

The Alpha Course

Talk 12

Why & How Should I Tell Others?

Duration: 40 Minutes

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Key:

P – **Personal Story / Testimony** that Nicky Gumbel tells in the classic Alpha talk. These may be replaced with a live speaker's personal story or the speaker may tell the story about Nicky in the same way Nicky tells stories about others.

S – Is a **Story** that Nicky tells about someone else (about a friend or a story he heard or read about).

Q – **Quotes** are key to the talk to emphasise a point and to enable guests to engage and relate to a point made. There is now a way that people can seek permission to omit or replace quotes used in the original talks. A quote should be replaced with something equally effective to maintain balance of teaching, story, and references to other information sources.

Key quotes will need approval to change (these will be identified by a comment in the left column). Please email publications@alpha.org with your request.

Text left untouched is the standard key message content of the Alpha talk.

Green boxes identify key Bible passages used in the talk.

Red type identifies a part of the key teaching text that may be removed or altered for contextualisation often supported by instructional notes in the margins.

NOTE: Key elements of this script are: personal stories, humour and reference to media / popular culture to draw the guests in to engage with the talk.

Parts of the talk may need to be contextualised for other contexts or cultures but make sure you maintain the key elements of humour and personal testimony. Notice how quotes, and stories are used throughout to add emphasis to the main points of the talk (theology and testimony).

NOTE: The strength of this talk is the use of personal testimony and stories to illustrate biblical / theological points. You may tell stories about Nicky (in the same way he tells stories about others) or you may think of your own effective examples of telling others about Jesus.

<p>P</p> <p>Try to speak from personal experience here.</p>	<p>Before I was a Christian I used to be rather irritated by Christians who tried to tell me about their faith—they'd try to kind of convert me. And I felt – you know, I was an atheist, but I didn't go around trying to make other people atheists. And it seemed to me rather interfering, and I couldn't see why they did it.</p>
<p>You may reword this example for your context.</p>	<p>Sometimes people say to me, 'Surely the best kind of Christian is the kind of person who <u>is</u> a Christian but <u>doesn't</u> talk about their faith. Surely it's a kind of private matter?' And sometimes they refer to some relation of theirs, sort of 'Uncle Norman', who is this wonderful Christian but never talks about his faith. And the question I always want to ask is: Well, how did Uncle Norman hear about it? Someone must have told him. And if the early Christians had not told people about their faith, <u>none</u> of us would know.</p>
	<p>So why should we tell people? First of all, because Jesus told us to. Jesus died for us, he rose again from the dead, and then he said, 'Now go and tell people about this amazing news that you can be forgiven, you can be set free. You can have eternal life.' And really he had no other plans except to use us to tell other people.</p> <p>The word Go appears 1,514 times in the Bible—I didn't count that, but somebody did! In the New Testament it's 233 times, in Matthew's Gospel 54 times. Jesus says, 'Go and tell... Go and invite... Go and make disciples.'</p> <p>Second reason is because of our love for others. As we look around, we see people who are struggling to find meaning, purpose in their lives, struggling with guilt, struggling with fear of death, and so on. It's rather like, I guess, if you're in a desert and you came across water, it would be selfish to say, 'Oh, it's wonderful to find water!' but not want to tell other people about it.</p>
	<p>And I think a recognition of the fact that there's a kind of spiritual hunger</p>

