Alpha Session Leader Guide

**St. Gabriel Catholic Church**

**Concord Township, Ohio**

**Winter Session 2022**

**January 25th through April 5th**



**Session Leader Notes—Session 1: Is There More to Life than This?**

Check list:

* Name tags & markers at dinner tables
* Registration List & pens
* Copies of Dates & Contact sheets for Guests

**6:00 pm**  Pray with your team. Review the evening. Session Leader will check in while team greets & seats Guests and offers drinks.

**6:30 pm** Introduce yourself. Welcome everyone & thank them for showing up. Mention Table Host & Helper roles. Explain the name game. If you want, meal donations each week are much appreciated to help cover the meals.Invite them to help themselves to dinner.

**7:00 pm** Thank everyone for coming and give them a brief idea of what Alpha is about.

Alpha is a Meal, film, discussion. No pressure, no cost, you are free to express your opinions or just observe and soak it all in. Before we watch the film, you may find this interesting:

*I once heard about a wealthy Texan who had an impressive ranch in Texas. On his ranch he had a large swimming pool, and in this swimming pool he kept a shark. The rich Texan loved to throw lavish dinner parties and afterwards he’d invite his guests to gather around the pool.*

*Then he would say to them, “If any of you will swim a length of this pool, I will give you one of three things: my antique car collection, or half of my estate, or the hand of my daughter in marriage along with the first two.” He continued, “But I must warn you before you do so, there is a shark in the pool!”*

*As soon as these words left his mouth, there was a big splash, and a man swam the entire length of the pool. The Texan said, “Congratulations young man, you’re the first person who has ever done that! Now what would you like? Would you like my car collection?” The man gasped, “No, no!”*

*He said, “Would you like half of my estate?” The man said, “No, no!” He said, “Ahh, you want the hand of my daughter in marriage?” The exasperated man said, “No, no!” So the Texan said to him, “Well what do you want?” The man said, “I just want to know who pushed me in!”*

*Transition to video: Some of you may be feeling like that guy tonight…you’re wondering how you got pushed into this Alpha thing. We’re really glad you’re here. Tonight we’re simply going to watch a video looking at the question Is There More to Life Than This? So, once again welcome and enjoy the video.*

**7:10 pm**  Play the DVD **“Is There More to Life Than This?”** 11 sessions of Alpha, good use of time?

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 2: Who Is Jesus?**

Check list:

* Name tags & markers
* List of registered participants for check in

**6:00 pm**  Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Reintroduce yourself if there are new guests, briefly welcome everyone and invite them to help themselves to dinner- For those who may be new, food donations accepted.

**7:00 pm** In this session, we explore the very existence of Jesus, who he was, what he did, and how we know that he actually did walk on this earth. What is the evidence and how do we know who Jesus was? So we are looking at the evidence. Which reminds me of a story…

*Pope Francis is known for doing things a little unconventional. One day, he asked his personal*

*driver to take him out for a secret ride in the country outside of Rome—no guards and no reporters. As soon as they got out of the city on a reasonably long stretch of road, the pope asked his driver, a 30-year-old olive-skinned guy with a beard and long hair if he could take a turn and drive the car.*

*The pope got behind the wheel, floored it, and was blasting down the road at twice the speed limit! In just a few minutes, he got pulled over by the police and the officer approached the car. Pope Francis rolled down the window and asked the young rookie officer if he could help him. The officer suddenly panicked, went back to his car and radioed in.*

*“Sergeant, I think I’ve made a terrible mistake! I’ve pulled over somebody really important.”*

*“Young man,” the sergeant replied, “how important is he? Is he the governor?”*

*“No sir, he’s more important than that.”*

*“Is he the president of Italy?” the sergeant asked.*

*“No, more important than that. I think I just pulled Jesus over and the Pope was his chauffeur!” the young man replied.*

This week’s video speaks more to the head…Who is Jesus? What proof is there that He existed?

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“Who is Jesus?”**

As CS Lewis said, Jesus was either a liar, lunatic or really is Lord. Look at the evidence?

