

The Falsity of the Alpha Course - A Testimony

Written by Anonymous

Saturday, 14 April 2012 09:19

Throughout my childhood I was always 'drawn' to church. My mum and grandparents attended the Church of England (C of E) local church in my village but I was a wonderer. At an early age I can remember attending an evening mission group and a church that was fun to attend (not like the C of E strict vicar's church) and was always attracted to what I now know are beach missions.

It was only in my late teens that I moved back to the C of E local church, much to my grandparents and mum's relief. I was still a rebel as I wore jeans and had a coffee before early communion, to stop me from fainting, but wouldn't tell my granddad!

I stayed within the C of E faith, jumping in and out at times and when I had my children I encouraged them to attend and participate within the church.

After a difficult situation in my life including a marriage breakdown, my faith in God was totally wrecked, I was pretty low. I still attended the local church but I started to ask the difficult questions like: 'Why were the pews reserved for the 'wealthy' local people?' 'Why was the vicar asking for money for the roof but at the same time buying all new robes?', and it went on and on. This as you can imagine was not popular and I felt a definite freeze towards me.

I remarried and moved away. My husband introduced me to a Baptist church. This was really strange to me, as everyone looked in Bibles. I always referred to this church as my husband's church; to me it wasn't the 'real' church that I was used to, because... where was the vicar with the dog collar, where was the Eucharist? And the Psalms were not sung - very strange indeed!

The minister seemed nice and people introduced themselves; some came over and asked me in a very forthright manner "When were you saved?" Frankly, it frightened the life out of me, so I would let my husband answer. I felt that the sermon was interesting, it had more meaning and I understood it. I agree to attend again and started to enjoy going, but I still had lots of questions that needed answering.

I was searching. I was confused. I knew I was definitely a sinner, I didn't want to be but I felt I couldn't help it. I wanted to have the peace that everyone talked about. After a few weeks the

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Alpha course was mentioned as a way to understand Christianity and how to become a Christian.

This, I thought, was a good opportunity for me to 'get my head straight' once and for all. I could attend the course and I would have a meal and make friends as well - excellent. The congregation was asked to 'sell' this to their friends and work colleagues, especially the meal, as it was seen as an important factor in encouraging people to come off the street, and, once in, would listen to the DVD course and become Christians. This was good news for me, I would ensure that I attend all the course and then I would be a Christian... and if I was one already it should reinforce, so shouldn't do any harm. I would have peace.

I can honestly say my husband was not impressed. He told me about Nicky Gumbel's past, but although what he said was serious, I kept telling myself that maybe Gumbel had repented - and who was I to judge, as my past was not a pretty sight! I wanted to make up my own mind, so off I went on my mission to become a proper Christian.

When I arrived the first week I was greeted with enthusiasm, but sensed a tension in the air - whether many new people would attend, perhaps? Or, was there enough food? Would it be a success and result in more attending church on Sundays? There were also little meetings going on with certain 'important' people in the church, I found out later that these individuals were going to lead the sessions and had been trained beforehand in using the leaders' materials.

A few more arrived, I recognised these from church and I started to relax and enjoying talking to my new friends. There were only two or three new people and they seemed to draw more attention from the regulars. After the meal - a full cooked dinner - we were divided into groups (names were placed on chairs), and the leaders were then asked to introduce everyone before listening to the DVD. We were told that after the DVD, there was going to be a time to ask questions and discuss the content, and then all would come together to pray before going home. There were about 6 people in my group and all attended church.

The DVD started. Immediately, Nicky Gumbel was in charge. He was an excellent communicator who could sell sand to the Arabs. He was easy to listen to and had an approach that gave you the sense that he understood all the issues you were personally experiencing, and if you listened to him, life would be so much better. He seemed a genuine person and the participants in my group were lapping him up and whatever he said they agreed with.

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I was going along with this, thinking this is what I have been looking for. I can do this, I will attend and then all will be well! The video went on for about 20 minutes, I think, and I was feeling positive. However, when the time came for questions and discussion, the leader started to ask the set questions on the sheet she had been given: 'What is life? What are we doing with our lives? Does God love us?'

Individuals were slow to respond but as they had been attending church, the leaders answered in their set answers, so I tried to ask "What does 'love' actually mean?" This caused a little hesitation from the leader; she checked her list, but there was obviously no information on this question and so a general answer was given, saying God loves us and 'The answers are all in your book'.