<p>Q</p> <p>You may replace this with an alternative quote.</p>	<p>out there sometimes comes from surprising sources.</p> <p>The singer Sinéad O'Connor said this: <i>'As a race we feel empty because our spirituality has been wiped out and we don't know how to express ourselves. And as a result we're encouraged to fill that gap with alcohol, drugs, sex or money. People out there,'</i> she adds grimly, <i>'are screaming for the truth.'</i></p>
	<p>Third reason to tell people is because good news travels fast. We can't keep it to ourselves; we don't want to. And the word 'gospel' actually means good news.</p>
<p>P</p> <p>Try to replace this with your own example to make this point about how we naturally want to share good news.</p>	<p>I remember when our first son was born. My wife Pippa gave me a list of the people—there were ten people on the list—that I was to ring and tell about this wonderful occasion. And the first person on the list was her mother. So I rang her mother and I said, 'It's great news: we've had a son. Pips is well. He's well—he weighs 16 pounds' or whatever it was!</p> <p>And then I rang the second person on my list, which was <u>my</u> mother. Well, I couldn't get through to my mother; her phone was engaged. So I rang the third person on the list, who was Pippa's sister. I said, 'It's great news!' She said, 'I know, you've had a son.' I said, 'How do you know?' She said, 'Well, my mother's just rung me.'</p> <p>And I went to the next person. I said, 'Hello there!'—they said, 'Oh, congratulations, I hear you've had a son!' And I went down the list—each person had heard. And when I finally got through to my mother, I discovered that she'd been engaged because she was talking to Pippa's mother, who'd been ringing her to tell her the news! Now, I didn't say to Pippa's mother, 'You've really got to tell people about this.' She was excited. And when we're excited about a relationship with Jesus, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to tell people.</p>
<p>Personalise or reword this to link it with the</p>	<p>So how do we go about it? In my experience, certainly in my own life,</p>

story you tell above.

P

Try to replace with your own story of a time you tried to tell others about Christianity.

Here is an example story to help you prepare, which you may use if you don't have your own story:

I heard a story about a man called Mark who felt he really needed to start trying to evangelise. He decided one day that he was just going to go for it and trusted for an opportunity to arise as he walked the streets. Mark saw one man (target) coming out of a shop scratching away a scratch card. So Mark went up to him and grabbed his hand and told him Jesus loved him and then asked if he could pray for him. Rather stunned, the man agreed and Mark closed his eyes and began to pray for him that God would bless his life

there've been two sort of equal and opposite dangers. I think I've swung in my life between insensitivity and fear. When I first became a Christian, it was definitely insensitivity that predominated—I just wanted to tell everybody!

I remember I'd been a Christian for about ten days and I went to a party, and I was determined to tell the first person I saw at this party about Jesus. And the first person I saw at this party happened to be an old friend of mine, who is now my wife, Pippa. She wasn't then my wife or even my girlfriend; she was just an old friend. And I knew she was not a Christian. So I thought, 'Right, I'm going to go and tell her about Jesus!' Well, in the time that I had been a Christian, in the ten days that I'd been a Christian, I'd been to this talk on telling others. And in this talk they said: 'If you want to lead someone to Christ, the first thing you must do is establish the fact that the person needs Jesus.' So I thought, 'Right, establish the fact she needs Jesus!' So I went up to her on the dance-floor. I didn't want to waste any time with polite conversation; I said, 'Hello, Pippa, you look awful! You really need Jesus.' Well, as you can imagine, this put her off for a very long time, and when she did finally become a Christian, it was through somebody totally different.

The next party I went to, I decided I'd go better equipped. This was a – I think it was a 21st birthday party; it was a dinner-jacket affair. And I decided I'd take some literature. So I put in my top pocket a little booklet called *Becoming A Christian* by John Stott. And I also thought, you know, people might raise questions. Because if you have a conversation, people might say, 'Well, is there any evidence for the Resurrection?' So I took *Evidence For The Resurrection* by Norman Anderson.

And sometimes people, you know, they want to know about suffering, and John Young's book I recommended earlier, that's very good on the question of suffering. And then other people respond better to a kind of story rather than a theological book, so I took Corrie Ten Boom's book *Hiding Place*; I took *Run, Baby, Run*, I took *The Cross & The Switchblade*.

and then, more passionately, he prayed that God would stop him from gambling with his life as he was gambling with this scratch card.

