

Rector's Blog - 20th August 2026

WHAT NEXT? – ALPHA...



It was Eric who asked Bob to come. Eric was Bob's only Christian friend and he was conspicuous by his absence at the Sunday morning coffee and paper brunch group that their mates formed each week. Eric was "busy at church". Bob could never see the attraction and asked his friend one day why church was better than a Latte and the Sunday Times with friends.

"Jesus was the best thing that happened to me, so I can't miss it!"

Bob questioned this odd answer, and Eric said *"I can't really explain it very well, but I know some who can. There is an Alpha course starting next week. Bring your questions there. They love people with big questions!"*

Eric explained that it was a free course with refreshments, meeting new friends, a video and then a discussion group where all questions are welcome. It was weekly for about 12 weeks. *"Come and try it out, what have you got to lose?"* said Eric.

So here Bob was on the first evening. He was a bit nervous and truth be told he nearly didn't come. In fact he had decided that he wouldn't bother, that he would apologise to Eric, and just duck out. But something prompted him, that he could give it a try and if it wasn't for him he could always not go back.

All that week Pauline and Mary had been praying over the list of guests and for the organisers and team. Praying protection over them and that all those who signed up would make it to the first evening.

Bob came to the front door and was welcomed by a great big smile on the face of Terry. He had a badge on saying "Terry" and a lanyard round his neck saying "Welcomer". Terry asked Bob how he was, how his day had been. He made Bob feel welcome and brought him in to meet the others.

The room was half full of people chatting in twos and threes. Each had a drink and it was difficult to tell who were the team and who were the guests. Bob was introduced to Eileen and Jason. It transpired that Eileen was a church member and Jason was, like Bob, invited by someone he knew, in this case Eileen! He said he probably wouldn't have come had she not agreed to come with him. Eileen said that although she was a committed Christian she had heard that the Alpha course was very good and even she might learn from it.

The room filled up and then a light meal was served. Chatting at tables over a tasty meal certainly broke down barriers and some new friendships started to form.

The hospitality team had been preparing the meal, allowing for any special requirements, and served it on time so that the conversations could continue to flow. The group leaders and befrienders ensured that the guests all had what they wanted, had drinks available and kept conversations going making links between guests to make them feel as welcome and comfortable as possible.

After the meal, the leader, Sue, explained what would happen next. She welcomed everyone and said that this was an opportunity to explore some of life's biggest questions. No question was disallowed. We will have discussions afterwards and everyone will be exploring together.

Sue then ran the video from YouTube. It was about 25 minutes long and was a mix of two people explaining some things from locations all round the world but it always started with a question which is asked of a range of people on the streets – with a wide range of answers! There were people telling their story related to the topic (a testimony) as well as Nicky Gumbel, the main proponent of Alpha (and previous Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton) doing mini-talks.

Bob found the video engaging and it certainly prompted some of his biggest questions, as well as some things he hadn't thought of before. He started to think to himself "*Does my friend Eric actually believe this stuff?*" but he wasn't yet confident to ask any questions out loud.

They broke into smaller groups with a facilitator who led the discussion. In Bob's group this was Barbara. Barbara asked open questions and allowed the group to offer their opinions. Some of these were quite derogatory about the Christian faith. Bob found this a bit odd, but at the same time, maybe it gave him permission to bring his own long held doubts to the discussion.

The discussion was still going when Barbara called time, saying it's important that we honour the advertised end time for everyone. Bob could have discussed some more but recognised there would be another chance next week. He was assured they would be in the same group so could pick up again next time. Bob had realised that he had decided that he would definitely come back next week.

Bob wasn't yet convinced but he had heard some new perspectives and wanted to find out more. He said goodbye and "see you again next week".

The team tidied up and then gathered to pray for the group. Barbara offered some thoughts on her group and asked for prayer for Bob, who had some great questions and seemed encouraged by some of the answers he received. They all prayed that the Lord would guide Bob by his Holy Spirit through the week and bring him back next week ready to explore some more.

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The purpose of the Alpha course is to allow guests and team to explore questions of life and Christian faith together. Some may come to faith and make a commitment. Some may not. But that's not its purpose. The course explores the Good News in the scriptures and relies on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is the focus of the latter third of the course.

As we launch Alpha in late September, we need team for the following:

Leader Rector and one other

Facilitators

Befrienders / welcomers

Hospitality

Prayers

If you think that this might be for you, come join the first course and see how it runs. That's the best way to prepare to be on team for the next course in Spring 2027!

And be praying for who you could invite (maybe coming along with them!)

²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Revelation 3:20).

Any questions let me know

Your brother in Christ,

Doug

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