During all this, the minister was moving from one group to another and just happened to be at my group when I asked the question. There was definitely some eye contact between the leader and the minister. I didn't pursue a better answer as I didn't want to upset anyone, but I felt that those types of questions were not helpful (to the leader!).

At the end of the evening I went home somewhat confused and the feeling that I could only ask certain types of questions, but, thought it was early days, and perhaps it was not helpful to ask the difficult questions.

In the second week, I was not so excited, and had promised myself to go with the flow and not ask the awkward questions. I never intended to be difficult; in fact, I wanted to make sure that I was genuine in my faith. I was surprised when I was greeted by the leader and minister with some enthusiasm, showing me the list of questions and notes that accompanied the second lesson on the DVD. It was straightforward and I didn't think any more about it.

After the meal we were asked to go into the same groups with the same leaders. However, we were short of leaders. I was happy to lead a group, something I have done many times in my work life, and when I volunteered it was declined with a very big 'No', because I had not undergone the training.

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I explained that I was actually trained to lead a group and did this within my day job, but I was told I had to be trained Nicky Gumbel's way. This raised alarm-bells in my mind. Why Nicky Gumbel's way? Were we not supposed to learn God's way? So I sat quietly and watched the 'important' church people trying to join groups together and make sure everyone had their scripts to follow.

The weeks went on and Nicky Gumbel stepped up his message: the selling of Christianity was his priority. I didn't ask any more difficult questions even though I had plenty to ask. From my small knowledge of scripture, I can remember thinking that what Nicky Gumbel was saying was not quite right.

I remember, clearly, him saying that God is knocking at your door and you can open it and God will be in your heart forever. There might be a little sin in you, but God will protect you; all you have to do is open your heart. Life was going to be great because the Holy Spirit was around.

In the last week, we were all congratulated for completing the course and given a special booklet. I felt I had graduated! I definitely had issues with some of the things he was saying, but thought that because the leaders agreed with Gumbel, who was I to argue?

Several months after the course I was baptised, and, looking back, I really do not think I truly understood what I was doing. It seemed the correct next step to do as I so much wanted to be a Christian, and, of course, I had completed the course.

But, Christian life was not what Nicky Gumbel had promised! I felt that I had failed and I got more confused than ever; my questions weren't answered, and my confusion reigned. I couldn't ask the questions that I needed to ask.

The church was not the learning place I needed... they seemed to talk a different language. Sin was never part of their vocabulary. In fact I convinced myself that God did not want me - why would He want me? I had tried and done everything that everyone in church said to do, and still I was confused and wasn't getting that peace that everyone said I would get when I became a Christian.

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I kept thinking that there was something wrong with me, as even God didn't want me. The course was a total misrepresentation of the truth. No-one can become a Christian by attending a course. I think it is an excuse for Churches to get people to fill seats, and for Nicky Gumbel to get wealthy.

There is a lot of wrong teaching and this is definitely one of them. Churches who run this course need to think again about the affect it can have on 'searchers'/young Christian lives. It doesn't matter if churches run it differently, because the end result is the same: you cannot become a Christian by attending a course. It is giving the wrong messages, and the scripture that Gumbel is referring to is misrepresented, as he is not taking the whole context into consideration when he delivers his message.

After several years of struggling, and still struggling today, I now have a better understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith. God chooses us and opens our hearts and minds by the working of the Holy Spirit living within us.

My relationship with God is more important than anything; I still fail and still feel not good enough, but I do know that God loves me and His promises stand firm. This is not the 'love' that Nicky Gumbel explains in his DVD's, but a love that will test, correct, and guide me, in my Christian faith.

Addendum

I can remember Gumbel saying that the Holy Spirit is with us and, as such, God talks to us telling us what to do. He says Jesus is waiting eagerly for us to ask Him in. We will know this because, Gumbel says, we will be told to do things like: "I should contact X or ring Y".

(Ed. This is typical charismatic nonsense and very cumbersome. God does not always tell us directly what to do – after all, He has already given us a conscience, a brain and intelligence, plus His written word! Another error here, is that 'God talks to everyone'. No, he does not. He does not guide the wicked, nor the unsaved, unless it is to guide them towards being born again [regeneration]).

However, he then goes on to say we can test whether it's God talking to us by checking if it's love, if it's good and if it's in line with the Bible, and all of us can go to God and ask for help and

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God will act - all we have to do is ask, whoever we are.

