

How This Holy-Spirit Movement Birthed a Course That Reaches Millions With Gospel

It's hard to ignore how our culture is growing more and more secular. Pew Research recently found that the number of Americans who attend church has been declining since 2007. And LifeWay recently reported that a substantial number of American Christians, whether out of embarrassment or laziness, never even invite their friends to church. But what if the answer to this problem was as simple as encountering the Holy Spirit?

I had the pleasure this week of interviewing Tricia Neill and Mathew Neville, both of whom are helping spread the Spirit's fire around the world through a program called Alpha. Neill, Alpha International's president, and Neville, the ministry's CEO, shared with me how a strong move of the Holy Spirit gave birth to the course.

Alpha is a biblical curriculum that churches and ministry groups around the world use in small groups. An Anglican church in England called Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) created the course, which uses a series of sessions to spark conversation about Christianity and the Bible. When Nicky Gumbel took over the course in 1990, he realized Alpha would better serve as a tool to reach people who were outside the church.

But Neill tells me things began shifting in May 1994, the year the Spirit fell on HTB. John Wimber began speaking to the church about the work and the person of the Holy Spirit. At that point, HTB added the Weekend Way to the end of the course, providing a time for seekers to learn about the Holy Spirit and meet Him for themselves.

Neill recalls wondering what was truly going on when God was pouring out His Spirit on HTB. After all, the congregation hadn't experienced something like that before. Neill says Sandy Millar, HTB's vicar at the time, used to say, "We will know it's of God when we see the fruit."

That's when Alpha exploded with growth. HTB had been running the course regularly on its own campus, but soon churches across the world were using Alpha to reach the lost. Christians started running the course in homes, in community centers and even in prisons.

I've had the privilege of visiting HTB several times, and I can tell you that it's not your typical Anglican church. I believe that's why Alpha isn't your typical Bible-teaching course. Neville tells me one great thing about Alpha is that you can run it anywhere—from village churches in England to prisons in Colombia to even palaces in different parts of Asia!

Another helpful aspect of the course is its safe, welcoming evangelistic style. The vast majority of people who attend Alpha do so because a friend invited them. Neill tells me that she joined Alpha because a Christian friend she played tennis asked her to come. Alpha changed her life, so she invited all her co-workers, four of whom went through the whole course and became Christians at the end.

Neville also attended Alpha because of a friend's invitation. After his 18-month-old son passed away, he and his wife were struggling in their marriage. A friend suggested that Neville attend Alpha's marriage course. The course connected Neville and his wife to the local church, where they gave their lives to Jesus.

And as the evangelism style in the Western church has changed over the past 25 years, Alpha continues to provide a space for unbelievers to explore the Christian faith without feeling

threatened or judged. They share biblical truth and then break up into small groups for people to share what they think about what they just heard and what they believe about Jesus.

Perhaps due to Alpha's welcoming structure, many churches that use the course experience growth, Neville says—even churches in spiritually dead places.

"I think sometimes the media want to portray—and I think even we Christians can get caught up in a doom-and-gloom picture of what's happening to faith," Neville says. "But look below that, and I think you can find some encouraging signs of what God is doing."

Neville is right. Regardless of what the media and the culture are saying, the Holy Spirit is still at work, and lives are being changed. Click on the podcast below to hear the entire interview!

Also, check out my latest book, *Trump Aftershock*, at [and](#) discover the story the media won't tell you. Learn how God has used President Donald Trump to point our nation in the right direction—and set off the aftershocks no one saw coming!