of the Alpha Film Series. Filmed entirely in Mandarin, the series allows a Mandarin speaking audience to explore life, faith, and meaning through their heart language and through content that is culturally relevant to them. The series is filmed in seven locations around the world.

[Rev. Andrew Chai is joined by two young hosts and other renowned leaders to unpack the basics of the Christian faith in an updated and engaging way.]



Contexts

Youth

Alpha is equipping churches with student-led resources to help them support the youth in their communities to run Alpha for their friends. Teens find that Alpha demystifies sharing the gospel and empowers them to find a way to share their faith. Alpha Youth is run in youth groups, churches, homes, and schools.



Catholic

Alpha is a unique way to introduce the Kerygma, the message of the gospel, and is a proven means to fulfill the call by Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI to the "New Evangelization."

Parishes running Alpha have seen significant growth in numbers and deepened relationships with Christ. Alpha is endorsed by many Catholic leaders including Father James Mallon, Papal Preacher Father Raniero Cantalamessa, and Cardinals Marc Ouellet, Gérald Lacroix, and Christoph Schönborn.



Prison

For inmates, attending Alpha in Prison not only helps transform their lives, but it also renews their hope and prepares them to begin a new life outside of prison doors. Recent studies show that 68% of offenders are re-arrested within five years of release. However, the recidivism rate for inmates involved in the Alpha Re-entry Initiatives (one year intensive pre and post release programs) has been reported to be reduced by 50%.



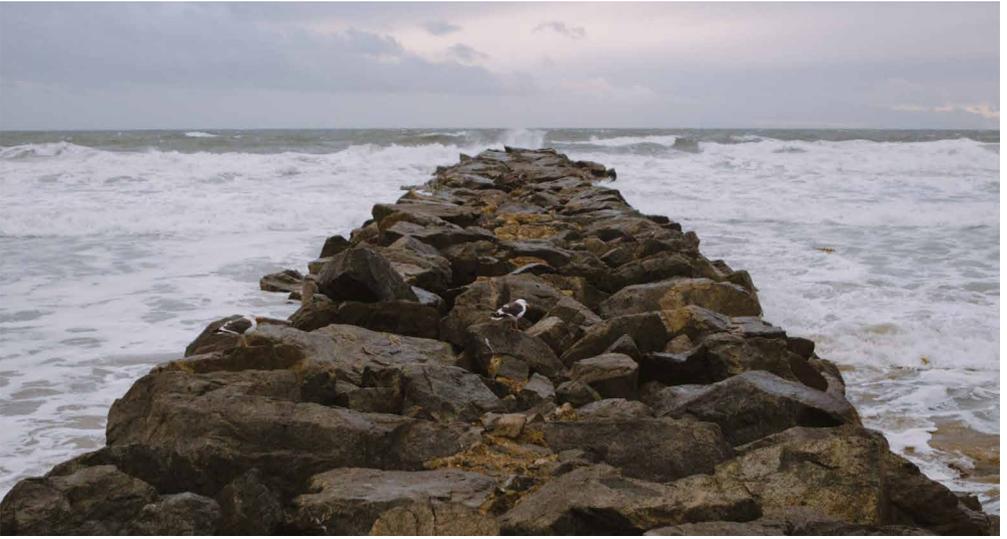
"Through Alpha, I've made the commitment to start over in Christ. The mistakes I've made are over with, and I've asked God to forgive me."

— Sherri, ex-offender, USA

Church Planting

Starting a new church can be a daunting and complicated process. Alpha is a flexible tool that offers a tried and tested place to start — an immediate way to connect with people as strategies are set. By running Alpha, and sitting in a small group with guests, you'll quickly discover the thoughts of local people and the needs of the community.



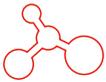


Ready to begin the journey?



STEP 1: WHAT ARE THESE TALKS ALL ABOUT?

Watch any and all of the Alpha talks at alphausa.org/watch.



STEP 2: CONNECT WITH ALPHA LOCALLY.

We have Alpha staff and church leaders who would love to talk with you and answer any questions you may have. Visit alphausa.org/contact.



STEP 3: GET STARTED.

All of the Alpha resources, including helpful training tools, are available for free. Take these practical next steps to continue your journey at alphausa.org/getstarted.

I'm ready to build my Alpha.

Visit alphausa.org and click on "Get Started" to access MyAlpha. Here you can register your Alpha and download all the videos, training, promotion, and resources you need for free.

Mission

We equip and serve the Church in its mission to help people discover and develop a relationship with Jesus through Alpha.

Letter From John

Alpha is for everyone. It's a fantastic space for anyone from any background to explore the Christian faith. By running Alpha, we are shaping followers of Jesus who are able to love people and meet them in deeply significant conversations in a fun, relaxed way. Our aim is to make running Alpha in any context or community as accessible and transformational as ever.

We are eager to come alongside you in the vision that God has given you for your local church and community, so that whole societies and nations might have the opportunity to discover who Jesus is. Together, we have an opportunity to provide a way for people to encounter Jesus in a meaningful way that will connect them to community and help them take the next steps of their faith journey.

Because we believe everyone should have the opportunity to discover a relationship with Jesus in a way that is honoring and brings dignity to their deepest questions, we are honored to offer our resources at no cost. We are so grateful to be on this mission together and look forward to how we can be of service.



John Wentz
Executive Director
Alpha USA



Partner with Alpha USA

Guests meeting Jesus through Alpha only happens because of friends like you. Alpha is 100% funded by donations, which allows us to make it completely free to churches and guests. Will you consider a gift to Alpha and help make this possible for more people in the world to experience?

alphausa.org/give

