

THE A-Z OF RUNNING *Alpha* ON CAMPUS



This manual is designed to take leaders through the different stages of setting up and running an Alpha course in a university, college, or place of higher education. Its guidelines and content grow out of experiences encountered by more than a hundred student courses already running successfully.

Sections include:

- advice on how to fit an Alpha course into a university or college schedule,
- how to publicize an Alpha course on campus,
- ideas for making weekly sessions more interactive and visual,
- tips on how to follow-up an Alpha course with students.

“The Alpha Course meets the vital test of being both open and faithful—welcoming all, while presenting the gospel message with clarity and power.”

— George Gallup, Jr.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Introducing the A-Z of Alpha on Campus

This manual is designed to take you through the different stages of setting up and running an Alpha course at your college, university or place of higher education. The following pages aim to both equip and encourage you to be able to present the Christian message in a way that is relevant to students today.

All Alpha courses are slightly different and not all of the suggestions made in this manual will apply to your course, but the aim is to provide a framework to help you get started. Try to have a good look through this manual before you start planning your course and then use it for reference as you work through the course.

Realizing the need for Alpha on campus

- The church is experiencing an alarming decline in attendance within the 18-30 age group.
- More than 15 million people are currently in further and higher education in North America.
- Less than one percent of them attend any Christian activity on campus.
- The majority of students with no church background now look elsewhere for spiritual significance.

Following a number of requests from students for help in reaching their unchurched or non-Christian friends at colleges and universities with the gospel, Alpha on Campus was launched in September 2000. Many students lose their

faith while at college and others are never exposed to a Christian witness during their years of study.

The college years are for many students a key time to explore the deeper questions of life.

Students are surrounded by pressure: financial constraints, social concerns, complex relationships, the uncertainty of the job market and of their future. The combination of these pressures may well provoke them to ask some fundamental questions. What does the future hold? Where am I going? Does God exist? Pluralism complicates the answers to this deep spiritual hunger as the concept of 'truth' has become almost a myth. Alpha is a tool by which to present the claims of Christ in a low key but powerful manner to the millions of students who have little or no understanding of the dynamics of the Christian faith.

What is Alpha?

Alpha is a 15-session practical introduction to the Christian faith designed primarily for non-churchgoers and new Christians. The syllabus for the course is contained in the book *Questions of Life*. Most are evening courses where there is a light meal followed by a talk on a subject central to the Christian faith. Students then break into pre-arranged groups (in which they remain for the entire course) to discuss the talk in an environment where each person should feel free to ask or express whatever they wish. There is also a weekend away during which the subject of the Holy Spirit is addressed. It is a low key, non-threatening series of evenings where students from any background or belief system can ask questions about the meaning of life.

Potential for Alpha on Campus

Following steady growth in Great Britain—where Alpha originated—enthusiasm for Alpha on Campus is beginning to grow in North America. Our aim is to introduce Alpha on university and college campuses across the US and Canada in order that every student has the opportunity to attend an Alpha course while studying.

Who is running Alpha?

Alpha has been designed as a tool that any denomination or organization could feel comfortable using. Courses are being run by a variety of para-church organizations, campus chaplains, local churches, faculty members, and students. The potential of these student groups is unlimited. As students are becoming Christians, friendships are being built, communities are forming, students are supporting one another and, most importantly, they are coming into a relationship with God. The key to running a course is to do what is natural to you in your area and campus.

Can you run Alpha?

Para-church Organizations

Various Christian organizations run Alpha courses as part of their ongoing yearly program of events on campus and feed new Christians into their existing structures of cell groups, Bible study groups and discipleship groups. Some of these include InterVarsity, Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, Navigators, and Chi Alpha.

University Chaplain

University chaplains have a challenging role. Many chaplains are not in a team and are on a campus of 15,000 students, most of whom are not Christians. Alpha is being run by both single denomination and ecumenical chaplaincy teams in the US and Canada. Chaplains have access to facilities and often play a vital role in supporting the para-church organizations, students and churches who want to run a course. Chaplains can help with the talks while encouraging the students to lead the small group discussion groups.

Local church

Many local churches are located close to a university or college campus and may have a number of students in their congregation. Some churches have provided a meeting place and speakers for an Alpha course while encouraging the students to invite their friends along and lead the small groups. Local church support has proved invaluable when planning the weekend away and providing continuity for the follow-up of new Christians. Students value local church support and this partnership is vital.

Students at home or in dorms

Students are the best people to reach fellow students and invite them on a course. The courses run by students in homes have been smaller but highly effective. The combination of food, video and discussion fits into a normal student evening and helps relax friends who may be nervous about

participating in the course. Generally the Alpha videos are used in homes as it is less intimidating to watch a video and discuss it than have a live speaker for the average number of 10 on a course. The videos also allow the students to focus on inviting friends and praying for the evening, rather than worrying about preparing the talk.