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Encourage them to come back next – no pressure. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 3: Why Did Jesus Die?**

Check list:

* Name tags & markers
* List of registered participants for check in

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team. **Ask if someone on the team will give a short witness next week regarding the retreat and why it is important to attend.**

**6:30 pm** Briefly welcome everyone and invite them to help themselves to dinner.

(No prayer before dinner.) Donation Basket.

**7:00 pm** *Alpha is like a jigsaw puzzle and each session presents a different piece of the puzzle. One important piece is the Time Away which is scheduled for* ***Saturday, March 12th, starting at 9 am.*** *It is one month away and we need to start making preparations so please let us know if you will be attending. I hope you will be able to attend.* **Next week someone will give a brief witness regarding the retreat and why it is important to attend.**

*There was a mild-mannered fellow named Dave who received a parrot for his birthday. The parrot’s previous owner had a few bad habits. As a result, the parrot had a bad attitude and worse vocabulary. Every other word was a curse word. Dave tried very hard to change the bird's attitude and was constantly saying polite words, playing soft music, anything he could think of. Nothing worked.*

*One day in a moment of desperation, he put the parrot in the freezer. For a few moments he heard the bird squawking and kicking and screaming, and then suddenly, there was quiet. Dave got frightened that he might have actually hurt the bird and quickly opened the freezer door. The parrot calmly stepped out onto Dave’s extended arm and said, "I'm sorry that I might have offended you with my language and actions and sincerely ask for your forgiveness. I will endeavor to correct my behavior."*

*Dave was amazed at the bird's change in attitude and was about to ask what had changed him. Before he could ask, the parrot looked back toward the freezer and said, "May I ask what the chicken did?"*

*Transition to video: The parrot had no idea why the chicken died. In the same way, there are a lot of different thoughts about the death of Jesus Christ and why He died. Tonight we want to take a look at that one core question, Why Did Jesus Die? Let’s watch.*

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“Why Did Jesus Die?”** Darrell’s story, that sure was something?

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 4: How Can I Have Faith?**

**❒Have a music video with lyrics ready – Amazing Grace my Chains are Gone by Chris Tomlin**

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Briefly welcome everyone and then invite them to help themselves to dinner.

**7:00 pm** Remind them about the **Time Away is Saturday, March 12th from 9 am to 1 pm. Have someone give a brief witness regarding the retreat and why it is important to attend.**

*Tonight we are looking at being sure of our faith, which reminds me of a story…*

*A businessman was in a great deal of trouble. His business was failing, he had put everything he had into the business, he owed everybody, it was a pretty bad situation. As a last resort he went to a pastor and poured out his story of tears and woe.*

*When he had finished, the pastor said, "Here's what I want you to do, put a beach chair and your Bible in your car and drive down to the beach. Take the beach chair and the Bible to the water's edge, sit down in the beach chair, and put the Bible in your lap. Open the Bible; the wind will rifle the pages, but finally the open Bible will come to rest on a page. Look down at the page and read the first thing you see. That will be your answer, that will tell you what to do."*

*A year later the businessman went back to the pastor and brought his wife and children with him. The man was in a new custom- tailored suit, his wife in a mink coat, the children shining. The businessman pulled an envelope stuffed with money out of his pocket and gave it to the pastor as a donation in thanks for his advice. The pastor recognized him and was curious. "You did as I suggested?" he asked.*

*"Absolutely," replied the businessman. "You went to the beach?"  "Absolutely.” "You sat in a beach chair with the Bible in your lap?”  "Absolutely."  "You let the pages rifle until they stopped?" "Absolutely.” "And what were the first words you saw?"  "Chapter 11."*

We put our faith in a lot of different things. Tonight, we are going to add something to get us in the right frame of mind. The question tonight is How Can I have Faith? Faith is a gift & comes by grace. God’s grace sets us free & his grace is amazing… Explain music video, stand & feel free to sing & join in.

**\*Music Video\* Amazing Grace My Chains Are Gone**

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“How Can I Have Faith?”** Isn’t Pippa’s love for children beautiful?