(Ed. If Gumbel has a problem with awkward questions, he would explode if I were in front of him! Note that Gumbel does not qualify or define 'love o, 'good'. Nor does he explain what he means by being in line with the Bible. In His past he virtually tore the Bible apart and threw it in the trash can, by bringing the Toronto Blessing to the UK! Though challenged many times he refused to face his errors, heresies and wickedness! So, his command to be in line with the Bible is just marketing.)

But, we have to wait for an answer at the end of our prayer. This seemed easy and I thought 'Even I can do this!' Even so, I kept thinking to myself that I have lots of thoughts like this but they come and go. I was excited that these were from God but it didn't add up. Did it mean every time I thought about contacting my children I needed to check in the Bible to see if this was from God. I was getting more and more confused.

(Ed. This person's very confusion shows that the sessions were unclear and lacking in clarity. It certainly did not 'add up'! Gumbel is encouraging psychic messages rather than godly direction. Also, God does not always answer prayers when we finish them. This kind of teaching encourages false answers, because the person will invent what is not given, because he MUST have an answer right away).

In the groups, I sat and listened and tried not to ask the difficult questions, but all the time I felt a total failure. Others seemed to accept what Gumbel said, and the other members seemed elated and totally on board. I wanted to be elated too, but it didn't happen. My brain was racing, thinking 'I have asked God lots of times for things, but didn't wait in prayer.' This reinforced my negative feelings about God not wanting me; surely He would have given me the answer, just like Gumbel said? Or, did it mean I would have to wait in prayer until an answer came?

(Ed. There is something wrong when 'difficult questions' are not answered or discouraged. Note the sycophantic way members of the group hung on to his every word! See, too, the seed of failure planted in the person because she did not experience what he said would happen!)

At this stage I was convinced that being a Christian was obviously not suited to me, because I do not recognise God talking to me. After all, Gumbel says 'anyone' can ask God for help and

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He will respond! The sinking feeling I had was terrible; I tried to ask a question without showing my vulnerability, but those who were 'supportive' said 'I will pray for you' and 'you need to relax, don't fold your arms, and have an open mind'. But, this made matters worse, not better. This just made me feel more of a failure.

(Ed. No – 'anyone' cannot ask God for help! He ignores the prayers of the unsaved, and also the wrong prayers of the saved! Others saying "I will pray for you" is just a way to avoid the hard questions, and the idea of having an "open mind" is more in tune with the occult and charismatic garbage than with truth).

I left the session really depressed and I wasn't sure if I was going to return.

(Ed. We are not told how many leave Alpha in this state – we are only told how successful it is!).

The last session was about the rest of our lives, and Gumbel tells us not to become a Christian and carry on as normal, but, instead, we must love everyone and always say good things about everyone, and be distinctive.

(Ed. Nowhere in scripture do we find this kind of teaching! It is false and unworkable. It also persuades people to put on a superficial attitude and behaviour, so as to 'prove' how 'Christian' they are).

Editor: Nicky Gumbel is a master propagandist. He has never apologised or repented of his part

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in the wicked Toronto Blessing. Nor does he bother to deflect attention from the Alpha Course and to Christ. At all times it is 'the Alpha Course' that matters and is given the praise. He may, or may not, be rich because of the financial success of this Course. But, he remains a false teacher, condemned by God for teaching "damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1).

The Course teaches that if you do the whole of it, you will become a Christian! This is a heresy of huge proportion. He should go back to the Bible he says must be the guide for Course attendees!

There are many more criticisms of the Alpha Course and Nicky Gumbel. Please read them before thinking of attending a Course. Indeed, play safe and do not even think about it! If you are already saved - do not damage your soul. If you are unsaved, let it be a warning, that no course can ever save you. Only God can do that.

It is a fact that God calls men to teach His people. He does not call supposed 'pastors' or 'leaders' to learn what Gumbel says, follow his pattern, and then propagandise! Those who are truly called to preach and teach are given the words to speak and the gifts to do so effectively. If they have to call in others to do the work, or rely on a course written by mere men, it shows beyond doubt that they are not called to do what they do. Simple as that.

The Alpha Course, in many instances, is the last resort of a dying local church that has lost love of God or has never had it in the first place. This is what makes the majority of local churches false. Gumbel panders to this falsity with an Arminian 'gospel that is no gospel'. Put a large stone around its neck and throw it in the sea, to be sunk without trace!