University Faculty

A number of university faculty members have run Alpha courses for their students on campus and for their fellow colleagues. Although one can combine students and faculty in the same course, it is suggested that the small group discussions may be divided between the two groups in order for discussion to flow freely.

Chapter 2

PLANNING AN ALPHA COURSE

. Planning an Alpha Course

Planning Checklist

- 1 Contact the Alpha on Campus Director
- 2 Attend an Alpha conference
- 3 Appoint an Alpha course leader and team
- 4 Register your Alpha course
- 5 Select a location
- 6 Set dates
- 7 Order resources

Contact the Alpha on Campus Director

The role of the Alpha on Campus Director is to support each Alpha course. The director should be able to provide you with answers to your general questions about Alpha, and also help you to get up and running, by providing:

- Recommended resources to get started.
- Suggested speakers – for student events and for Alpha talks during the course.
- Advice on weekends/days away – offer advice on where to go, how to run it and suggest speakers and a ministry team.
- Training – offer advice and the possibility of running training days for any Alpha teams.

Attend an Alpha Conference

The two-day Alpha conferences are designed to train and equip you and your team to run an Alpha course. They cover the principles and the practicalities of the Alpha course and include a “Model Alpha Evening”.

For forthcoming Alpha conferences, please see the latest edition of *Alpha News* or check the website: Alphana.com

Appoint an Alpha Course Leader & Team

Alpha Course Leader

The Alpha course leader should be a mature Christian. This person will host each Alpha session, including the team training sessions, and will have pastoral responsibilities for the course.

Team

Leaders and helpers for an Alpha course should be people who relate easily to those outside the church; they may not necessarily have been Christians for a long time. We recommend this test: "If I had been praying for my friend to become a Christian for five years and they finally decided to do Alpha, would I want them to be in X's group?" If the answer is yes, then X is suitable to lead or help. If the answer is no, then you should look for the area where X could best serve in the course.

Registering a course

There are a number of ways to register an Alpha course:

- Contact the Alpha on Campus Director for a registration form.
(US e-mail: AlphaOnCampus@aol.com)
(Canadian e-mail: alphacampus@yahoo.com)
- Complete the registration form you receive with *Alpha News*

- Use the registration page at www.alphana.org or www.alphacanada.org

The Alpha Register is the list of all the Alpha courses running world-wide which have registered with an Alpha office. It is updated regularly and is published in *Alpha News*. Student courses will have a special designation.

There are a number of benefits of registering an Alpha course:

- The course listing will appear in the Alpha Register both with *Alpha News* and on the Internet. The Alpha on Campus Director receives a number of calls each week from people looking for a course in their area. Using the register, people can find courses not only for themselves, but also for their friends and family.
- You will receive information about special events that may be taking place.

Select a meeting place

Based on the anticipated size of the course, select a site for the weekly meetings.

Setting

As a general rule the more flexible the setting, the better. The home is the best place and is generally more comfortable for the non-churchgoer. Depending on the size of your course and the rooms available it may be necessary to use an alternative. Whatever your location we would encourage

ou to create a homelike atmosphere using lighting, tablecloths, background music, etc.

Small group space

If you have a number of small groups, make sure your facility has enough places for the small groups to meet in private.

Bookings

Reserve all the rooms that will be needed for every aspect of the course so that there is no clash with other events. This is especially vital if the course is being run on campus in a university room.

Set the dates

- Decide whether you will run the course over one or two terms. Go to page 21 for ideas of how to structure your course.
- Choose an evening when not much else is happening.
- Plan time for the two training sessions before the course starts. These are great opportunities to pray for friends, the course ahead and to bond as a team
- Training session 3 looks at the subject of ministry, and should take place during the week preceding the week end away
- The best time for the Alpha Weekend to take place is after the talk on Guidance. However it can happen any time after the talk on Prayer but before the talk on Healing. Make sure it does not clash with any important event. Experience tells us to book the weekend early and let

everyone on the course know the dates to avoid last-minute cancellations because, "I didn't know about it!"

Order resources

In North America, all Alpha resources are published by Cook Communications Ministries.

You may order Alpha resources using this website:

www.Cookministries.com/Alpha/

Or in Canada: www.cook.ca

In the USA, call or write: Cook Ministry Resources, 4050 Lee Vance View, Colorado Springs, CO 80918-7100

1-800-426-6596

1-800-36-ALPHA (1-800-362-5742)

In Canada, call or write: Cook Communications Ministries, P.O. Box 98, 55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, N3L 3E5.

