

# what is alpha?

# 30

**short descriptions  
for your alpha  
communication  
plan**



**Alpha Mid Atlantic**





## **What is Alpha?**

### ***30 short descriptions for your Alpha communication plan***

Alpha Mid Atlantic has created these short paragraphs for your church to use to better inform your congregation about Alpha. You'll find eight months of content, plus a suggested ninth month where you can add testimonies from your church of lives that were changed as a result of meeting Jesus on Alpha.

You'll find an outline of the material at the beginning of this resource, followed by enough content for thirty weeks of Sunday leaflets, weekly newsletters, or any other print or digital need that you have. Please feel free to use these paragraphs wherever they best suit your needs.

We're honored to serve you.

Your Alpha Mid Atlantic team

## **Weekly Topics for each Month's Theme:**

### **Month 1: What is Alpha? (what, where, when, how, who, why)**

Alpha is...

Setting the table - food and conversation

The Talks – interactive, scientists, criminals, religious leaders

Small group – same all 10 weeks, they discover what they believe, deepening intimacy

### **Month 2: Evangelism**

Based on 10 most-asked questions when considering Christian faith

Post-Christian approach – decidedly not apologetics

Safe space to explore – ask questions, no answer wrong (because undergirded in prayer)

Belong before you believe – no rules of order of service to follow

### **Month 3: Discipleship**

Why beneficial for new believers

Why beneficial for long-time believers who still have questions

Encourage all newcomers to do Alpha; everyone will have same base of faith

Encounter w Jesus and focus on prayer deepens our faith

### **Month 4: Equipping (for faith-sharing)**

Great Commission – our calling, starts on not knowing about GC

What if we have no non-Christian friends?

Not enough time to explore faith w our friends – invite them to *come with you*

Do we ever look for moments to share faith w our friends?

### **Month 5: Encounter**

Why encounter matters

Holy Spirit Day – opportunity to encounter Jesus

Prayer Ministry

Worship and testimonies

### **Month 6: Prayer**

Alpha undergirded in prayer – so we don't worry about wrong theology on wk 2

Prayer team on every Alpha and Helpers praying Alpha night

H/H praying during week as is congregation

Prayer Ministry on HS Day and Healing night

### **Month 7: Small groups**

The heart of Alpha – where you belong before you believe

A conversation hosted like a dinner party – more questions than answers, no teacher

Videos- we say what we believe; SG – they wrestle w what they believe

Judgment-free, no wrong answers, no homework

### **Month 8: Promo to launch of Alpha**

Same paragraph each week during month leading up to Alpha

### **Month 9: Testimonies from your church**

**Plus, a special note to use for Easter Sunday**

## **Month 1—What is Alpha?**

### **Month 1, Week 1:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

What is Alpha? Alpha is an encounter with Jesus, the true light of the world. Alpha is an experience of the Holy Spirit. Alpha is a safe space to ask difficult questions of life, faith, and meaning. Alpha isn't church. Alpha is a judgment-free zone where no opinion is considered wrong. Alpha is food. Alpha is friendship. Alpha is for you if you've known God your whole life. Alpha is for you if you're not sure how God and Jesus fit together and why it matters. Alpha is for you to come with your friends who don't know Jesus. Alpha is for all of us, because the Father's greatest desire is for us to experience his deep love. Alpha is coming!

### **Month 1, Week 2:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

On Alpha we quite literally set the table for our friends and newcomers to meet Jesus. Every Alpha session begins with a meal, because conversation happens best when we're around the table. At Alpha we have conversations about life, family, and work before we begin sharing about faith. Listening to one another around the table demonstrates our love and sincere welcome of everyone. When listening precedes gospel sharing, guests have a safe space in which to hear the gospel message.

### **Month 1, Week 3:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

What happens on Alpha? Each evening features a 25-minute film designed to inspire more questions than provide answers as they explore the big issues around faith and unpack the basics of Christianity, addressing questions such as Who is Jesus? How can we have faith? And Why is there so much evil in the world? The films offer perspectives from scientists, business leaders, hardened criminals and include on-the-street interviews with people from a wide variety of faith backgrounds. Everyone is welcome to explore life, faith, and meaning on Alpha.