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 5: Why and How Do I Pray?**

**❒ Have a music video with lyrics ready - Trust In You by Lauren Daigle**

**6:00 pm**  Pray with your team.

**6:30 pm** Briefly welcome everyone and announce that you will begin with prayer. Keep it very simple… *“Thank you God for this gathering of friends, thank you for all those who have helped in preparing and serving these meals. We ask You to watch over us, protect us and bless the food that we are about to eat, Amen”.*  Then invite them to help themselves to dinner. *After dinner tonight, try to walk around and meet someone you didn’t know and learn something about them.*

**7:00 pm** Time Away, Explain Agenda | **Saturday, March 12th from 9 am to 1 pm**  No cost.

*We are almost half way through the course so far we’ve looked at:*

*Who Jesus is. Why He died. What it means to have faith.*

*Now for the next few weeks we are going to explore what it means to have a relationship with God – How can you have a relationship with someone you can’t see?? How do you speak to Him?*

*Our topic for today is prayer. Which reminds me of a story….*

*There was a man trapped on his roof due to rising flood waters. When a large boat came by, the captain yelled, "Let me help you!” The man yelled back, "No, God will save me."*

*A little later, a little rowboat came by and a fisherman asked, "Let me help you!" The man yelled. back again, "No thanks, God will save me."*

*Eventually the man yelled out to God, "Why won’t you answer my prayers and save me?" A loud voice from heaven responded back, "Who do you think sent you the two boats?!"*

We put our faith in a lot of different things. Tonight, we are going to add something different to get us in the right frame of mind. The question tonight is How Can I have Faith? Faith is a gift & comes by grace. God’s grace sets us free & his grace is amazing… Explain music video, stand & feel free to sing & join in.

**\*Music Video – “Trust in You” by Lauren Daigle**

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“Why & How Do I Pray?”** Wasn’t that Chilean Miner’s story incredible?

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 6: Why and How Should I Read the Bible?**

❒ **Have a music video with lyrics ready - Word of God Speak by MercyMe**

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Briefly welcome everyone and begin with prayer. Keep it very simple… “Thank you God for this gathering of friends, we ask You to bless the food that we are about to eat…” Then invite them to help themselves to dinner.

**7:00 pm** Time Away, Explain Agenda | **Saturday, March 12th from 9 am to 1 pm**  No cost.

So last week we really started diving into what it means to have a relationship with God when we talked about prayer. We know that good relationships rely on communication and prayer is a good place to start. But many struggle with their prayer being a one way street of God I need this, God please do this, etc. but its hard to listen to His side of the conversation. So today we will hear about how God speaks to us through His holy word, the Bible.

That reminds me of a story…

*Mrs. Jone’s dishwasher stopped working, so she called a repairman. He couldn't accommodate her with an evening appointment, and since she had to go to work the next day, she told him, "I'll leave the key under the mat. Fix the dishwasher, leave the bill on the counter, and I'll mail you the check.*

*By the way, don't worry about my Rottweiler dog, Brutus. He won't bother you. But do not under ANY circumstances talk to my parrot!" When the repairman arrived at Mrs. Jone’s apartment the next day, he discovered the biggest and meanest-looking Rottweiler he had ever seen.*

*But just like the owner said, the dog just lay there on the carpet, watching the repairman go about his business. However, the whole time he was there, the parrot drove him nuts with excessive cursing, yelling, and name-calling. Finally, the repairman couldn't contain himself any longer and yelled, "Stop talking, you crazy bird!" To which the parrot replied, "GET HIM, Brutus!"*

*Transition to video: Our words do make a difference and it’s obviously important to LISTEN carefully. Tonight, we’ll look at and then discuss the question Why and How Should I Read the Bible?*

**\*Music Video: Word of God Speak – Mercy Me**

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“Why & How Should I Read the Bible?”** Does anyone need a Bible, just let us know or your table host and we’ll get you one.

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 7: How Does God Guide Us?**

❒ **Have a music video with lyrics ready – How Great is Our God, by Chris Tomlin**

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Welcome everyone, begin with prayer and invite them to help themselves to dinner.

**7:00 pm** Time Away, Explain Agenda | **Saturday, March 12th from 9 am to 1 pm**  No cost.

Today’s session is called How Does God Guide Us? God can guide us in many different ways.

