

WHY RUN ALPHA

An introduction to get started



Alpha



MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

At Alpha we love the Church! Our heart is to see it grow and advance for God's kingdom and glory – both locally and globally.

We want to equip and support you in the vision that God has given to each of you in your local churches and communities, so that whole societies and nations are reached and transformed by the good news of Jesus Christ. This vision is the number one reason that I work for Alpha and I feel hugely privileged to support this transformational work.

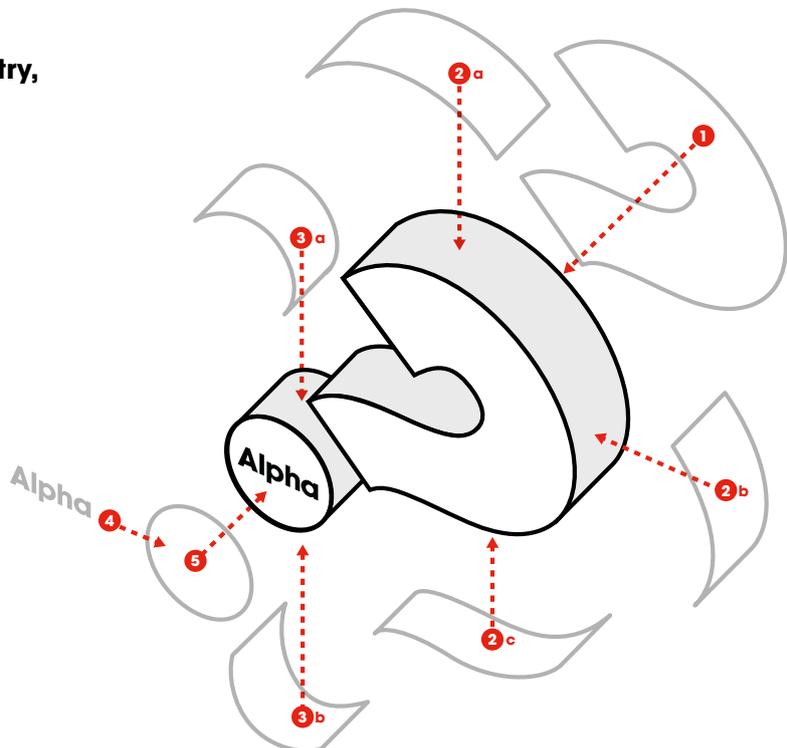
It's amazing to see how effective Alpha has been at not only encouraging unity around Jesus in the global church but also at impacting culture. This is evident when we see guests feel welcome and part of the community – even before coming to believe in Jesus.

Alpha creates a space to encourage a culture of invitation and empowerment, giving people the tools to share the gospel in their individual contexts and beyond.

We want to ensure Alpha continues serving the church in helping people find and follow Christ, and it is my prayer that you will be blessed by it.

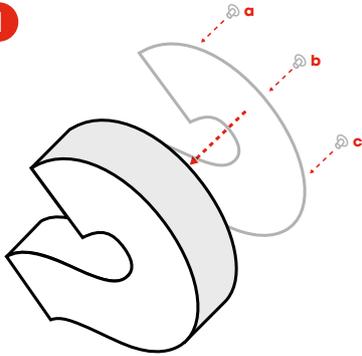
Thank you very much,

Kingston Ogango
Regional Director of Ministry,
Alpha Sub Sahara Africa



WHAT IS ALPHA?

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Alpha is a series of interactive sessions, typically run over eleven weeks, including a weekend away, where anyone can explore life and the Christian faith in a friendly, open and informal environment.

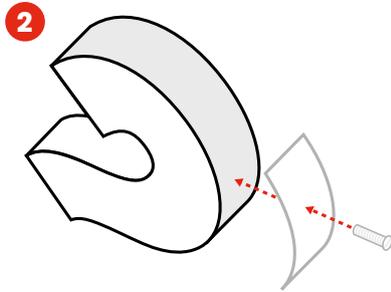
Everything that you will need to host the best Alpha possible is available **for free** on our website: alpha.org/run

Alpha is designed to create a space where people are excited to invite their friends for a conversation about Jesus.

Everyone is welcome on Alpha, although Alpha is designed particularly for people who would not describe themselves as Christians or church-goers.