### **Month 1, Week 4:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

The best part of every Alpha is small groups, because that's where you get to know the people around the dinner table, ask big questions, and share your thoughts and experiences of life and faith. The group stays together throughout the entire Alpha experience, allowing for deepening friendship to develop through honest conversation. Each group is led through the evening by a host who asks questions and leads conversation around the night's question. No question is off-limits and no answer is considered wrong. Alpha is a go-at-your-own-pace exploration of faith and meaning in the company of other explorers. Small groups are the heart and soul of every Alpha.

## **Month 2—Evangelism**

### **Month 2, Week 1:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha is Evangelism. Alpha is an approach to evangelism that is designed with a post-Christian audience in mind. Alpha isn't church; it's a safe space to explore the claims of the Christian faith where no question is off-limits and no opinion is considered wrong. Guests come searching for their own truth and leave having encountered The Way, The Truth, and The Life. Relying on the Holy Spirit and prayer, the Alpha team asks more questions than they answer as they gently guide guests on a journey toward Jesus.

### **Month 2, Week 2:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

The weekly themes of the Alpha videos are based on the ten most-asked questions non-believers have when exploring the Christian faith. Questions like: Why did Jesus have to die? Why and how should I pray? And Why is there so much evil in the world? The talks build on one another, preparing guests for an encounter with Jesus and the Holy Spirit at the Holy Spirit Day, a retreat day offered two-thirds of the way through the course. The final video, What about the Church? offers guests a fresh vision of the joy of connecting with a local Christian community.

### **Month 2, Week 3:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Evangelism in a post-Christian world looks different than it did in the era of Billy Graham. The gospel message never changes, but the methods of sharing the gospel must adapt with the culture. In a disagreement equals judgment culture, conversation must precede proclamation of the gospel. On Alpha we spend lots of time getting to know our guests over dinner and conversation. We prioritize asking questions over providing answers, allowing the video to say what we believe, and group discussion to be a space for our guests to wrestle with what they believe.

### **Month 2, Week 4:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

On Alpha you belong before you believe. What do we mean by that? Imagine being brand new to church. We stand, we sit, we kneel. We recite prayers aloud together, we pray silently, we pray silently while someone else prays aloud. We sing songs that don't play on the radio, and read Scripture by turning to a book, chapter, and verse rather than a page number. We know what to do, but how about our guests who've never been to church? Alpha isn't church. It's a welcoming space where guests can feel like they belong long before they believe.

## **Month 3—Discipleship**

### **Month 3, Week 1:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha is Discipleship. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century Anselm of Canterbury famously said, “For I do not understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.” His words still hold true today. People who are new to the Christian faith are in need of deeper understanding for their faith to grow. Alpha offers anyone who is new to faith the opportunity to explore the claims of Christianity, wrestle with what those claims means for them, and grow in their understanding of Jesus and the gospel.

### **Month 3, Week 2:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Whether you’ve been a Christian for two weeks or twenty years, deeper exploration of the pillars of our beliefs allows us to grow deeper roots in the soil of our faith. On Alpha, guests explore the historicity of Scripture, the meaning and implications of the gospel, and the impact of testimonies of encounter with Jesus and the difference he has made in their life. The sessions go deep, offering even long-time believers the opportunity for greater understanding of their faith and reflection on the difference Jesus has made in their life.

### **Month 3, Week 3:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

If you’re new here, come join us on Alpha! Whether you’re new to the Christian faith, recently returning to church, or you’ve been growing in your faith for decades, please join us at Alpha. Alpha is one of the best ways to meet others from our church and begin to connect more deeply with them.