*A Jewish businessman in America decided to send his son to Israel to absorb some of the culture of the homeland. When the son returned, the father asked him to tell him about his trip. The son said, "Pop, I had a great time in Israel. By the way, I converted to Christianity." "Oy vey," said the father. "What have I done?"*

*He decided to go ask his friend Jacob what to do. Jacob said, "Funny you should ask. I too sent my son to Israel, and he also came back a Christian. Perhaps we should go see the rabbi and ask him what we should do."*

*So they went to see the Rabbi. The Rabbi said, "Funny you should ask. I too sent my son to Israel. He also came back a Christian. What is happening to our young people? Perhaps we should go talk to God and ask him what to do."*

*The three of them prayed and explained what had happened to their sons and asked God what to do. Suddenly a voice came loud and clear from Heaven. The Voice said, "funny you should ask, I too sent my son to Isreal..."*

**\*Music: How Great is Our God by Chris Tomlin**

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“How Does God Guide Us**?”

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 8: How Can I Resist Evil?**

❒ **Have a music video with lyrics ready – Lord I Need You by Matt Maher**

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Welcome, prayer and dinner.

**7:00 pm** Encourage discussion about the Day Away with everyone at your table.

Today’s question is “How Can I Resist Evil?” and it purposely comes right after the retreat because many come to a deeper faith on the retreat and consequently, will be a target for the evil one. Please pray for each other and encourage each other on the journey.

**(Explain the follow up programs to stay connected.)** As we talk about temptation and the reality of Satan, it reminds me of a story -

*One day, Jesus and Satan were battling it out, and God the Father came between the two of them and says "Listen, I'm tired of the two of you fighting, so I’m going to put a test out there and see which of you can pass this test. Whoever can type the most information about the world of people in two hours wins the contest." So, they both agreed to it. Jesus typed with heavenly efficiency and Satan typed faster than hell. Then ten minutes before their time was up, a thunderstorm blew in.*

*Lightning suddenly flashed across the sky, and a power surge caused both their laptops to shut down. Satan stared at his blank screen and screamed every curse word known in the underworld. But Jesus just smiled. As each of them restarted their computers, Satan searched frantically, screaming, “It's gone! It's all GONE! I lost everything when my computer shutdown!”*

*Meanwhile, Jesus quietly started printing out the essay he’d written. Satan became irate. “Wait!” he screamed. “That's not fair! He cheated! How come he has all His work, and I don't have any?” God just shrugged and said, “Well Satan—you know how it is—Jesus saves.”*

*Transition to video: It can be funny to look at the idea of Jesus and Satan—but when we look at.*

*the world around us it’s clear that both good and evil really exist. Tonight’s video looks at that.*

*reality as we ask the question How Can I Resist Evil?*

**Music: Lord I Need You by Matt Maher**

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“How Can I Resist Evil?”**

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 9: Why and How Should I Tell Others?**

❒ **Have a music video with lyrics ready – 10,000 Reasons by Matt Redman**

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Welcome, pray and dinner.

**7:00 p.m Follow up options. What’s next, connect & transition?**

Today’s question is “Why & How Should I Tell Others?” It can be difficult to talk to others about our faith in Christ but Jesus has commanded us to do it. – GO THERFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES – the Great Commission. Today’s session is about spreading the Good News.

*A State Police Officer was parked on the side of the highway, working the radar, and waiting to catch speeding drivers. He sees a car puttering along and clocks it going 22 MPH. He thinks to himself, "This driver is just as dangerous as a speeder!" So, he jumps on his motorcycle, turns on his sirens and lights and pulls the driver over.*

*As he approaches the car, he notices that there are four elderly ladies inside—one in the front seat and three in the back. They look like they’re scared to death—their eyes are wide-open; their skin is pale and they’re straight up in their seats. The elderly driver says to the officer, “I don't understand, I was doing exactly the speed limit!*

*What seems to be the problem?" “Ma'am," the officer replies, "You weren't speeding, but you should know that driving slower than the speed limit can also be a danger to other drivers." “Slower than the speed limit?" she asked. “No sir, I was driving the speed limit exactly—twenty-two miles an hour!" The officer suddenly realizes why she’s confused and explains to her, “Ma’am, those signs on the side of the road that say ‘22’ aren’t speed limit signs, they’re the route number. You’re on Route 22.”*