VISION AND MISSION



At Alpha, our vision is to see the evangelisation of the nations, the revitalisation of the church and the transformation of society. Such change will come only through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to explore faith in the context

of a local church community, where they can come and see Jesus, community and love at work.

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



Uniting the Church

Alpha runs across all major Christian denominations, including 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 has shown across the world that it can be a most effective tool for evangelisation.

It empowers lay people’

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale

Archbishop of Johannesburg, South Africa



‘Alpha has played a huge role in Grace’s mission to reach people who feel far from God.

It’s like the front door of the church. New people flock into the Alpha course year after year, are baptised on the weekend away, get plugged into small groups and find themselves in life giving community. Stories of individual lives change are astounding. Literally from prison to baptism is one story that stands out. Eating and learning together is simply a winning recipe.’

Pastor Wayne Taylor,

Grace Family Church, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



‘We have been running Alpha for 15 years and it has had such a great impact. People who have gone through the course have been elected to various positions in the church as stewards and cell leaders and they are committed members.

It has had more impact also around the community. I would encourage all churches to run Alpha to enable their churches to grow.’

Reverend Nomsa Nomqolo,

Kuilsriver Methodist, Cape Town, South Africa



“I think Alpha is a great tool – the good thing is that people get saved and within the eleven weeks they are filled with the Holy Spirit. The weekend away is a time for deliverance. People come and pray for you quietly, so quietly that only the people near you can hear. It is so quiet that you wonder if the Holy Spirit can move. But it is amazing to see people getting filled with the Spirit right there, before your eyes.

The teaching on the Holy Spirit, and how to be filled by the Holy Spirit on Alpha is one of the best kinds.”

Reverend Dr. David Oginde

Bishop of Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM), Nairobi, Kenya

“The Alpha Youth Series is still the greatest tool to bring young people to Jesus, most of all, it’s a safe place for every person, regardless of age, race, rich or poor. Everyone can get vulnerable and sees the need to depend on Jesus. I believe Alpha is the tool for youth leaders to engage young people.

Ayanda Luthuli
Youth Leader, Sarepta Church in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



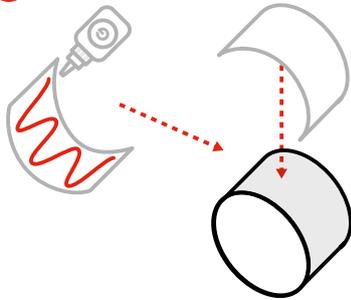
‘We have been running Alpha for nearly a decade. In this time, we’ve hosted courses with over 200 guests and those with 5 or 6, but each time there has been an unmistakable impact in the lives of those who attend. It has also made a marked difference in our church culture, as each time we gear up for Alpha we are challenged to be evangelically-minded and to put our talk about being invitational and reaching the lost into practice.

The reach of Alpha’s impact is truly impossible to quantify and it has become a fundamental part of our church life.

Bishop Gary Rivas
Gracepoint Church, Johannesburg, South Africa

EMPOWERING THE LOCAL CHURCH

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We train and equip local leaders to run Alpha, and as they do, not only are we seeing guests' lives transformed, but also that churches are changed and renewed. A culture of hospitality, openness and invitation develops, 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 there's no follow up if they don't come back.

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 realise that it is only God who changes people's lives – we just introduce him.

If we allow people to be themselves and ask their questions, and focus on building relationships and relying on the Holy Spirit, lives are changed.

ALPHA IS REPRODUCIBLE.

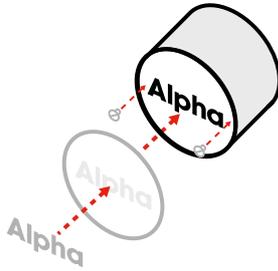
Alpha empowers ordinary people to be a part of this extraordinary work. Alpha can be run by anyone and in any context in collaboration with the local church.

We often witness that the things that seemingly are small and insignificant often have huge impact when Jesus gets involved.



HOW DOES ALPHA WORK?

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Every Alpha session has three key elements: food, a talk and a discussion.



FOOD

Almost every social event is centred around food and drink. The food on Alpha allows people from different backgrounds, with a whole variety of questions and ideas about life, to come together, share a meal or snack and get to know one another on a deeper level.