1-800-263-2664

All resources are also available from your local Christian bookstore.

Alpha on Campus Resources

The basic resources needed to run a course for 10 guests

The A-Z of running Alpha on Campus

Questions of Life

Telling Others

How to Run the Alpha Course

Alpha Team Training Video

Alpha Team Training Manual (x3)

The Alpha Course on Video

Alpha Manual (x10)

Searching Issues

Alpha Poster Pack

Chapter 3

HOW TO PUBLICIZE AN ALPHA COURSE

3. How to publicize an Alpha Course

Ninety-nine percent of people come on a course because of a personal invitation from a friend. All other methods of advertising – posters, newspapers, inserts and fliers – are simply a backdrop to the personal invitation and not a substitute. There are a variety of approaches for promoting Alpha on Campus depending on the set-up of the college or university itself. On campuses it is possible to make use of the student union, the dorms and lecture halls. Word of mouth and personal invitations may be more appropriate for commuter students. Alternatively, local media or the Internet may be a more effective medium for you to use. You will know what is best for your particular college setting.

Personal Invitations

Word of mouth and personal invitations from Christian friends are generally the most effective way to publicize your course. Results of a questionnaire sent to all Alpha course leaders showed that 80 percent had found this the most effective way of encouraging students to attend their course.

Local Newspaper

How the press can and cannot help you:

- There is no guarantee you will ever get any story in the papers or on the radio because you do not pay for this form of advertising. There are certain things you can do to help, and these guidelines will show you how to do that.

- There is no guarantee that your PR message or story will appear in exactly the way that you want it to. You can supply your story, but then it will be left to others (journalists and editors) to determine how it will actually appear. Student newspapers are often low on material and are more likely to publish an article if it has been written for them with a photograph enclosed.

Tips on what your local media are looking for

Most local and regional press are desperate for good material.

Here are a few tips to help you put something together:

- Groups of students doing something together
- Local angle
- Something that readers can relate to
- A good picture
- Speedy access to right contacts – e.g., people to interview
- Attributable facts and quotes
- Basic facts without complicated detail

Local/Student Radio

Local/student radio could be an extremely effective way of reaching a large audience within your area. It may be an idea to put together a short advertisement. This is often quite a cost effective medium and can sometimes be used as a springboard to radio interviews or features. Contact your local/student radio station for details of their charges.

Student radio stations are often greatly interested in student activities and may be willing to interview course leaders or those who have just been on the course.

Ideas for New Student Orientation Week

Orientation Week is a real opportunity to reach out to the student world and make them aware of the gospel. In previous years, those running courses have come up with some very creative ways of raising awareness and encouraging students to come on an Alpha course. Here are just a few examples:

Displaying posters

These are an effective way of advertising locally and will help students identify how to make contact with you. Make sure posters are personalized with the contact details of your course.

On campus bulletin boards

Often space is available for coordinated community projects. These spaces get booked up well in advance so inquire early.

Student Union

Approach the Student Union about placing a poster and leaving some invitations for people to take away.

Exhibition Booth

Obtain permission from the college or university to have an Alpha booth during new student orientation week. Make use of the Alpha posters and invitations to attract attention. Hand out Alpha invitations and postcards inviting people to your Alpha course.

Fun Events

Use fun events such as putting on a play that concludes with an invitation to an Alpha course or barbeque lunches, sports tournaments and dinners where their friends will feel comfortable, meet other Christians and be invited to a course.

Survival Kits or Packs

Fill small bags with a bar of chocolate, a can of coke, chips, a *Why Jesus?* booklet and an Alpha invitation. Hand these out to every student. Even if they only want the chocolate, they will have an opportunity to find out more.

NOTE: Remember that any publicity on campus is likely to require approval, though campus requirements will differ. It is recommended that the course administrator contact the Office of the Dean of Students, as that office usually has oversight for new student orientation.

Alpha Event

The Event

This could be a lunchtime or evening event to which you invite friends along. The idea is to make it informal and relaxed in order to attract non-Christians to come and enjoy themselves as well as hear about the Alpha course. It acts as a teaser for your course. You could decide to have a sit down meal with jazz playing, a music event, multimedia presentation or a barbeque. Whatever you decide, make it fun and friendly.

A Testimony

It may also be a good idea to select one or two people to give a testimony. The best people to do this are those who have found the course of value and whose lives have been changed by God. They need to be brief, sincere, and if possible, humorous. Choose the sort of people that the majority of students will relate to.

Here are some questions that the host of the evening could ask those being interviewed:

- How did you find out about the Alpha course?
- What was the course like?
- What happened to you on the course?
- What difference has Jesus made in your life?
- What would you say to someone who has not yet done the Alpha Course?

