

Alpha Online



Host Notes



Is there more to life than this?

SESSION

01

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Introduce guests to Alpha. What is it? Who is it for? How long does it last? What's the format?
- Try to always finish on time
- Remember that the first session is different from others; it's more about getting to know each other. In future weeks we'll have more discussion about the session's talk

Icebreaker ideas

Desert Island Game

"If you were stuck on a desert island and you could take one thing (not a person) with you, and you already have the Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare, what would you take?"

Stuck elevator

"Which person from history would you most like to be stuck in an elevator with, and why?"

Discussion questions

- 1. Start by getting to know each other** – Try an icebreaker or get-to-know-you game (ideas above!)
- 2. How and why did you end up coming here today?** – Try to draw more out of guests if they are a bit hesitant. Start with the guest you think is most reluctant about trying Alpha to encourage other guests to open up
- 3. If it turned out that God existed and you could ask one question, what would it be?**

Recommended

Reading

What's So Amazing About Grace? – Philip Yancey

The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming – Henri J. M. Nouwen

Searching Issues: Does Religion Do More Harm Than Good? – Nicky Gumbel

Don't forget

We hope you enjoyed this evening, it's a bit different from other weeks. If you're feeling a bit frustrated, don't worry – there will be lots more time for discussion next week. Next session's talk: *Who is Jesus?*

Who is Jesus?

SESSION

02

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- The small group works best if everyone has the chance to participate. Explain how it should work and that there's no pressure to talk, but that everyone should feel able
- Ask each person to introduce themselves briefly and welcome new guests
- Try to always finish on time

Key concept

Understanding the evidence regarding the historical claims of Jesus Christ.

Guests come to Alpha with a variety of ideas about Jesus. Many of their views would fall into the "folklore/legend" category. Others would see Jesus as a wonderful man, great moral teacher, or religious leader. There are some who really have no idea about Jesus. The goal this week is to get their ideas on the table and begin to help them sort out the evidence that either questions or confirms their assumptions.

Discussions around Jesus that may surface include: Was Jesus a real, historical person? Was He more than a wonderful man? Was He more than a great moral teacher or religious leader?

Discussion questions

- 1. Introduce any new guests to the group** – ask new people to say their name and how they came to be here
- 2. What makes you happy?**
- 3. What do you think about Jesus?**
- 4. If you had a chance to meet Jesus, how would you feel and what would you say to Him?**

Additional questions (if needed)

- Before tonight, what was your concept of Jesus? Has it changed? If so, in what way?
- What aspects of the evidence presented tonight did you find convincing/not convincing

Recommended

Reading

Mere Christianity – C. S. Lewis

Jesus Is ____. – Judah Smith

Orthodoxy – G. K. Chesterton

Don't forget

Next session's talk: *Why did Jesus die?*

Why did Jesus die?

SESSION

03

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Welcome any new guests. Introduce everyone and remind guests that small groups are at the heart of Alpha
- Mention the Weekend Away or Alpha Day
- Suffering and other religions are issues that frequently come up in this session

Key concept

If we are honest, we all have to admit that we do things we know are wrong.

This week we are looking at the problem of sin, God's solution, and the result of Jesus' death. We may have heard that Jesus died on the cross, but we are left asking the question, "Why did He die?" Does Jesus' death really have relevance to our lives today? Why are we so good at rationalizing our mistakes and feeling superior to others?

Really listen for what the guests have to say around this pivotal week of Alpha.

Discussion questions

1. **What does the word 'forgiveness' mean to you?**
2. **Have you ever had to forgive anyone? How did you do it?**
3. **Has anyone ever forgiven you?**
4. **What do you think about the idea of God's forgiveness?**

Additional questions (if needed)

- What does the word 'sin' mean to you?
- What is your reaction to Jesus' death?

Recommended

Reading

The Cross of Christ – John Stott

Searching Issues: Why Does God Allow Suffering? – Nicky Gumbel

Mud, Sweat and Tears – Bear Grylls

Why Jesus? – Nicky Gumbel

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
How can I have faith?

How can I have faith?

SESSION

04

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Remind the group about the Alpha Weekend or Alpha Day
- Last week's talk was, *Why did Jesus die?* Share the video link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

This week we are looking at the evidence for believing in Christianity. The message takes the perspective of a person who has decided to believe the claims of Christianity. How can that person make sure they have made the right decision?

Many will still be exploring faith so continue to let them ask questions and let the group respond. Encourage them to consider what obstacles might keep them from having faith.

Discussion questions

1. What does faith mean to you?
2. Is faith a blind leap or something more substantial?
3. What do you think about the evidence of Christianity that was presented?
4. How can a person have faith in something she or he can't see?

Recommended

Reading

Searching Issues: Is Faith Irrational? – Nicky Gumbel

The Reason for God – Tim Keller

The Hiding Place – Corrie Ten Boom

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
Why and how should I pray?

