

details? For example, was it Frisbee himself who prayed for you in 1982? Did Cain minister to you personally in 1990? Which of the above have you met? Do you think they are the sort of people whom God would honor by making instrumental in 'channeling' a major outpouring to His People?

CONCLUSION

13 HTB's view regarding spiritual roots appears to be that, since Alpha leaders say "come **Holy Spirit**", then any resulting manifestations *must* be from the true Holy Spirit. But surely it is the *way* in which someone approaches God that matters, not just the *name* used? Not everyone using the name "Jesus" is referring to the Jesus of the Bible. The Lord Himself warned of *false* Christs (Matt. 24:24), and Paul pointed out, in 2 Cor. 11:4, that some people believe in "another" Jesus – i.e. a counterfeit one. Likewise, Paul said there was "another **spirit**".

(Incidentally, if making supplication to the Holy Spirit is acceptable to God the Father, can you point out all the places in Scripture where God's People did this? We ourselves cannot find any.)

14 Would you acknowledge that, if indeed judged by the fruit alone, the results of the Alpha retreat still strongly indicate that the manifestations are *not* from the Holy Spirit? There are many examples we could cite; the following is only a fraction of them:

(a) You teach, "the fruit of the Spirit [includes] ... **self-control**", yet Alpha manifestations are frequently *uncontrollable*. (We note that, in your book *Searching Issues*, you admit it is "**evil** powers which seek to **control**".)

(b) You state that the fruit of the Spirit includes "**love, ... goodness, [and] faithfulness**". It is a small point, but HTB has recently put general notices up asking for volunteers to help with HTB's activities. Whilst HTB runs various such things, it also has a membership of *thousands*. Given that you already advertise these activities, do you really find you also have to put general

notices up requesting volunteers? If HTB is filling its people with the true Holy Spirit, surely they are only too keen to serve the Body?

(c) Your Bible version says that the fruit of the spirit includes "joy, peace, **patience, kindness [and] gentleness**" yet HTB sometimes seems to prefer using *lawyers* in place of these things.

15 In *Searching Issues* you confess, regarding the "power and gifts of the Holy Spirit", that an apparent "**counterfeit**" exists. The manifestations on Alpha: look exactly like those experienced by New Age initiates; are all listed as marks of *apostasy* in Scripture;¹ and can readily be linked - in terms of both personalities *and* doctrines - to the New Age. Would you thus not sympathize greatly with church elders who suspect that graduates from Alpha retreats are merely undergoing a New Age counterfeit of true salvation? Do you accept that they would be very wise to investigate these things extremely carefully (and to wait for your reply to this letter) before proceeding with Alpha?

16 In light of the above, is it not exceedingly unreasonable for HTB to make the 'Retreat' a part of the Alpha copyright, such that it is now *illegal* to run Alpha without it? Do you not feel that this may well frighten churches into doing something for which there is no genuine scriptural support?

Thank you very much for your time. There is great confusion about these things, but obviously God is not the author of confusion. If you could therefore make the reply as clear and unambiguous as possible it would be hugely appreciated.

Sincerely,
Dusty Peterson & Elizabeth McDonald

This letter and the book mentioned above is distributed by:
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¹ Please see Part 5 of our book *Alpha: the Unofficial Guide: Overview* for details.

Open Letter to the Leaders of the Alpha Course

From Dusty Peterson and Elizabeth McDonald
Sent March 28th, 2003

Letter #1: Alpha's 'Holy Spirit Retreat'



Dear Rev. Nicky Gumbel,

Certain important questions are being asked regarding aspects of Alpha's 'Holy Spirit Retreat'. Some of the main ones are given below and we wondered if it might be possible for you to help clear them up - as we cannot find the answers in any Alpha publications.

We realize you yourself are extremely busy, but if a member of your large staff could possibly furnish replies to each of these queries it would be very useful. We will undertake, God-willing, to put your full response onto our website (bayith.org) as soon as we receive it. Many thanks in anticipation.

INTRODUCTION

1 You rightly say that the Bible is “the **supreme** authority for what we believe”.² Would you therefore agree with the Lord Jesus when He said, in Matthew 7:13-14, that “**broad** is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many** there be which go in thereat: ... and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto **life**, and **few** there be that find it”? (We ask this because it doesn’t appear to line up with what Alpha currently teaches – e.g. in chapter 9 of *30 Days* and chapter 2 of *Searching Issues*. Would you not agree that Alpha is ‘post-millennial’?)