Evangelistic Event

Alpha has been used on a number of campuses as the follow-up tool to a university mission or evangelistic event, such as a special lecture or Veritas Forum.

Chapter 4

HOW TO RUN AN ALPHA COURSE

4. How to run an Alpha course

The Alpha course for students is run in exactly the same way as the traditional Alpha course. As in baking a cake, the best way to start Alpha is to follow the set recipe. With later courses there may be adaptations you need to make for a local context. Please only make changes that are consistent with the copyright statement (see page 52).

The student culture is a unique and challenging environment. It is important, therefore, to adapt the course in a way that best fits you and the students on your course. The following are a number of suggestions to help make your course more student-friendly, from creating the right environment to ideas about what food to provide.

Possible Timetables

The Alpha Course is a 10-week, 15-session practical introduction to the Christian faith. As student terms vary from campus to campus, it can be difficult to fit the course into one term.

While it is possible for the course to run over two terms, it is best to run it in one, especially if the school is on the 16-week semester system. Following are suggested course timetables which you may find useful:

In one term

- Week 1** – Who is Jesus?
- Week 2** – Why Did Jesus Die?
- Week 3** – How Can I Be Sure of My Faith?
- Week 4** – Why and How Should I read the Bible?
- Week 5** – Why and How Should I Pray?
- Week 6** – How Does God Guide Us?
- Weekend** – Holy Spirit weekend
 - Who Is the Holy Spirit and What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
 - How Can I Be Filled with the Spirit?
 - How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?
- Week 7** – How Can I Resist Evil?
- Week 8** – Why and How Should We Tell Others?
- Week 9** – Does God Heal Today?
- Week 10** – What about the Church?
- Evangelistic Event** – Supper party with talk – Christianity: Boring, Untrue and Irrelevant? (either here or at the beginning of the course) to act as a teaser for the next course.

Over two terms

TERM 1

- Evangelistic Event**– Supper party with talk (Christianity: Boring, Untrue and Irrelevant?)
- Week 1** – Who is Jesus?
- Week 2** – Why Did He Die?
- Week 3** – How Can I Be Sure of My Faith?

- Week 4** – Why and How should I Read My Bible?
- Week 5** – Why and How should I Pray?
- Weekend** – Holy Spirit weekend: 4 sessions (as in one term)
- Holiday** – Keep in contact with course members

TERM 2

- Week 1** – How Does God Guide Us?
- Week 2** – How Can I Resist Evil?
- Week 3** – Why and How Should We Tell Others?
- Week 4** – Does God Heal Today?
- Week 5** – What about the Church?

Creating the Right Environment

- Try not to use a room which is being used for another activity at the same time or which is a through-route to somewhere else.
- Have something going on as guests arrive. Many courses have music playing, a video playing (from a popular show or MTV), etc.
- Make it easy for latecomers to join the group without feeling awkward.
- Try not to over-run the session, but make it easy for people to leave on time if they wish to. Be as flexible as possible. Students can be very unreliable so be prepared for this.
- Try to finish in good time and then suggest going out as a group afterwards. One course said that one of their best nights was when they went out to a 70s night afterwards. This is a great way to form friendships and encourage people to come back each week.

Food on Alpha

Food has always been an important part of the Alpha course. A simple but filling meal at the start of the session helps people relax, stimulates conversation and also does wonders for encouraging students to come back each week. Experience has shown that courses without a meal find their groups do not bond as well. The meal time also enables leaders and helpers to get to know guests in a more relaxed environment, asking questions about their daily life rather than discussing deep spiritual issues.

Often budgets can be tight, but with a bit of imagination, some easy recipes and some help from your team, it's amazing what can be achieved.

Or alternatively, here are a few suggestions from past Alpha courses:

- Pizza often draws students in. To make it really easy, you could just order take-out.
- If you don't have time for a full meal, home-made cookies always go down well.
- Donuts can be a good alternative and can be bought cheaply from most supermarkets.
- Hot dogs or hamburgers are a very cheap and easy option. They take no time at all and there is little mess to clear up afterwards.
- Baked potatoes with chili and cheese –warm, filling, and inexpensive.
- If meals are supplied in dorms, some courses offer hot chocolate with cake and donuts.

Worship on Alpha

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:19 "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord," (NIV).

Depending on the setting, it is best to try and have some form of worship. We have found that although many find the singing the most difficult part of the course to begin with, it is often the part they enjoy most by the end of the course. For many, such singing is their first experience in communicating with God. It also helps people to make the step from Alpha to the church, where the worship of God is central.

