

Alpha Counseling Service
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Dear friends,

Five more things I have learned in my years at Alpha.

6. Ministering at Alpha means working with a wide variety of people, and this has given me a greater ability to love. 'Love the sinner and not the sin' is repeated by Christians but I don't see many church going Christians actually practicing this statement. I'm not suggesting accepting sinful behavior but often people caught up in sin are not confronted in love but with hostility. It's hard to separate the sin from the sinner but I'm learning to do that. It's called GRACE! Jesus said to the adulteress: *"Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more!"* John8:3-11

7. Working at Alpha has taught me the importance of having relationships with people of diverse backgrounds. These relationships have given me a wonderful network of friends. Having prayed weekly with the same group of ministers for twelve years gave me the opportunity to learn from and care for a diverse cross section of Christianity that I might have missed if I hadn't worked here. As time goes on I am amazed at all the former clients who stay in contact and refer to the new things they are learning as they grow in their relationship with Jesus. Although, I don't hear back from all of the people I have worked with over the years, I hope they are growing and doing well also.

8. Being at Alpha has allowed me to see miracles of the first caliber. God continues to surprise me with what He can do in a "hopeless situation". Sometimes I form attitudes about people, it's called judging, and I really think I'm wasting my time only to have a "hopeless cause" teach me about faith and works. I'm reminded that my job is to sew gospel seed or water seed sown by others but it is always up to God to produce fruit. I've learned I'm not responsible for the outcome of ministry just my output. Trust and obey for there is no other way...that works!

9. In my years at Alpha I have found a troubling reoccurring theme among Christians I see. Most of us (yes, me included) want everyone around us to change so we don't have to! We want family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even politicians to correct their ways to give us less stress but, God's way is to use these people in our lives to shape us into godly people. He wants us to love the unlovely by His power and this goes against any hope of there being fairness in my life. It's not fair that only I have to change but, God isn't working for or from fairness but is working to develop godliness in His children. Not everything I've learned have I enjoyed.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:43

10. Last, but definitely not the least, I have learned how many truly faithful Christians there are in this world. Sometimes Debi has to remind me that I work with a special group of people at a crossroad and struggling with problems in their life. And because I tend to get stuck focusing on all their problems, I tend to forget about the faithful people who are looking to Jesus for a life filled with grace. Alpha could not survive without the many faithful helpers who have not tired of praying and giving.

Thank You All!

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers...Philemon 1:4

Richard