2 You have also said that the Bible is “our authority for what we teach” and is “our authority for how we act”.³ Would you therefore agree that all Christian teaching ought to be founded solely on Holy Scripture? (The relevance of this question will become clear in a moment.)

ALPHA MANIFESTATIONS

3 Alpha participants often report feeling physically *forced*, by an unseen power, to do something (e.g. laugh uncontrollably), yet we can find no examples in Scripture of God doing this to people who are seeking Him. He sometimes forces His will on those *opposing* Him, but not on those who are trying to walk with Him. Can you list all such examples you know of in the Bible?

4 You teach that “Jesus came to set us **free**”, so would it be possible to explain why there are so many reports of Alpha participants not having the freedom to stop the manifestations they are experiencing? Surely someone in a relationship based on love would not *force* their will on the object of their love – and would permit the other party the freedom to stop some advance if they wanted to?

² All emphases in this letter are our own.

³ Full references for all quotations and other material in this letter have, for space, been kept back for the version of the letter as it appears on our website.

5 From official testimonies, common experiences on the Alpha retreat include: shaking uncontrollably; powerful electric shocks; a voice in the *head*; laughing for no reason; being knocked to the ground; white lights in the head; and unnatural heat. (Examples are available in our book *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide: Overview*.⁴) Unfortunately we cannot find a single unambiguous verse in Scripture showing God doing any of this to His People. Please can you point us to all the relevant ones?

6 There are many instances of people experiencing manifestations on Alpha *whilst still unsaved*. Since the unsaved are spiritually *dead* to God and therefore *cannot* receive the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:14), and since their most pressing need is for salvation, can you explain why the Holy Spirit would give them ecstatic experiences rather than convicting them of their sinful nature at this stage?

7 Alpha teaches that the manifestations themselves don’t matter, and that we should simply judge by the resulting fruit. Is this due to the absence of biblical support for these manifestations, and because of their amazing similarity to those things experienced in pagan religions such as the New Age movement?

ROOTS OF MODERN ALPHA

8 You cite John Wimber and his 1982 ministry team as being “very significant” in your life. You quote Wimber regularly and glowingly, and you recommend his books. Do you not feel that such strong endorsement legitimizes the people whom he cited as being influential on *him*? These include: Morton Kelsey, Agnes Sanford, Kenneth Hagin, and John & Paula Sandford. Would you not agree that, in each case, their teachings are dangerous, and that they have *admitted* deriving aspects of their doctrine from New Agers? In view of verses like 1 Cor. 5:11 and Titus 3:10, are you not concerned about this,

⁴ Outlets for our book are available from the ‘Better Than Rubies’ section of our website (www.bayith.org).

and about the fact that none of them have repented of their cooperation with such people?

9 Would you accept that Matthew 7:17-18 teaches us that the roots of a movement are very significant when determining if that movement is of God or not? Are you aware that Wimber largely attributed his ‘anointing’ to a man called



Lonnie Frisbee, who was a practicing bisexual, died of AIDS in 1993 and is buried at Crystal Cathedral

Lonnie Frisbee who had been traveling with him for 18 months prior to Wimber’s team ministering to you in 1982? Are you aware that Lonnie Frisbee worked with Bob Mumford and Kathryn Kuhlman during the 1970’s? What do you think of them, given that they too derived much from New Agers?

10 Alpha only took off - i.e. went beyond Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) - *after* Paul Cain ministered there in 1990. Are you aware that his mentor, William Branham, was a man who denied the Trinity and who was greatly influenced by at least two New Agers? What is your definition of a heretic? Despite verses like 1 Cor. 5:12-13, John 7:24, and the whole of 1 John, Alpha seems to suggest that we cannot judge whether someone is a true brother or not. If that is so, how can HTB make the judgment that Paul Cain was “a man of God”?

11 Biblically, if a supposed disciple of the Lord produces a prophecy that they claim is from God but observably fails to come to pass, that person is to be accounted a false prophet. Cain, Wimber, Branham, Hagin, Kuhlman (and her protégé Benny Hinn) have all demonstrably produced false prophecies, yet far from alerting the sheep about these people, HTB seems prepared (directly or indirectly) to legitimize them. Since the Lord Jesus Christ took the trouble of warning us to “**Beware** of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15), what is *your* definition of a false prophet?

12 Aside from Wimber, have you ever personally been prayed over, or otherwise ministered to, by any of the above people? If so, please can you supply