After the prayer, Mark opened his eyes expecting to see him looking really happy and blessed, but instead the man looked a bit confused as he opened his hand to reveal an international phone card, which he was scratching to show the calling code. 'I'm just going to call my family in Nigeria,' he said as he ran off.

Mark felt like a fool.

He said: 'I'm sure God was laughing at me and these days I make sure that I pray first and look before I leap!'

And, of course, the most powerful way to speak to people is to use the Bible, so I took a Bible. And then, of course, if somebody does become a Christian, you would want to give them a New Testament, so I took one of those, and maybe some Bible-reading notes and some follow-up material. And so I stuffed all my pockets of my dinner jacket—luckily, dinner jackets have lots of pockets, so I filled this dinner jacket with all these books.

And finally I managed to persuade some poor girl to dance with me. And I got out on the dance-floor, and I was like this—I was sort of...! I said, 'I'm so sorry, I'm a bit tired. Do you mind if we go and sit down?' So we went and sat down. And I quickly brought the subject round to Christianity. And she started asking questions. I said, 'Do you know, it's amazing you asked that question. I just happen to have a booklet here about the Resurrection! Oh, suffering! Yeah, I've got one about that!' And this pile of books went up like this, and she staggered off with these books.

The amazing thing was she came back a week later, and she said she was on a boat over to – she went on holiday and she was on a boat over to France, and she turned to her neighbour and she said, 'I've just become a Christian.' And she died in a riding accident at the age of 21. And I've often thought it's amazing that God used even my insensitivity to help her at that moment in her life. But that is not the way to go about it!

So I've swung from insensitivity to fear. If you go around like that, as a kind of bull in a china-shop, as I did, sooner or later you get hurt, and you kind of get a bit more cautious. And there came a point in my life when I really became quite frozen with fear even to talk about Jesus in any context.

Ironically, I think the time that I was most fearful was when I was at theological college. I was at theological college in Oxford, and while we were there we went on this kind of mission, I suppose, to the North of England, to a place called Allerton. And the way that it worked, we'd go and speak in people houses. But before we did that, we'd have supper

	<p>with people vaguely connected with the church.</p> <p>And in our case, my friend Rupert Charkham and I, we went to have supper with... Well, the wife was involved in a community group; the husband was a complete atheist. He was a solicitor, rather smart solicitor, and I think he was chancellor of something or other. And they lived in a smart house, and they had smart children, and we were having a smart meal together!</p> <p>And over this meal he leant over the table and he said, 'You know, well, what are you guys doing up here, anyway?' So I said, 'Well, we've come up here... by train. And we're here because umm... because umm... because we're such good friends together at Oxford. And we're here to umm... to umm... umm... to umm...'. And my friend could bear this no longer, and he said, 'Well, we're here to tell people about Jesus.' And I went, 'Oh my goodness! How embarrassing!' And I thought, 'What's happened? Why am I ashamed even to mention the word <i>Jesus</i>?'</p> <p>And much of my life it's been like that. You know, I've swung from insensitivity to fear. And then I've heard a talk: 'Go and make disciples!' and I've gone back to insensitivity. And then I get hurt and I go back to fear. And all the way along I've been thinking: 'What's the right way to do this?'</p>		
	<p>And I think in essence it boils down to one word, and that is <i>love</i>. That's why we tell people, and that's <u>how</u> we tell people.</p>		
<p>Talk point 1</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="491 1581 657 1744"> <p>THE ALPHA COURSE</p> </td> <td data-bbox="657 1581 1525 1744"> <p>1. PRESENCE</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>THE ALPHA COURSE</p>	<p>1. PRESENCE</p>
<p>THE ALPHA COURSE</p>	<p>1. PRESENCE</p>		
<p>You may remove the text in red if you are translating in to another language.</p>	<p>I find it helpful to think of this subject under really five headings, all beginning with the letter P, to make it slightly easier to remember. And the first one is Presence. Would you like to turn to Matthew, chapter 5, verses 13–16.</p>		