Why and how should I pray?

SESSION

05

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Encourage guests to book the Weekend Away or Alpha Day in their diaries
- Last session's talk was, *How can I have faith?* Share the video link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

Prayer is at the heart of Christianity: because at the heart of Christianity is a relationship with God.

Surveys indicate that most people pray. Even people who don't consider themselves religious find themselves praying from time to time. Where do we take our fears and anxieties? Sometimes our worries seem like they are going to crush us. Other times we experience a calm we can't explain, but it doesn't last. Is there something/ someone bigger we can trust? Still these questions may remain: If God knows our needs, why should we pray about them? What is the value of prayer? Take time to introduce prayer this week at the end of the small group time.

Discussion questions

1. **Have you ever tried praying? What was it like? What happened?**
2. **What do you think about the idea of God answering prayer?**
3. **Have you ever experienced a coincidence happening after prayer?**
4. **Finish with a short prayer (if appropriate)**

Additional questions (if needed)

- In the talk, various reasons for praying are given. Which of these do you relate to and why?

Recommended

Reading

God on Mute - Pete Greig

Too Busy Not to Pray - Bill Hybels

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
Why and how should I read the Bible?

Why and how should I read the Bible?

SESSION

06

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Encourage guests to book the Weekend Away or Alpha Day in their diaries
- Last session's talk was, *Why and how do I pray?* Share the video link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

The Bible is one way God can speak to us.

This week we will look at how to read the Bible. Encourage the guests to get a Bible in a version that they can understand.

Remember that when a guest hears God for themselves in the Bible, they will remember it more than if we talk about how we hear God.

Discussion questions

- 1. Has anyone ever read any of the Bible? What was your experience?**
- 2. How do you feel about the idea of God speaking through the Bible?**
- 3. Have you read anything in the Bible that has challenged an aspect of your beliefs or behavior?**

Additional questions (if needed)

- Does anyone have any practical suggestions about how to read the Bible? At an appropriate point in discussion, you might recommend the Bible in One Year app:
bibleinoneyear.org

Recommended

Reading

Why Trust the Bible? – Amy Orr-Ewing

30 Days – Nicky Gumbel

The Bible, The Message version

Bible in One Year App – Nicky Gumbel,
available at: bibleinoneyear.org

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
How does God guide us?

How does God guide us?

SESSION

07

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Encourage guests to book the Weekend Away or Alpha Day in their diaries
- Last session's talk was, *Why and how should I read the Bible?* Share the link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

Today we want to discuss the idea that God has a plan for our lives.

Be attentive to the creative ways He has revealed His plan to your guests. Try to create ways for people who feel like they have "messed up" in life to see that God is the God of the second, third, fourth chance.

Discussion questions

1. **What are the ways that God may speak to people today? Have you ever experienced this?**
2. **What should we do if we believe we have made a mess of our lives?**
3. **In the last few weeks has anyone had a sense that God might have been guiding them?**
4. **What are the ways that God may speak to people today? Have you ever experienced this?**

Additional questions (if needed)

- What is a risk you could take to make yourself a better person or make the world a better place? Encourage guests that many times God may be speaking to them through these desires
- What should we do if we believe we have made a mess of our lives?

Recommended

Reading

Listening to God - Joyce Huggett

Chasing the Dragon - Jackie Pullinger

Don't forget

The next session is the Alpha Weekend or Day

Alpha Day or Weekend

SESSIONS

08-09

HOST NOTES

SESSION 8

Who is the Holy Spirit?

There is no small group discussion following this session.

Encourage guests that this is a longer session and that the discussion time will follow the talk on "What does the Holy Spirit Do?" Focus on relationships and enjoy spending time with each other. So, relax and enjoy yourself. Have fun!

SESSION 9

What does the Holy Spirit do?

Key Concept

The Holy Spirit does a variety of things including giving new life, a newfound sense of family and unity, and new power to follow Christ. The Holy Spirit not only transforms our character, but gives us the ability to be a blessing to others as well.

Take time to discuss some of the spiritual gifts that will be mentioned in the next talk. Many people may have never had a chance to talk about these things, so encourage them to keep an open mind and focus on how these gifts could be a blessing to others.

Discussion questions

- **Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11**
- **What do you think each of the spiritual gifts refers to? (vv. 8-10)**
- **What is the gift of tongues? Does anyone have any experience with this? - How do you feel about the idea of God giving us supernatural gifts?**
- **Does everybody have the same gifts? (vv. 4-6) - Different gifts, works and service, but the same God**
- **Why does God give spiritual gifts to people? (v. 7) - For the common good not for our own glory**

Mention that there will be an opportunity to hear more on this subject in the next session.

