

THE ALPHA COURSE

By Rod

The scene is the first meeting of an Alpha course. Alan is the leader. He is rather nervous having to take charge of what proves to be a very difficult group! All arrive with various hang-ups, which lead to spontaneous uncontrollable reactions. These should be played to the full effect with lots of movement and overacting. All the parts [except Edna and Fred] could be played male or female to suit available thespian talent.

CAST

Alan *the leader of the group. Nervous, tries to be humorous but none of the others laugh at any of his jokes, which makes him more nervous.*

Betty *afraid of dying and talk of death.*

Carol *timid, doesn't like shouting.*

Daniel *Jewish, doesn't like mention of "God".*

Edna *prim and proper, religious, hates talk of "sin".*

Fred *northern, "chapel" so reacts strongly against mention of "church".*

Alan *[He is a bit nervous]* Can I begin by welcoming you all to this Alpha course. We will be meeting together each week as a sort of discussion group for ... discussion. *[Nervous laugh]* I would encourage you to be honest in what you think. Anything goes, so to speak. We can all learn from each other.

It's therefore important that we get to know each other, so I thought that we would begin by each introducing ourselves. Perhaps we can all say one little thing about ourselves - frivolous or serious. Just to help the others know what makes us tick.

I'll start the ball rolling by saying that my name is Alan and I hate Chinese food. It gives me terrible wind. I'm a meat and two veg man myself so I really enjoyed the meal we just had.

All *[General murmurs of approval for the food.]*

Alan Who's next? Perhaps we can just go round the circle – starting on my left.

Betty Oh, OK. My name is Betty. I don't like to talk about dying. I find it a worrying topic. It simply makes me go to pieces.

Alan OK, fine. Thank you, Betty; we'll try to remember that.

Carol Hello, I'm Carol. I have to warn you that I have an aversion to shouting. I hate it when I hear raised voices. It makes me frightened.

Alan I don't think you need to worry about that here, Carol. You're amongst friends. We're not going to be shouting at each other. We're simply going to be involved in intelligent discussion.

Daniel Well my name is Daniel. I am actually Jewish by birth.

Betty Really? How interesting.

Daniel Yes, although I am far from being a strict Jew I was brought up not to use the G word.

Alan What word is that, Daniel?

Daniel G blank D.

Alan *[Understanding and rather worried]* Oh, right. G blank D. We'll do our best – although it may be a little tricky. You'll have to forgive us if it slips out occasionally.

Daniel All I do is say a brief prayer.

Alan I'm sure that will be fine. Who's turn next?

Edna I'm Edna. I've been a worshipper all my life. I've always got great strength from religion – but I don't like talk about S-I-N. I find it rather distasteful. It always provokes a reaction in me.

Alan What sort of reaction, Edna? I hope you don't erupt or we'll have to call you Etna. *[Laughs nervously]*

Edna I find I can't help but defend myself.

Alan Well, that's not unreasonable. I'm sure it won't be a problem. *[Turning to Fred]* And finally we have

Fred Fred. Although I moved down to Cheltenham for my work several years ago, I was brought up in the north.

Alan What is your job, Fred?

Fred I work at GCHQ.

Alan *[Trying to be funny. In stupid 'Fred Gumby' voice]* Oh, so you're in intelligence.

Fred I can't say I'm afraid. But, as I was saying, I was brought up in the north where we used to go to chapel. This is so ingrained in me that if anyone mentions the other place of worship I simply get up and walk out.

Betty You mean church?

Fred *[Standing up]* Church! Right, that does it. I'm off. *[Starts to leave]*

Alan *[Shouting]* No, please, don't go!

Carol *[Covering ears]* Stop shouting. Oh God, please help me!

Daniel *[Falling to knees]* Father, forgive us for taking your holy name in vain.
Forgive our sin.

Edna *[Standing]* Sin! I'm no worse than anyone else. I go to church.

Fred *[Who had been returning, resumes his departure]* Church! Right, that does
it . I'm certainly off!

Alan *[Going over to Fred. Whispering and gesturing for quiet]* No, please,
don't go. *[Guides Fred back to his seat. Calm returns. All resumes their
seats. Alan now speaks slowly, calmly and quietly]* Right, is everybody
OK now?

All *[General murmurs of "Yes"]*

Alan Ok, good. What did anyone think about this evening's talk on "Who is
Jesus"?

Betty Well I thought it was really good. It made me realise that Jesus was a
remarkable man.

Carol Yes, he did some amazing things. All those miracles.

Daniel He really showed us how to live. How to show love and compassion to
everybody.

Edna Yes, and his teaching was incredible. So profound.

Fred No wonder he has had so many followers. I learned a lot.

Betty Me too. Though I am not totally convinced he really was who he said he
was.

Carol You mean when he said he was God?

Daniel *[Falling to knees]* Father, forgive us for taking your holy name in vain.
Forgive our sin.

Edna *[Standing]* Sin! I'm no worse than anyone else. I go to church.

Fred *[Getting up to leave]* Church! Right, that does it . I'm off!

Alan *[Shouting]* No, please, don't go! *[Fred pauses]*

Carol *[Covering ears]* Stop shouting. Oh God, please help me!

Daniel *[Falling to knees]* Father, forgive us for taking your holy name in vain. Forgive our sin.

Edna *[Standing]* Sin! I'm no worse than anyone else. I go to church.

Fred *[Who had been returning, resumes his departure]* Church! Right, that does it . I'm off!

Alan *[Going over to Fred. Whispering and gesturing for quiet]* No, please, don't go. *[Calm returns. All resumes their seats.]* Okay, I can see that discussions on this topic are going to be somewhat complicated. But it's getting late anyway – and we all seem to have learned a lot from the talk about Jesus. *[Looks around for support]*

All *[General murmurs of agreement]*

Alan So perhaps we can simply agree to meet again next week. Same time. Same place.

All *[General murmurs of agreement]*

Alan Excellent. So that's it for tonight. Thank you all for coming. Next week the topic is: "The cross: Why did Jesus have to die?"

Betty *[Falling to her knees and wailing very loudly]* I don't want to die. I don't want to die.

Carol *[Covering ears]* Stop shouting. Oh God, please help me!

Daniel *[Falling to knees]* Father, forgive us for taking your holy name in vain. Forgive our sin.

Edna *[Standing]* Sin! I'm no worse than anyone else. I go to church.

Fred *[Getting up to leave]* Church! Right, that does it . I'm off!

Alan *[Looks desperate. Stands up and shouts out]* QUIET! *[Everyone stops. Shaking fist]* Wait till I get my hands on that Nicky Gumbel!

THE END