	Jesus said this (verse 13):
Matthew 5:13	“You are the salt of the earth.”
Matthew 5:14	Verse 14: “You are the light of the world.”
Matthew 5:16	Verse 16: “...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”
	<p>Jesus says to this group of people, he says, ‘Look,’—just as he would say to us tonight—he says, ‘Look, <u>you</u> can make a difference to the whole world.’ “You are the salt of the earth”; ‘you’re the light of the whole world.’ What he’s saying is we can have a wide-ranging influence. And we do that not by withdrawal. He says it’s no good if you cover a light. We do it by involvement. You have to be out there. You have to be out there in your jobs. You’re on the front line. Those of us involved in kind of full-time Christian work are, hopefully, supporting you. But you’re the ministers! You’re the people who are bringing the light of Jesus Christ to the world around, to your families, to your neighbourhood.</p> <p>So we need to be in the world, but we need to be different. Jesus says, “You’re salt.” Now, salt in the ancient world was used instead of refrigeration to stop things going bad. And he says, ‘You’re the people who need to stop the society around you going bad. And you’re light—you’re the ones who allow the light of Christ to shine through you.’ We do it, he says, “by your good deeds”—everything that we do and say as Christians. And it’s summarised in, I suppose, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” It’s living out the Christian life, particularly with those in close proximity to us—our family, our work colleagues, people maybe we share a flat with. It’s really enough that they know that we’re Christians. We can’t constantly be sort of forcing it down</p>

	<p>their throats. But if they know that we are Christians, they watch our lives. And we're called to be different—and to show it through our love—our love for our enemies, little acts of kindness, honesty, integrity.</p> <p>This is hard. You know, it's really hard to live the kind of life that Jesus calls us to live. But this is what we're called to: we're called to a different love. That's what we're striving for.</p>
<p>P</p> <p>Try to replace this with your own example.</p>	<p>With our family. When I first became a Christian, I immediately tried to convert my parents. And I realised that was so counterproductive. Somebody pointed out, you know, if you say to your parents, as I'd said, 'I've become a Christian,' what that is, is an implied criticism of their upbringing, the way that they brought you up. And I wish somebody had told me earlier that it would have been better to say something along the lines of: 'You know, I'm beginning to find there's a bit more to the Christian faith than I first thought,' and then to live it out.</p>
<p>1 Peter 3:1</p>	<p>The same with a husband-and-wife relationship. In fact, St. Peter gives very clear guidance—don't look it up, but in 1 Peter 3, verse 1 he says:</p> <p>If any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.</p>
	<p>And so often I've noticed on Alpha people say, when we say, 'How do you come to be here?' they say, 'Well, I noticed a change in my wife...I noticed a change in my husband...I noticed a change in my son...in my daughter ...in my parent...in my friend...at work.' They see the difference.</p>
	<p>It involves, of course, more than just our family and our immediate friends; it involves the needs of the people around us. Relieving human</p>

	<p>need—hunger, homelessness, poverty. I’m just so impressed by, well, many of you and all the young people in our church when I see the kind of things that they get involved in.</p> <p>And then social justice—the removal of injustice, inhumanity, gross inequality in our society.</p>
<p>S KEY STORY</p> <p>You may choose to use this story or replace it with another effective story about social justice from a Christian perspective.</p>	<p>William Wilberforce. He was aged 27, which is actually the median age, it’s kind of the average age of people who come on an Alpha course here at this church:</p> <p><i>He was aged 27 when he sensed God’s call to fight against the inhuman, degrading slave trade. Ten million slaves left Africa for the plantations in the year 1787, and in that year he put down a motion in the House of Commons about the slave trade. It was not a popular cause, but he said this:</i></p> <p><i>‘So enormous, so dreadful did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be what they would; I from that time determined I would never rest until I had effected its abolition.’</i></p> <p>Bills were debated in 1789, 1791, 1792, 1794, 1796, 1798, 1799—they all failed. In 1831 he sent a message to the Anti-Slavery Society in which he said: ‘Our motto must be perseverance, and ultimately I trust the Almighty will crown our efforts with success.’</p> <p>He did. In July 1833 the Abolition of Slavery Bill was passed in both Houses of Parliament. Three days later Wilberforce died. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in national recognition of his 45 years of persevering struggle on behalf of African slaves.</p>
<p>You may use or add to these facts with other examples.</p>	<p>But what about today? There are massive needs, injustices, out there. What about the fact that 800 million people live on less than a dollar a day and go to bed hungry every night—if we were to fast on bread and water for the rest of our lives, we would still be vastly better off than</p>

