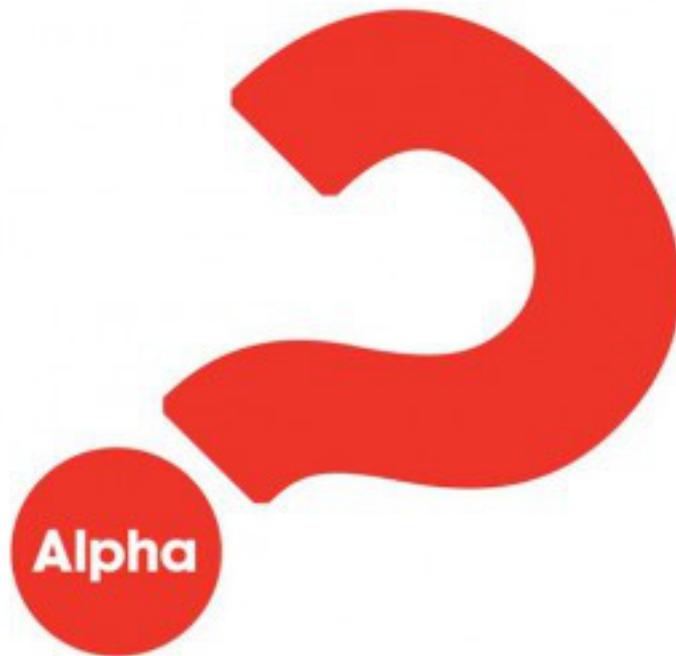


Diana's Story



I was brought up a Catholic and received a lot of religious formation. I had a strong faith and gave a lot to God through the Church. I believed in giving and gladly made many sacrifices in my life but I was disappointed and felt cheated as I experienced and witnessed manipulation and corruption from some of those who said were helping others and spreading the gospel. I became unhappy with the Church and as a result I took a step back and doubted about everything I had believed in. For some years now I did not find my faith attractive. I really wanted to continue to believe and I tried to behave as if I believed and made an effort to keep my faith but sometimes I felt I was losing it.

About 3 years ago I saw the Alpha banner hanging from the rails outside St Peters and I thought it would be good for me to do the course. I did not do it. Life took over; I was not sure what the course would be like and I was concerned it may put me off the church even more.

Then I met my husband Fernando and we got married a year ago. Fernando mentioned that we could possibly get more involved in the parish and I told him about the Alpha Course. We decided to do it and this time, with Fernando's help I did it!

Maybe because Alpha is specifically designed for people who want to know more about the faith whether Christians or not, I felt I could go along and there would be no expectation of me accepting and full heartedly agreeing to all that the church says and does. I had lots of questions and doubts and I was able to share them openly when I was ready. It is not necessary to open up at Alpha, and it is not the way for everyone but it was the way for me. It was hard to share where I was in relation to the faith. However, I experienced openness, understanding and a non-judgemental attitude. I was enriched by others and some barriers came down in my spiritual life and in how I view the Church.

I now know that the Church is the people, I have found a community in this parish and if I do not stay in the church with people who share my values and beliefs, where would I go? Like a friend reminded me last week, the apostle St Peter also said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" I was embarrassed to be known a catholic in public and professional circles.

I still have a way to go but I can now say that I am proud of my faith and as a result it is not a problem to let others see it if the occasion arises.