### **Month 3, Week 4:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha is not just an opportunity to increase our understanding of the gospel. Alpha offers an opportunity for encounter with the living Lord Jesus and filling with the Holy Spirit. The cornerstone of Alpha is the Holy Spirit Day, offered two-thirds of the way through Alpha. On this day of worship and prayer, many people encounter the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit for the first time. This tangible touch from God is for many guests the highlight of Alpha and a great source of deepening their faith.

## **Month 4—Equipping (for faith-sharing)**

### **Month 4, Week 1**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Did you know that 51% of church-going Christians have never heard of the Great Commission? And of those who have heard of it, only 17% actually know it was Jesus’ great co-missioning of

us—all of us—to join him in telling others about him so they might experience the forgiveness, love, and acceptance of the Father. How are you living out your great co-missioning with Jesus?

### **Month 4, Week 2**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Did you know that 38% of practicing Christians don't have any non-Christian family or friends with whom to share the good news of Jesus' love for them? How did we come to live in such a holy huddle? If you find yourself in that 38%, perhaps before you say, "I have no one to invite to Alpha," you might want to ask the Lord how he wants you to be more intentional about making friends outside of church.

### **Month 4, Week 3**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Perhaps you can't think of anyone to invite to Alpha with you. A good place to begin is to look for opportunities to have conversations with your friends that are more meaningful than casual. That's where spiritual conversations are more likely to develop. Praying regularly for our friends also helps us remember to think about their spiritual needs.

### **Month 4, Week 4**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Have you ever found yourself in a meaningful conversation that takes a turn toward the spiritual and you longed for more time to talk with your friend about their spiritual pain points? Why not keep it simple and tell them about Alpha—a safe space to explore difficult questions of life, faith, and meaning in a judgment-free way—and invite your friend to come to Alpha *with* you. Just be sure it's an invitation to go *together!*

## **Month 5—Encounter**

### **Month 5, Week 1**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

An encounter with Jesus is essential to coming to faith in Jesus, especially in a post-Christian culture. Young people today aren't primarily interested in knowing if Christianity is *true*; they first want to know if it's *good*. Does it make a positive difference in the world? Will it make a positive difference in my life? Knowing that Jesus can transform lives for the better makes all the difference to a seeker. That's why sharing testimonies of the difference Jesus makes in our lives is such a vital part of Alpha.

### **Month 5, Week 2**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Encountering Jesus (not just learning about him) is the most crucial part of Alpha. That's why we call Alpha an experience and not a course. Two-thirds of the way through Alpha guests experience the Alpha Day Away, also called, Holy Spirit Day. This day is filled with teachings on Holy Spirit, times for worship, discussion, and prayer ministry, and is the capstone of every Alpha. For many guests, it's the time when they give their life to Jesus, and the first time they experience the Holy Spirit.

### **Month 5, Week 3**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

On the Alpha Day Away, guests are offered a chance to experience prayer ministry. Prayer ministry is a special time for guests to receive personal prayer with trained prayer ministers. This is often a time of personal breakthrough, freedom, healing, and general peace with God. Most people who receive prayer ministry on the Alpha Day Away express that it was unlike anything they have experienced before. This time of encounter with Jesus and Holy Spirit lies at the heart of Alpha.

### **Month 5, Week 4**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

The Alpha Day Away, or Holy Spirit Day, is the centerpiece of every Alpha. In addition to time for teaching on Holy Spirit, small group discussion, and prayer ministry, there's time for worship and sharing of personal testimonies. Testimonies from people who have previously experienced prayer ministry embolden those who may be unfamiliar with receiving personal prayer. Sharing the stories of the difference Jesus has made in someone's life encourages our guests to open themselves up to Jesus.

### **Month 6—Prayer**

#### **Month 6, Week 1**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha runs on prayer. On Alpha we set the table for our guests to explore questions of faith and we pray for Holy Spirit to come guide them. We don't try to convince people of the truth of the gospel, we create space for Holy Spirit to do the convicting, so he might lead many to the Father through Jesus. We don't correct a guest's nascent theology because we recognize that once Holy Spirit gets a hold of someone, their search for "their truth" will eventually become a discovery of "the truth"—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

#### **Month 6, Week 2**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Central to every Alpha team is the Prayer team. These folks come each week to Alpha but don't join in with a small group. Instead, they stay together and PRAY! They pray for each guest, for



Holy Spirit to move, and for guests to meet Jesus. In addition, each Alpha Small Group helper prays quietly for the guests in their small group during the discussion time. Prayer is the most essential part of any Alpha. Would you consider being on the Prayer team?