	<p>them. Every three seconds poverty takes a child's life. Today and every day until we act, 30,000 children die because of avoidable diseases, i.e. because they live in poverty. 8,000 die of AIDS every day in developing countries. There will be 15 million preventable deaths this year.</p>
<p>Q You may choose to use, replace or remove these quotes.</p>	<p>And that's what I love about what Bono is doing, inspired by his Christian faith. And he was invited to speak at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, He said this.</p> <p>He said, 'My name is Bono. I'm a rock-star—Brighton rock star. Excuse me if I appear a little nervous—I'm not used to appearing before crowds of less than 80,000 people. I heard the word "party"—obviously got the wrong idea!' And he went on to speak of his time working in an Ethiopian orphanage. He said: 'We lived for a month working at the orphanage. The locals knew me as "Dr Good Morning". The children called me "The girl with a beard". Don't ask!</p> <p>'It just blew my mind; it opened my mind. On our last day at the orphanage a man handed me his baby and said, "Take him with you." He knew in Ireland his son would live; in Ethiopia his son would die. I turned him down. In that moment I started this journey. In that moment I became the worst thing of all: a rock-star with a cause. Except this isn't a cause—6,500 Africans dying a day of treatable, preventable disease, dying for want of medicines you and I can get at our local chemist: that's not a cause; that's an emergency.'</p>
	<p>And I think it's easy to be overwhelmed, really, by the scale of the problems and to think, you know, 'Can we really make a difference?'</p>
<p>S KEY STORY</p>	<p>A man was walking along a beach in Mexico. And he saw that what had happened is the tide had gone out and there were tens of thousands of starfish left stranded on the beach, dying for lack of oxygen, in the heat of the sun. And there was a young boy who was picking up the starfish one at a time, going down to the sea and just throwing them in, and</p>

	<p>going back to get another one, pick it up and going back and throwing it into the sea.</p> <p>And this man went up to him and he said, `Look, can't you see—there are tens of thousands of starfish out here! I don't really think that what you're doing is going to make any difference.' And the young boy picked up another one, and he went down to the water's edge and he threw it in the sea, and he said, `I bet it made a difference for that one!'</p>
<p>Q</p>	<p>That's what we can do. Nelson Mandela said this: `It's not the kings and generals who make history, but the masses of the people.'</p> <p>That's the first P—Presence.</p>
<p>Talk point 2</p>	<p>THE ALPHA COURSE</p> <p>2. PERSUASION</p>
	<p>Secondly, Persuasion. Would you like to turn to Acts, chapter 17, verses 2–4.</p>
<p>Acts 17:2-4</p>	<p>As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded...</p>
	<p>There's a big difference, I think, between pressure and persuasion. Pressure is not a good idea. I don't know how you respond to pressure, but I run a mile if anyone tries to pressurise me to do anything. And the effect of pressure is the opposite effect of persuasion: pressure is very <u>unpersuasive</u>. But Paul says he tries to <u>persuade</u> people. And he does it by reasoning, by explaining.</p>
	<p>Because the Christian faith is not a blind leap of faith; it's a reasonable</p>