Smaller courses (10 people or less) may feel conspicuous singing out loud. These courses could begin the evening with a vocalist singing two or three worship songs. This method introduces the group to worship but doesn't demand participation. Where this has been used, guests have commented on how much they enjoyed the music.

However, unless worship can be led and music played competently it is probably best not done at all. Instead you might listen to a couple of worship songs on CD or ask someone to come in and sing a solo for the guests to sit and listen to.

If you would like to find out more information about worship, you may like to look at the Alpha Worship Pack (with cassette or CD). This is a comprehensive training resource for those wishing to introduce worship to the Alpha course. It is specifically designed for Alpha course leaders, worship leaders and music teams but also suitable for use within smaller groups for unaccompanied worship.

Prayer on Alpha

"Evangelism without prayer is like a bomb without a detonator and prayer without evangelism is like a detonator without a bomb".

Dutch Sheets, The Prayer Summit

In other words we need both prayer and evangelism to be effective.

It is invaluable to meet together as a team to pray before each session. This will not only benefit the guests but will also have the very positive effect of bonding the team together more closely.

As a group leader, you might want to pray for the people coming into your group. Pray that they will mix well and that good friendships will form. Once you have met the group, we would encourage you to pray for them daily in your own time.

Opportunities for prayer with the guests come especially on the Holy Spirit weekend and after the talk on healing. Make sure that the team is prepared for this.

For more information on prayer, listen to the Prayer on Alpha seminar which is available on video or audio.

Giving a Short Testimony

It is always possible to argue over facts. A personal testimony, however, makes the same point via a different route. We are all intrigued by the way other people choose to live their lives. Students will be fascinated by the insights into your life. For an even greater impact, interview one of the students. An interview is less daunting for them than a monologue and enables you to shape the content of what they say.

A testimony might focus on either "How I came to Christ" or

“What Jesus means to me today”.

- Testimonies should be brief, honest (but not shocking), specific and practical.
- Make sure that God gets the glory rather than your former lifestyle.
- Don't preach. Avoid church jargon.
- Weave in biblical concepts and truths without reading the Bible.

Content and Presentation of Talks

Film or video clips are great for raising questions, setting up an issue or illustrating a point in a dramatic, visual way.

Don't

- Explain the content of the clip. This will weaken the impact.
- Use video clips just as a gimmick.

Do

- Check the film well in advance. Sometime a clip isn't always as you remember it.
- Make sure you (or one of the leaders) have full mastery of the technology before you use it.
- Think through how you will introduce the clip and how you will follow it up immediately afterwards.

Video Clips and Creative Icebreakers

The following examples should simply give you an idea of what might be used to raise questions related to the course. We encourage each leader to seek out his or her own material.

1. Who is Jesus?

Forrest Gump

He runs across America “for no particular reason”. He builds up a large following of people and then suddenly stops and makes his way home. Make the point that all of us follow something or someone (pop stars, fashion, sports heroes). Do we know why we are following them?

2. Why did Jesus die?

The Mission

The scene where Robert De Niro has a huge weight of armor cut away by the natives he used to hunt. Make the point that this is a powerful display of forgiveness and the fact that the price had been paid.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

Final dramatic scene – penitent men bow before the breath of God; walk in the steps of God; take a step of faith. Make the point that we have to take that step of faith.

Armageddon

Bruce Willis dies to save the world so that his daughter can experience love. Makes the point that Jesus sacrificed his life so that we can love God.

3. How can I be sure of my faith?

Lay out several glasses of different brands of soft drinks, making sure all labels are hidden. Ask the group to sample the drinks and see if they can identify the different brands. Make the point that in order to discover “the real thing” for themselves, they actually have to do something.

4. Why and how should I read my Bible?

The Simpsons

The episode where Homer refuses to go to church and God speaks to him, encouraging Homer to do what he likes.

5. Why and how do I pray?

Video TV News

- Play this to the group and then invite short prayers relating to the areas covered.
- Find any clip from a film with a child talking to a father.
- Allow Christians to find things to pray about for non-Christians in the group.

6. How does God guide us?

Illustration

Ships and other sea vessels often use two or three fixed points on shore (e.g., a house, a tree and a telegraph pole) in order to ascertain or maintain their exact position. Make the point that we can often feel “all at sea” but God provides various ways for us to know where we stand with Him.

7. The Holy Spirit weekend

Supplement the weekend by using entertaining videos outside of the talks.

8. How can I resist evil?

Return of the Jedi

Show the scene where Luke Skywalker fights Darth Vader to illustrate how to resist evil.

Chariots of Fire

It's not when you fall that you fail – get up!