Alpha Day or Weekend

SESSIONS
10-11
HOST NOTES

SESSION 10

How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?

This session is followed by a time of prayer ministry in a group setting. Spend time praying with any guests who would like prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Encourage guests who have further questions that you would be more than happy to discuss the teaching following the prayer time. Make sure to keep the discussion alive so guests can take their next steps.

SESSION 11

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

Ask each member of the group, starting with the person who will be most open, to describe their experience of the weekend. This will give permission for any others who want to, to share their experiences. If appropriate you may wish to offer an opportunity for the group to pray for one another.

How can I resist evil?

SESSION

12

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Hear back from those who attended the Alpha Weekend or Day – how did they find it? Give guests the opportunity to express what God might have done in their lives. Start with a positive person!
- Take the opportunity to ask your group about their individual experience of the weekend
- Last week's talk was How does God guide us? Share the link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

Read the news and we see evil all around us.

The talk about evil is intended to come the week after the Alpha Weekend, to provide guests a firm foundation of spiritual confidence. Please be sure to encourage and strengthen your group. Pray for each other to close the evening.

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think bad things happen?
2. Where does temptation come from?
3. How do you resist temptation?

Recommended

Reading

The Screwtape Letters – C. S. Lewis

Café Theology – Mike Lloyd

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
Why and how should I tell others?

Why and how should I tell others?

SESSION

13

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- If you are holding a small group reunion or celebration to mark the end of the course, this is a good time agree a date and time
- Last week's talk was How Can I Resist Evil? Share the video link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

It can be difficult to talk to others about the deeper or personal matters of our lives.

Our faith in Christ falls into this category. Some people feel that one's faith is a private matter and should not be discussed with others. However, telling others about our faith is a natural part of our relationship with God.

Discussion questions

1. **Has anyone told their friends, family, or colleagues at work that they are doing Alpha? What was their reaction?**
2. **If you didn't know anything about Christianity, how would you like to be told about it?**
3. **What do you think/feel about the idea of telling others about your faith?**

If you haven't already, pray as a group

Recommended

Reading

Lord Help My Unbelief – John Young

Searching Issues – Nicky Gumbel

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
Does God heal today?

Does God heal today?

SESSION

14

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- Remind guests about your small group reunion. If you haven't already arranged one, this is the perfect time. What would people like to do?
- Last session's talk was, Why and How Should I Tell Others? Share the video link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

God is still healing today.

The Greek word that means "I save" also means "I heal." God is concerned not just about our spiritual salvation, but our whole being. One day we shall have a new and perfect body. In this life we will never reach perfection. When God heals someone miraculously today, we get a glimpse of the future when the final redemption of our bodies will take place (Romans 8:23).

Discussion questions

Offer to pray for healing, make sure everyone in the group gets a chance to be prayed for.

Ask your guests if there is a specific problem or illness for which they would like prayer for healing. At the same time ask if anyone would like prayer for any other issue. This is a good time to hear any general questions about the subject of healing, so allow time for the group to discuss briefly before praying together.

Offer to pray for everyone who wants prayer in turn.

Recommended

Reading

Dancer Off Her Feet – Julie Sheldon

Power Evangelism – John Wimber

Don't forget

Next session's talk:
What about the church?

What about the church?

SESSION

15

HOST NOTES

Introduction pointers

- If you have organised a small group reunion in the next couple of weeks, confirm details
- Remember to send out your guest questionnaire, if you're doing one, and ask guests to fill it in if they're happy to
- Last session's talk was, *Does God heal today?* Share the link with anyone who missed it

Key concept

Today the church, as an institution, gets a lot of negative press.

Some see the church as an organization that abuses people or has some political agenda. This is certainly a different picture than what Jesus drew for His disciples when He described a church that would "prevail against the gates of hell and become hope for the world."

In this session, we help people rethink their understanding of the church as an organization and begin to understand the value of Christian fellowship and to see how involvement could have a positive impact in their lives.

Discussion questions

1. **Has anyone told their friends, family or colleagues at work that they are doing Alpha? What was their reaction?**
2. **Go around the group asking each person to summarize what they have learned and experienced over the past eleven sessions**
3. **Ask the group what they would like to do after Alpha. Try to encourage them to stay connected as a group**
4. **Ask each of them if there is anything they would like prayer for. Close in prayer**

Additional questions (if needed)

- What comes to mind when you hear the words "church" or "Christian"? Look back on the last eleven sessions. Has your view changed?

Recommended

Reading & Music

Questions of Life – Nicky Gumbel

Lord, Help My Unbelief – John Young

Music: *Set Apart* – Worship Central

Music: *10,000 Reasons* – Matt Redman

Music: *Everything in Colour* – Ben Cantelon

Don't forget

If you want to watch this or any session's talk again, you can catch up on:
run.alpha.org.uk/preview-resources