	<p>step of faith. There are good reasons to believe. And that's why I would encourage you to look into those reasons quite carefully, so that if somebody says to you, 'Well, what is the evidence for the Resurrection?' you're able to say, 'Well, actually there's quite a lot' and that you've thought about it. If somebody says to you, 'Well, how can you believe when there's so much suffering in the world?'—of course we don't have neat answers to these, but there's something that we can say.</p>
<p>1 Peter 3:15</p>	<p>Again, don't bother to turn to it because we haven't got time, but in 1 Peter 3:15 Peter writes this:</p> <p>Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the <u>reason</u> for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.</p>
	<p>Those are two key things. I have never met anybody who became a Christian as a result of an argument. I've never met anybody who said, 'I met this Christian and we had this violent disagreement, and at the end of it I said, "Oh, I see! I'm so sorry, I was completely wrong and you're completely right! I'd better become like you!"' It doesn't work like that. He says, don't do it like that; do it with gentleness and respect. And I think respect means we listen to people. We say, 'Well, you know, what do <u>you</u> think? What do <u>you</u> believe?' That's why we try to do that—I know sometimes people find it a bit frustrating in the early weeks of Alpha that the leaders and helpers <u>don't</u> say more. But we're trying to respect the fact that the guests who come on Alpha, those of you who are guests here, we want to hear what <u>you</u> say. We are genuinely interested. It's so fascinating to hear it. And we want to respect what people believe, and listen to it.</p> <p>And I think respect also means being honest. That's why it's okay to say, 'I don't know. I'm sorry, I don't know the answer to that question.</p>

	But I'll go away and find out.'	
<p>P</p> <p>You may use this example about Nicky or replace it with your own experience.</p>	<p>I think we need a little bit of a multi-layered approach, because certainly in my case I had intellectual objections and I believed they were genuine intellectual objections, to the Christian faith. But at the same time, I think with hindsight as I look back on my life, there were other things going on at the same time.</p> <p>I think, for example, I was beginning to realise the implications that becoming a Christian might have for my lifestyle. And possibly, although the reasons that I was giving to people were the intellectual reasons, deep down for me it was a moral question as well.</p> <p>And also I was a bit worried about the fact that I had argued quite semi-publicly against Christianity. I was sort of known in the university that I was at for the arguments against Christianity. So I thought, 'I'm going to really lose face if I suddenly turn round and say I've become a Christian.' So there are other reasons underneath. So even though people were arguing with me on an intellectual level, that alone was not going to be enough. But I'm so grateful for the people who <u>did</u> help me to overcome my objections.</p>	
<p>S</p>	<p>When they first realised that the <i>Titanic</i> was sinking, they rushed around trying to persuade people to get into the lifeboats, but a lot of people didn't believe them and wouldn't get in. Some of those early lifeboats went away half-empty. But they were trying to persuade them out of love.</p> <p>And I think that trying to persuade people, again, is an act of love.</p>	
<p>Talk point 3</p>	<p>THE ALPHA COURSE</p>	<p>3. PROCLAMATION</p>
	<p>Third P is Proclamation. It's communicating the message—at the heart of Christianity it's all about Jesus. And I suppose that's what</p>	

	<p>we're trying to do on the Alpha course, is to focus on the person of Jesus and try to communicate that message. And there are many ways that we can do this, but one of the simplest ways is simply to say to people, 'Come and see!' Would you like to turn to John, chapter 1, verse 35.</p>
<p>John 1:35-46</p>	<p>The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"</p> <p>When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"</p> <p>They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"</p> <p>"Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.</p> <p>Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who'd followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We've found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought <u>him</u> to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You're Simon son of John. You'll be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).</p> <p>The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told <u>him</u>, "We've found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see."</p>
<p>Amend this text according to your context.</p>	<p>It's so natural, isn't it, to say, 'Come and see!' That's what the Alpha Celebration Suppers at the end of the course are an opportunity to do: it's to say to friends who've maybe been interested in what you've been doing, 'Come and see!'</p>
	<p>There's no greater privilege than bringing a friend or a member of the family to know Christ. That verse, verse 42, where it says that Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ:</p> <p style="background-color: #ADD8E6;">the great Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, who wrote a</p>

Q

commentary on John's Gospel, he wrote by the words **he brought Simon to Jesus**: *'The greatest service that one person can render another.'*

And it's something that we can all do. Andrew —we don't really read very much about Andrew except that all the time he was bringing people to Jesus.