It is best not to charge for food on Alpha – we believe that hearing about Jesus should be free. While lots of Alphas do ask for a suggested donation to help cover the costs, it doesn't have to be expensive to put on some refreshments for your guests. Some churches ask their home groups to take turns to cook for Alpha. Some churches also run their Alpha in a coffee shop or provide juice and fruit for their guests.



TALKS

After some food and time to get to know one another, a short talk is played as a film or can be given as a live talk. The talks are designed to engage and inspire conversation on big issues around faith. The videos are usually around thirty minutes long. There are 15 Alpha talks that can be explored over 11 weeks, including the Alpha weekend.

All of the videos and scripts are available for free online:

alpha.org/run

Sign up, create a course and download the videos and scripts in "Series Materials"



DISCUSSION

Probably the most important part of any Alpha. This is the chance for people to share their thoughts and ideas on the topic in a honest and friendly environment, and simply discuss in a small group. The discussion provides the space for building relationships and to experience what the Christian life really looks like. There's no obligation to say anything and there's nothing guests can't say.

Alpha small group host's focus is on allowing guests the space to ask questions rather than offering all the answers. The thing that can most affect the success or failure of a small group is choosing and training your hosts and helpers.

Small group training is available online: alpha.org/run
Sign up, create a course and download training and discussion guides in "Series Materials"



Alpha explores these questions in the talks each session:

SESSION 1

Is There More to Life Than This?

SESSION 2

Who is Jesus?

SESSION 3

Why Did Jesus Die?

SESSION 4

How Can I Have Faith?

SESSION 5

Why and How Should I Pray?

SESSION 6

Why and How Should I Read the Bible?

SESSION 7

How Does God Guide Us?

WEEKEND SESSION 1

Who is the Holy Spirit?

WEEKEND SESSION 2

What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

WEEKEND SESSION 3

How Can I Be Filled with the Holy Spirit?

WEEKEND SESSION 4

How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?

SESSION 8

How Can I Resist Evil?

SESSION 9

Why and How Should I Tell Others?

SESSION 10

Does God Heal Today?

SESSION 11

What About the Church?

ALPHA IN MANY CONTEXTS

Alpha can be run by the church in many different contexts:

CHURCH

Some churches run Alpha with many small groups, while some with just one or two. There are also churches that run Alpha in their cell, connect or home groups.

Each round of Alpha runs over 11 weeks. Some churches run three rounds of Alpha per year, some run two rounds and some run one round a year. We have found that churches see the best result of Alpha when they run it continuously over a minimum period of three years.

YOUTH AND TEENS

Alpha for Youth is typically run in church youth groups, schools and universities. It's an opportunity to inspire and equip young people to invite their friends to explore the meaning of life and faith from a Christian perspective.

The same Alpha content is done in a fun and interactive way, mostly using the Alpha Youth Series.



CATHOLIC CONTEXT

Alpha is run in Catholic parishes globally. It is a unique way to introduce people to an initial proclamation of the Good News – 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 Evangelisation.”

Parishes running Alpha have seen significant increase of deepened relationships with Christ. Alpha is endorsed by many Catholic leaders including Father James Mallon, Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, Papal preacher Father Raniero Cantalamessa, and Cardinals Luis Antonio Tagle, Wilfred Napier and Christoph Schönborn.

PRISONS

Alpha is also run in local prisons, halfway homes and drug rehabilitation centres. Churches send teams into these places, running Alpha, bringing hope to the inmates.

WORKPLACE

Alpha in the Workplace is usually run by Christians in their workplaces during lunch time or after work; inviting their colleagues to encounter Jesus and experience His love.

Many people have been greatly encouraged as this gives them a structured but laidback platform to bring the good news of Jesus to their workplace.



RESOURCES

Alpha has been filmed in three different formats, so you can find the one that works for you.

ALPHA FILM SERIES

Filmed for today's audience, the Alpha Film Series is emotive, engaging and epic in scale and scope. Nicky Gumbel and two presenters, Toby Flint and Gemma Hunt, walk us through the basics of the Christian faith in a way that multiple audiences can relate to. The episodes feature inspiring stories and interviews, as well as visual illustrations and motion graphics.



ALPHA YOUTH SERIES

The Alpha Youth Series is a series designed for teens and young people between the ages of 13 and 18. Each episode is interactive – with short breaks that make space for discussion in small groups, giving young people the chance to explore faith. The Alpha Youth Series has been updated to with new street interviews filmed in Johannesburg, Nairobi and Lagos, to give answers and perspectives of young people in Africa.