### **Month 6, Week 3**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Prayer doesn't only happen on the night of Alpha but throughout the entire week as well. Small Group Hosts and Helpers try to pray for each guest in their small group by name, every day of their Alpha. We also encourage the whole congregation to pray for the guests attending their Alpha—even if they don't know them by name. Through prayer, we can all join in the work God is doing around us to bring others into his kingdom.

### **Month 6, Week 4**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

In addition to all the “behind the scenes” prayer on Alpha, there are also two times when guests are prayed for in person—during the Alpha Day Away and the Alpha night on Healing. These times of prayer ministry are often the first time guests have been personally prayed over. Many guests receive Jesus as savior during this time of prayer ministry on the Day Away. When guests experience prayer ministry they usually experience the presence of the Holy Spirit, a sense of freedom and peace, and even healing. Prayer ministry on the Day Away is the heart and center of every Alpha.

## **Month 7—Small Groups**

### **Month 7, Week 1**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Small groups are the heart of Alpha. During small group time we extend radical hospitality to our guests, welcoming and listening to everyone, even those who disagree with the claims of Christianity. On Alpha you belong before you believe, and this is never truer than in small group discussion time where guests share their personal stories which often form the basis of their beliefs. On Alpha, guests get to deconstruct their worldview and reconstruct it with Jesus at the center.

### **Month 7, Week 2**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha small groups are hosted by two volunteers—a host and a helper. They are not teachers. Nor are they leaders of the discussion. Think of them as dinner party hosts who guide a conversation so that everyone feels welcomed and included. Hosts and helpers ask more questions than they provide direct answers. Alpha hosts and helpers provide space for guests to respond to the movements of Holy Spirit so they might encounter Jesus for themselves.

### **Month 7, Week 3**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

The distinct difference between an Alpha small group and any other church small group is that there's no teaching or correcting during an Alpha small group. Small group hosts and helpers actually say very little about what they believe. The Alpha video is where we believers get to "say" what we believe. During small group time our guests get to work out what they believe. Giving them space to wrestle with their beliefs builds trust within the group which in turn creates the right atmosphere for deeper faith exploration.

### **Month 7, Week 4**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha small groups are judgement-free safe zones for exploring difficult questions of faith, life, and meaning. No question is off-limits and no opinion is considered wrong. There is no homework on Alpha, just extended time to consider the claims of Christianity, the stories of the difference Jesus has made in peoples' lives, and one's personal response to these claims.

### **Month 8—Use this for the month leading up to your Alpha**

**Alpha begins (date, time, location)**

Every day we have many questions. But then there are life's big questions. *Why am I here? Is there more to life than this?* We all have different perspectives on the meaning of life and faith. Alpha is a judgment-free safe space to talk with others openly and honestly, both at dinner and during the discussion following the video. At Alpha no question is off-limits and no answer is considered wrong. Alpha is a great opportunity to invite friends and neighbors who may have questions about faith. For more information contact {name, email}.

***Who will you invite to join you on Alpha?***

### **Month 9—Share testimonies of changed lives from your church**

**Alpha begins (date, time, location)**

### **For Easter Sunday:**

**Alpha returns this {month}! Each week you can learn something new about Alpha here.**

Alpha is a slow, judgment-free exploration of the claims of Easter. Do we need a savior? Why did Jesus die? Did he really rise from the dead, and if so, what difference does that make in my life? Our friends need to meet our Jesus whose resurrected life we celebrate every year and commemorate every Sunday. Who do you wish knew that the Easter story is for them too? Invite them to Alpha!