But Peter became one of the greatest influences in human history. Countless millions of people—lives have been affected by the apostle Peter.

And we can't all do what Peter did, but we can all do what Andrew did—he brought his brother to Jesus.

S

KEY STORY

I heard about a man called Albert McMakin. He was 24 years of age, he was a farmer, he'd just become a Christian and he was really excited. So he heard that there was this event going on where someone was speaking about Jesus, and he decided he would invite all his friends.

And he'd got this old van, and there was one guy he really wanted to come. He was a farmer's son, and he really wasn't interested. This guy had lots of girlfriends, he was a very good-looking guy. And he thought, 'How am I going to get him?' So eventually he said to him, 'Look, would you drive the van?' And the guy said, 'Okay, well, I'll drive the van. I'm not particularly keen to come in, but I'll drive the van.'

And he came along and drove the van, and just was interested in what was going on, so he popped in at the back, and he was spellbound. And he went back night after night after night. And on the last night the speaker said, 'Look, if you want to give your life to Jesus, come to the front.' And this farmer's son got up and went to the front.

Since that day, that person has spoken to 210 million people in person about the Christian faith. He's been the friend and confidant of nine American Presidents. And he's spoken—not live, but through television and so on—to half the world's population. His name, of course, is Billy Graham. We can't all be Billy Grahams, but we can all be Albert McMakins! We can all be the one who says, 'Come and see' and brings

	our friends to Christ.	
	<p>Second thing that we can do is tell our own story. That's what Paul—if you read the book of Acts, Paul's constantly telling people his own story. He'd say, 'Look, this is what I was like. I was persecuting the church. This is what happened, and this is the difference Jesus has made.' And when friends ask, you can tell your story. And really there's no answer to your story. They can argue about the evidence for the Resurrection or the contradictions in the Bible or suffering or etc. etc., but they can't argue with your story.</p> <p>When Jesus healed the blind man, there were a lot of people who came and questioned him. The Pharisees came and questioned him about it, and they were cross-examining him and trying to trap him, and he said, 'Look, I don't know the answers to all your questions. But I'll tell you this: once I was blind and now I can see.' There's no answer to that.</p>	
<p>P</p> <p>You may try to replace this with your own experience.</p>	<p>And then we may have an opportunity to actually explain, ourselves, and to bring someone ourselves to Christ. I remember the very first time that that happened to me. It was about two months after I'd become a Christian. I met up with a guy who I'd never met before, and we went walking in the mountains in Norway. And on the train on the way back—we'd been talking for about four days and he'd been asking questions—we prayed a very simple prayer. He prayed a prayer of repentance, thanked Jesus for dying for him, and asked him to come into his life by his Spirit.</p> <p>And I don't know what it is now—over thirty years later—that man is still a very close friend of mine. I was best man at his wedding, he's godfather to one of our children, and it's such a joy to see the difference that Jesus has made in his life, in his family's life. No greater privilege.</p>	
<p>Talk point 4</p>	<p>THE ALPHA COURSE</p>	<p>4. POWER</p>