ALPHA WITH NICKY GUMBEL

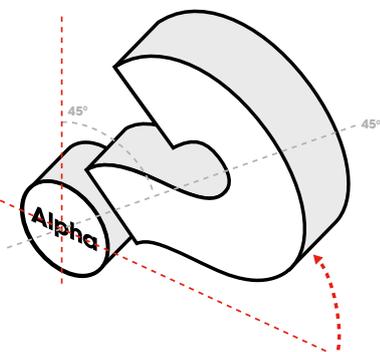
This series features Alpha pioneer Nicky Gumbel presenting each topic with humorous anecdotes, personal experiences and Biblical relevancy. The talks (29 minutes each) were filmed at Holy Trinity Brompton, where Alpha first began.



To download these resources go to alpha.org/run.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

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SIGN UP ONLINE

Everything that you will need to host the best Alpha possible is available digitally for free on our website: alpha.org/run

For any help, please contact us at support@alphasa.co.za

Steps to signing up online:

1. Visit our website to register for free: alpha.org/run
2. When registering for the first time, click "**Sign Up**"
3. Add in your information and create a password
4. A verification email will be sent to you. Check your email inbox and [click on the link to verify your account](#)
5. Back on the webpage alpha.org/run you can now add your email address and password and **log in** to your account

Steps to creating a course:

1. Login to: alpha.org/run (If you have not yet signed up, then please follow the previous steps)
2. Click on **Create an Alpha** and follow the steps to help customise your course:
3. **Select your course audience**

4. **Select your course type** (videos, live talks with scripts, or both)
5. **Select your course context** (are you running Alpha at a Catholic church, a prison, high school, the workplace, or none of these)
6. **Select the language that you will run your course in**
7. **Select which resource you would like to use** (if you selected "Youth" as your audience then you will see the Alpha Youth Series as an option)
8. Once you have selected a resource, click "**Run this Series**"
9. **Enter the final details of your Alpha**
10. Select "**Publish to Alpha**" (included the location of your Alpha) if you would like to publish your Alpha so that guests can find your Alpha course when they search at alpha.org/try-alpha

Steps to downloading all the resources:

1. Once you have created a course, click on "**My Alphas**" to preview all your courses
2. Within the course you have created, click on "**Schedule**" to make any adjustments to your training and session dates
3. Click on "**Promote**" to download all the resources to help you [promote your Alpha to your congregation](#) and equip them to [invite guests](#). These include posters, invitation cards, social media content and videos, all for digital or print.
4. Click on "**Series Materials**" to download team training videos, the talk videos, and additional resources such as guides for your team, guides for guests, guest feedback form, scripts and many other helpful resources
5. Click on "**Team**" and invite your Alpha team to preview the course you created, and all the resources online

INVITE

Invitations are vital in spreading the news about your Alpha.

Encourage your congregation to get involved and invite their friends and family. Use the materials online, or make your own, to help equip your congregation.

Some churches host an informal 'Launch Party' to make it even easier to invite guests along to hear about Alpha and what it involves.

TRAIN

Host training with your team.

The thing that can most affect the success of any Alpha is training your Alpha team. Although Alpha has a simple format, there are a few crucial things to remember when running a small group. Even if they have experience leading, helping or hosting groups, it's still essential that they understand the idea and principles behind Alpha, especially hospitality and small group dynamics.

PRAY

Prayer is vital to the effectiveness of Alpha and we believe that when we pray, anything can happen.

Some suggestions include getting your whole church praying in your Sunday services and small groups, getting people together to pray before each session, and getting hosts and helpers praying for each guest by name throughout Alpha.

Visit alpha.org/pray and join us to pray for the work of Alpha around the world. For more ideas on how to pray, visit 24-7prayer.com/prayer.

'Through Alpha, God is unlocking a lot of prison doors, especially the prison of the mind for people not incarcerated.

One day, sad and alone, as I watched the videos and studied the material, it was as if the Holy Spirit finally got through to me. As a result, on my second course, in those priceless moments when the inmates would really open up to me, it was like being in a room with God. As soon as we prayed, the Lord would just come and be with us.