9. Why and how should we tell others?

Light of the World

Give each member of the group a candle. Try to make the room as dark as possible and then light a candle. Use this candle to light the candle of people on either side of you. They in turn light their neighbor's candle and so on until all group members' candles are lit. Make the point that the whole group can be “lit” simply by each person “lighting” his or her neighbor.

10. Does God heal today?

Man in the Moon

The scene where Andy Kaufman goes to the Philippines in search of healing.

11. What about the Church?

Sister Act

Find an appropriate scene, e.g., the scene where the nuns set up a recreation area for the young people in the community to show the importance of church.

Mr. Bean in Church

Funny example of church life.

12. How can I make the most of the rest of my life?

Dead Poets Society

Seize the day.

Back to the Future

Choose clips which show how the decisions we make affect our lives in the future.

Groundhog Day

Clips to show that each day we are responsible for the right/wrong choices or decisions that we make.

Copyright: The law is confusing over the use of specific video clips as suggested in this manual. Film and video companies have advised that technically it is illegal to show all or part of a hired film to anyone other than your family. However, in practice, the law is extremely difficult to interpret. As no one has ever been taken to court over this issue, there is no established precedent. Normally distribution companies do not mind clips of their films being shown as long as:

- It is only a tiny part of the whole film.
- No money is changing hands.
- No profit is being made.

Chapter 5

THE ALPHA WEEKEND/DAY AWAY

5. The Alpha Weekend/Day Away

We highly recommend a weekend away. However, if only a day away is possible, that too will be effective. The teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit is a vital part of the course and is not to be missed.

General Information

Cost

Try to keep the cost of the weekend as low as possible. Never let money be an issue which prevents someone from attending the Alpha weekend.

Some will not be able to pay but others will be able to pay more. Ask people to contribute what they can afford – for example, the amount they would spend in their home town over a weekend. On Sunday morning of the weekend take a collection from all the course members, letting them know what the financial shortfall is. God always honors this principle.

Saturday Afternoon

Organize a walk or a game (football, soccer, volleyball, basketball) for those on the weekend. Bear this in mind when selecting a location for the weekend, and make full use of any facilities available to you.

Saturday Night Entertainment

After the talk on the Saturday evening of the weekend it is good to give guests an opportunity to relax. If you have a smaller number on your weekend, you may like to play a game (e.g., Pictionary, Trivial Pursuit). If you have larger numbers, you may prefer to have a cabaret-style entertainment evening. Ask someone to be in charge of coordinating the entertainments.

Speakers

If you would like someone to lead your Alpha Weekend, do contact the Alpha on Campus Director or your Alpha Regional Advisor. They may be able to suggest a guest speaker to invite. Live speakers are recommended for the weekend, even if you have been using videos for the rest of the course.

Timing

The ideal time for the Alpha Weekend is between the talks on “Guidance” and “Resisting Evil”. It should always fall between the talks on “Prayer” and “Healing”. It is always preferable to have the talk “How Can I Resist Evil?” following the weekend. If necessary, switch around the talks on evil and guidance.

Location

It is important to reserve your facility as far in advance as possible. The better locations are usually booked up early.

Suggested Timetable for the Alpha Day Away

Saturday

9:15	Arrive, registration and coffee
9:45	Welcome and Worship <i>Who Is the Holy Spirit?</i> <i>What Does the Holy Spirit Do?</i>
10:30	Discussion groups
11:00	Coffee
11:30	<i>How Can I Be Filled with the Spirit?</i>
1:00	Lunch Afternoon free
4:00	Optional time for small groups
5:00	Worship <i>How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?</i>
7:30	Finish

Option:

Begin Friday evening with “*Who Is the Holy Spirit?*” followed by snacks and a casual activity (such as a campfire on the beach). Follow the Saturday schedule outlined above, showing only one video in the morning.

Suggested Timetable for the Alpha Weekend

Friday

6:30	Arrive
7:00-9:00	Supper
8:45	A short introduction to the weekend

Saturday

8:30	Breakfast
9:30	Worship followed by <i>Who Is the Holy Spirit?</i>
10:45	Coffee
11:15	<i>What Does the Holy Spirit Do?</i>
12:00	Groups
1:00	Lunch (afternoon free)
5:00	Worship followed by <i>How Can I Be Filled With the Spirit?</i>
8:00	Supper
9:30	Talent show or entertainment (optional)

Sunday

9:00	Breakfast
9:45	Groups
10:30	<i>How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?</i>
1:00	Lunch

Afternoon free – but go to church together in the evening

Checklist

It may be worth noting the following as a reminder of what to tell the students to bring with them. It is always a good idea to bring spares of everything just in case items are forgotten.