	Fourth P is Power . Would you like to turn to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 5. St. Paul writes this	
1 Thessalonians 1:5	...our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.	
	This is not just an intellectual exercise—you don't sort of persuade people just intellectually. Of course, there are reasons and it's important to give reasons; but what Paul is saying here is not just about words—it's about the activity of the Holy Spirit.	
P	<p style="background-color: #FFFF00;">For me, I look back to certainly particularly the first experience of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>That the love of God—that's what Paul says in Romans 5, verse 5—the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Again, love is at the heart of it. But when we experience God's love deep down, that's what the Holy Spirit comes to do.</p> <p>And the Holy Spirit also comes with activity: with conviction of sin, with deep conviction, but also with activity—with healing, for example. That's what we're going to look at next week.</p>	
Talk point 5	THE ALPHA COURSE	5. PRAYER
	Fifth P is Prayer . Prayer for others. Paul loved people, and out of that love came a desire to pray for them. In Romans 10, verse 1 he says: My heart's desire and prayer to God is that they may be saved . And so often when someone comes to faith, their faith comes alive, we find that somebody's been praying.	
	Ric Thorpe, was on the staff of the church here till he planted a church	

<p>S</p> <p>You may use this story or replace it with an example of someone else you know.</p>	<p>in Shadwell:</p> <p>Ric told me once that when he became a Christian he rang a very good friend of his who he knew was a Christian, to tell him the news. And his friend was so delighted. He said, `Do you know, I have been praying for you every day for four years.' And Ric said he was so excited by that idea that he started praying for <u>his</u> friend, and ten weeks later his friend became a Christian. I don't know how it works, but there seems to be something that prayer is very effective.</p>
<p>Reword the text in red according to the story you tell above.</p>	<p>And maybe that's one of the things that in the small groups you could begin, maybe even tonight, to start to pray together. It's so powerful.</p> <p>We pray for others, but we also pray for ourselves. Because when you start this, some people, hopefully, will be interested and when you say, `Come and see!' they say, `Oh, I'd love to.' But not everybody responds positively. Sometimes—and you may already have experienced this—you've told a friend what you're doing, and they make some... Maybe they mock it a bit or ridicule it or they're not quite as enthusiastic as you hoped they would be. But this is quite normal.</p>
	<p>Would you like to turn Acts, chapter 4, verses 29–31.</p> <p>This was an occasion where the apostles had been involved in healing somebody and it had provoked a very negative reaction! They'd been threatened, and—verse 29—this is their response:</p>
<p>Acts 4:29-31</p>	<p>“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”</p> <p>After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.</p>
	<p>My encouragement to you would be: if you get a negative reaction from</p>

	<p>time to time, which will probably take place, don't give up. Don't stop. Keep going. Because it will have such an impact if you do.</p>
<p>S</p> <p>You may use this story or replace it with another similar story.</p>	<p>I heard about a man, it was during the war: he was dying in the trenches. And his friend, who was by him in the trenches, turned to him and he said, 'Is there anything I can do for you?' And this guy said, 'No, I'm dying. There's nothing you can do.' 'Well,' he said, 'is there anything I could do when I get home, any message I could take?' And this man said, 'Yes. I'd like you to take a message to this man at this address and tell him that what he taught me as a child is helping me to die now.'</p> <p>So this man went back and he went round to this man at that address, and he told him the story. And the guy said, 'God forgive me.' He said, 'I taught that man in Sunday school, children's church, but I gave up teaching there years ago because I thought that what I was doing was having no effect.'</p>
	<p>But Paul says the gospel, the good news about Jesus, is the power of God, is the power of God to change lives.</p>
<p>S</p> <p>You may quote this story or use a similar example from your own course.</p>	<p>I remember a woman called Jane, who's a friend of ours, who brought a friend along to Morning Alpha here. And this friend's life was radically changed, wonderfully changed by Jesus. And Jane said this to us, and I wrote it down. She said this: <i>'If bringing her along is the only thing I ever did in my life, my life would have been worthwhile.'</i></p>
	<p>May we pray.</p>
<p>PRAYER</p>	<p><i>Lord, we thank you so much for this amazing message of Jesus: Jesus Christ, him crucified, risen from the dead, alive today, with us right now. And Lord, I pray that you would help each one of us to find first of all in our own lives that relationship with you, and then in due course to have this joy, this privilege, of being able to tell others and to see them find life</i></p>

and freedom in Christ. For his name's sake, amen.

THE
ALPHA
COURSE



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