As I wait for the third season of Alpha in prison to start, and I continue sharing with friends and family, I'm unlocking even the prisons of the mind of people who aren't incarcerated.'

***Treasure
Boksburg Prison, South Africa***

SOME MORE TIPS ON GETTING STARTED

When should we run Alpha?

There are a few helpful things to think through when deciding the dates and times to run your Alpha.

Dates

Try to avoid booking your Alpha over any holidays or events to avoid long gaps between sessions or guests being unable to attend. For example, running Alpha over Christmas or the school holidays might mean that lots of your guests aren't able to make all of the weeks.

You also need to think about two dates for training your team and a date for a launch party, if you are having one.

Timings

Alpha can be held at any time of day, you just need to work out the best time for the people you are trying to invite. If you are running Alpha with university students, an early morning breakfast might not be the best option and if you are running it with mainly parents, a morning might prove better than an evening. Whatever time you choose, make sure that you have enough time for food, a talk and a discussion.

Example timings:

Evening:

7:00 – Food
7:30 – Welcome
7:35 – Worship
7:45 – Talk
8:15 – Discussion Groups
9:15 – End

Morning:

09:45 – Breakfast and Coffee
10:15 – Welcome
10:20 – Worship
10:30 – Talk
11:00 – Discussion Group
12:00 – End

Where should we run Alpha?

Alpha is currently run in churches, homes, coffee shops, universities, schools, the workplace, and all sorts of other locations all around the world. It doesn't matter what venue you choose, just try to make the space welcoming and conducive to good conversation.

Who should be on the team?

Choosing the right team is really important. The people that host and help in the small groups need to be the best people to both welcome new people into the community and guide discussions in a way that

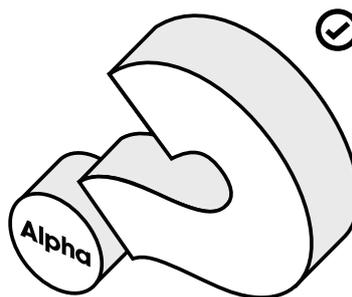
allows for real exploration. The most helpful question to ask is, 'Would I be comfortable with putting my non-Christian friend in the group with these hosts?' It is important to look for the right people.

Plan your Alpha weekend or day away

A crucial part of Alpha is the weekend or day away. This can feel like a difficult thing to organise but it doesn't have to be.

It is a really important part of Alpha and is often the part which guests find most transformative, so it's worth putting effort into running one if you can. A good way to make the process easier is to pair up with another Alpha in your city and run a weekend together.

For top tips and more information on exactly what is involved, there is more training available about the Alpha weekend on our website, sign-up at alpha.org/run



ALSO FROM ALPHA



Bible in One Year

The Bible in One Year is a free Bible reading app with a daily commentary by Nicky and Pippa Gumbel. Since its development in 2009, the app has had over 3.5 million users across 194 countries, many of these readers being Alpha guests.

It is available in five languages, and includes audio commentary by British actor David Suchet.

Free to download on the **Apple App Store and Google Play.**



THE MARRIAGE COURSE AND THE PRE-MARRIAGE COURSE

The Marriage Course is a short course that's simple to run and designed to help strengthen relationships. It's a really great way to support your congregation and also to reach out to your community.

The course is designed for any couple that want to invest in their relationship. It covers a range of practical subjects such as communication, conflict resolution, and how to talk about money. The Marriage Course is based on Christian principles, but has been created for all couples with or without a church background

The episodes have recently been re-filmed with insight from leading experts. The course has been running for over 25 years and has been tried by over one million people in 127 countries.

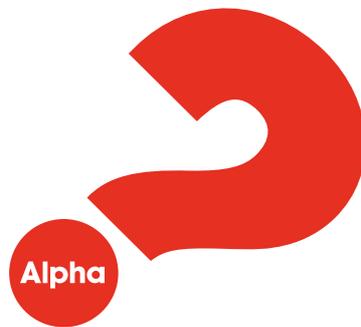
Visit **themarriagecourse.org** for more information on The Marriage Course and The Pre-Marriage Course.

To access a full range of resources, register at **run.themarriagecourse.org**

Also available to download at run.themarriagecourse.org are the:

THE PARENTING CHILDREN COURSE
THE PARENTING TEENAGERS COURSE

#RunAlpha



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alpha.org/southafrica