Don't forget to bring

- Bible, Alpha Manual and notebook
- A skit, song, etc. for talent show or entertainment (optional)
- Sports gear
- Rain gear
- Towel and soap

Chapter 6

FOLLOW-UP TO ALPHA

6. Follow-Up to Alpha

Expect fruit and plan

Conversion may take place in a moment, but it is part of a process. Jesus used the expression “born again” (see John 3:3) for the beginning of a spiritual life, and the New Testament speaks about becoming a child of God. While the birth of a child occurs at one moment on one day, there is a much longer process which takes place spiritually.

New Christians need to be integrated into the life of the Christian community and appropriate ways of doing this will vary. You may be running Alpha in your church and so follow up is obvious. But for those running a course in their home or in dorms, it is important to plan ahead to the end of the course and decide how to encourage new Christians.

Local Church

For those not running Alpha in a church, it is very important to be linked in with a local church. Toward the end of the course you may want to start taking your guests along to a Sunday service so that once the course has finished they are already partly integrated into church life.

In addition, a few courses have found that their local church has been really helpful, particularly when hard issues have arisen in the discussion groups. They were able to turn to someone with authority for help and support.

Alpha Resources

A number of resources have been compiled with the aim of providing (new) Christians with solid biblical roots for their faith and

lifestyle, and to address problems and difficult issues in a clear and simple way. These include:

A Life Worth Living (available on video)

Nine talks based on the book of Philippians. Ideal for those who have just completed the Alpha on Campus course, and want to get going in the Christian life.

Challenging Lifestyle (available on audio)

Nineteen talks based on the Sermon on the Mount. Deals with issues such as “How to Have an Influence on Society”, and “How to Handle Money”.

Searching Issues (available on audio)

Seven talks which tackle the seven most common objections to the Christian faith.

The Heart of Revival

Ten Bible studies based on the book of Isaiah, drawing out important truths for today by interpreting some of the teaching of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. The book seeks to understand what revival might mean and how we can prepare to be part of it.

30 Days

Nicky Gumbel has selected thirty passages from the Old and New Testament which can be read over 30 days. This book is for those who are interested in beginning to explore the Bible.

Chapter 7

TO CONCLUDE

7. In Conclusion

Alpha contains the truth of the gospel. Be encouraged as you prepare, teach and lead each session. Be prayerful and committed to the students you come across. Then they will know the truth, and the truth will set them free (John 8:32).

We hope that this manual has shown you how Alpha can be used as an effective tool of evangelism to reach out to students around you. We have found that time and again God has honored simple requests for Him to send his Spirit among us. Amazing and profound changes always occur as a result. We continue to see students give their lives to Christ, be filled with the Spirit and get excited about Jesus. We hope that you will find Alpha an easy way to present the Christian message in a non-threatening manner which is relevant to students today.

Chapter 8

APPENDICES

8. Appendices

Questions and Answers

What is Alpha?

Alpha is a 15-session practical introduction to the Christian faith designed primarily for non-Christians, non-churchgoers and new Christians.

What are the advantages of Alpha compared to other types of evangelism?

We are not suggesting that Alpha is the only or even the best form of evangelism. But we have found that it is proving very effective in all types of settings and cultures. For a fuller discussion of why, please see chapter 1 on principles in *Telling Others*.

Are there any special considerations when teaching the post-modernist mindset?

We recognize that we live in a post-modern culture, but how this translates in practice is still uncertain. We find an extraordinary mixture of mindsets in the student world, primarily between those coming from a more “rationalist” view and those who are more “existentialist and post-modern”. Many commentators on society have noted how the so-called post-modern generation relate to stories rather than apologetics and for that reason the New Age movement has proved so popular among students. Certainly we find the desire to experience God in a real way a vital aspect of Alpha, hence the importance of the Holy Spirit teaching and weekend.

The material covered on Alpha includes many illustrations and stories which appeal to the post-modern mind, yet we also see that many of the students are more “rational”, and the logical manner with which the claims are Christ are presented appeal to them.

We would encourage you to recognize that students are all coming from different positions and a mixture of both the intellectual and experiential is vital.

Must we start with the celebration dinner?

Many people have found the celebration dinner is a great help to launch an Alpha course. However it is not the only way. You may find that it is better to use Alpha as a follow up to your campus-wide evangelism initiative or special events.

Would you recommend doing the Alpha course with videos or with live speakers?

We recognize that the ideal is to have live speakers, but we recommend that people start their course with the videos for these reasons:

- To prepare 15 talks in a term and to prepare them well is extremely hard work.
- If it is your first Alpha course there are a lot of things to organize apart from the talks.
- If the course is small, it is an advantage to watch the talk on video. This makes the discussion easier as the speaker is not also the group leader, and the expression of contrary opinion is less threatening.
- Often people move from videos to live speakers gradually.