*The driver was a little embarrassed by her mistake and apologized. He said, “Ok, well I’m not going to give you a ticket but before I let you go, ma'am, I have to ask, is everyone in the car, ok? These women seem awfully shaken." She waved him off and said “Oh, they'll be fine officer. It’s just that we’ve been on Route 119 all morning and just got off."*

**Music: 10,000 Reasons by Matt Redman –** Why tell others? Because it’s what we were created to do…

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“Why & How Do I Tell Others?”**

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** Dismiss guests. Hosts & helpers meet to recap the evening and close in prayer.

**Session Leader Notes—Session 10: Does God Heal Today?**

**❒Have a music video with lyrics ready – Holy Spirit by Francesca Battistelli**

**❒ Gregorian Chant CD for Prayer Ministry & have tissues available.**

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team and prepare for Prayer Ministry

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the needs of the Guests…Words of Knowledge

**6:30 pm** Welcome, prayer and dinner.

**7:00 pm Announcements:** Prayer Partners, Follow Up programs

Today’s session is Does God Heal Today? I believe God heals and I believe He wants to heal even more and He wants to use us to do it. We should pray with trust for healing for ourselves and for others. Sometimes, we just can’t figure it all out.

Play **Music Video Holy Spirit:**

**7:10 pm** DVD Presentation – **“Does God Heal Today?”**

**7:35 pm** No group discussion tonight

**7:40 pm** Short Break

**7:45 pm** *God cares about our spiritual, physical, emotional and psychological well-being. If anyone would like to receive healing prayer today, we are going to pray together for healing in our small groups.*

Lead a prayer to the Holy Spirit then invite them to raise their hands for prayer, healing of relationships, unforgiveness, guilt, physical pain, sadness, depression, etc.

**8:15 pm** After everyone has been prayed for in small groups, close in prayer

**Session Leader Notes—Session 11: What About The Church?**

❒ Have a music video with lyrics ready **– How Great Thou Art, Carrie Underwood**

❒ Testimonial Forms & pens at each table

**6:00 pm** Pray with your team

**6:30 pm** Welcome, pray, and dinner.

**7:00 pm** Our final topic is What About the Church? Today the Church gets a lot of negative press. Many people try to distance themselves from any organized ‘church’. Many feel ‘church’ is irrelevant. This is mostly due to misunderstandings about what ‘church’ is.

*Reminds me of another ‘misunderstanding’…*

*A man has lived a long, good life. He's ready for heaven. He's excited to meet Jesus. One day he dies, and he meets Jesus immediately. He's overjoyed. Jesus holds him and he knows that heaven is going to be even greater than he ever dreamed.*

*After a while Jesus says, 'I have many more new arrivals to greet, so I'm going to let Saint Peter show you around right now'.*

*St Peter shows him all the wonders of Heaven. They go to one area and  he says, 'Here's where the Presbyterians like to worship'. Then he shows him another area where the Lutherans and the Episcopalians like to worship. This went on with Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists,  and so on.*

*Then he showed him where Buddhists and Muslims and Jews all worship Jesus together, because Jesus has power to make that happen too.*

*Finally, St Peter says, 'We have to be real quiet now.' So they proceed along some beautiful pathways with St Peter cautioning the man to be quiet at every step.*

*Finally the man says, in an almost inaudible whisper, 'Where are we going that we have to be so quiet?*

*St Peter responds, 'We're going to see the Catholics. They think they're the only ones here.'*

Transition to video: We’ll see in the video – being part of a “faith

community”—a church—can be so much more. Tonight we’ll look at What about the Church?

**7:10 pm** Play the DVD **“What About the Church?”**

**7:40 pm** Short break.

**7:45 pm** Begin small group discussion.

**8:10 pm** Wrap-up discussion at tables.

**8:15 pm** **Play & Close with How Great Thou Art.**  Dismiss guests. Meet with hosts & helpers after guests leave recap session and plan for next session.