Is there a model to fit Alpha into one term?

It seems that all universities and all Alpha courses are unique. Term lengths vary from 12 to 16 weeks, so we find that courses are using different models to fit in with these timings. (See page 21 for more details.) We have found that the courses that have split over two terms have, in some cases, had a certain number of guests dropping out over the holiday break. It is therefore very important where you place the weekend, as this is often a turning point in the course for a number of the guests.

What about doing two talks in a week/night?

The whole feel of Alpha is process evangelism. It is about walking with people and what happens in between the talks is very important. So, if possible, try not to merge the talks unless you feel it is right for your group.

How do you encourage guests not to drop out over the holidays?

The best thing you can do is to be really organized, to plan your term and to set dates. This will help guests to know what the course involves and to fit it into their schedule.

How can we be more creative if we only have a small group?

Video clips and icebreakers can be difficult when you only have a small group. One activity that works well is to listen to a thought-provoking song while group members shut their eyes and listen.

Do you mainly have a discussion in the small groups or do Bible study?

Our experience has been that people normally start off in their small groups by discussing the issues raised by the talk and other related and unrelated issues. When the last person in a group becomes a Christian or as the leader feels appropriate, it may then be possible to move on to Bible study. Alpha discussion groups are not Bible studies.

What do you do if one person dominates the group?

Here skill is required from the leader of the small group to draw out answers from other people and to include the whole group in the discussion (see *Telling Others*, chapter 7).

What do you do if no one in the group will say anything?

Two questions that normally get people talking in a group are:

- What did anyone think of the talk?
- What does anyone feel about the talk?

Following that, refer to the discussion questions in the Alpha Team Training manual. Do not be anxious if people are quiet for a little bit after you have asked them a question. Often it takes people time to think through what they want to say.

What happens if someone in my small group has a really serious problem?

Each Alpha course should have a pastoral care structure in place where each guest is looked after by a leader or helper

and each leader or helper is looked after by a pastor. As problems arise, they can go up this structure of pastoral care to the appropriate level. For those running a course at home, it is very important to link in with your local church for support. Do refer serious issues to Christian people with experience and training in that area. Don't take on something you can't handle.

Does it matter if people drop out of the course?

Obviously, it is very disappointing if people drop out of the course. However, we believe it is important to leave the guests to decide whether to come or not. If they do decide to keep coming, wonderful. If they stop coming, it is unfortunate, but we do not chase after them. See, for example, the Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-22).

Must people attend every session?

We ask those helping or leading the course to be 100-percent committed to it and to come every week and to the weekend.

However, it is the opposite for those who are guests on the course: they may come and go as they wish (see *Telling Others*, chapter 3). The best approach is to encourage them to come without applying any pressure.

Alpha Copyright Statement

Sandy Millar, Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton writes:

"We have always been keen to allow individuals who are running an Alpha course the flexibility to adapt where it was felt necessary to allow for locally-felt needs and where there was the desire to retain the essential elements, nature and identity of the course. Experience has shown though that this has been misunderstood

and the resulting loss of integrity in some courses has given rise to considerable confusion. Now that Alpha is running all around the world, we have reluctantly had to draw up a copyright statement more tightly in order to preserve confidence and quality control. I am sure you will understand."

Alpha Copyright

1. With the exception of books published by Kingsway (in which the author is stated to hold the copyright), all Alpha resources and materials, including graphics materials, booklets and tapes are copyrighted by Holy Trinity Brompton.

2. In no circumstances may any part of any Alpha resource be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright holder or that holder's agent. Permission is granted for downloading *The A-Z of Running Alpha on Campus* for personal use only.

3. Use of Alpha resources is permitted only when in conjunction with the running or promotion of an Alpha course. Resale, or the obtaining of payment in any other connection with any Alpha resource is not permitted.

4. Holy Trinity Brompton asks that the name "Alpha", or names similar to it should not be used in connection with any other Christian course. This request is made in order to:

- avoid confusion caused by different courses having similar titles,

- ensure the uniformity and integrity of the Alpha course,
- maintain confidence in courses listed on the Alpha register.

5. Holy Trinity Brompton accepts that minor adaptations to the Alpha course may occasionally be desirable. These should only concern the length of the talks or the number of sessions. In each case the essential character of the course must be retained. Alpha is a series of 15 talks, given over a period of time, including a weekend or day away, with teaching based on all the material in *Questions of Life*. If the Alpha course is adapted, the person responsible must:

- only use such a course in their own church or parish,
- not allow such a course to be used elsewhere,
- not publish or promote such a course.

This statement supersedes all previous statements relating to copyright in any Alpha resource.