

Using Emmaus with Alpha

The main Emmaus course, Nurture, has the same length, aim and scope as Alpha, so it comes as no surprise that the earlier (Contact) and later (Growth) modules of Emmaus can be used to supplement Alpha's own materials at the pre-Alpha and post-Alpha stages. Lichfield Diocesan Missioner Mark Ireland writes "Alpha is hugely effective at helping people who are already interested in Christianity to cross the threshold of belief, whereas Emmaus aims to start further back, at the first contact stage, and take the new believer through a much longer period of initiation - the Growth modules" (Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, *Evangelism - which way now?*, London: CHP, 2003, p.35, see <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk>).

Sometimes, churches use Nurture itself as a temporary substitute for Alpha, to make a change after re-running Alpha constantly, or if they want to customise the course in the light of local experience (which is not permitted for Alpha). Emmaus co-author Bishop John Finney finds that "leaders become bored with one course and need to change to a different one for the sake of their own sanity!" (*Emerging evangelism*, London: DLT, 2004, p.79).

But by far the most common practice is to use the Growth modules to follow-up Alpha. Alpha's own follow-up material is not extensive and Mark Ireland notes that "many parishes are using Emmaus as a follow-up for those who have completed the Alpha course". *Evangelism - which way now?* p.36 (Alpha or Emmaus? found the same - downloadable from this website under "Research", see pp.88 and 91f). In *Evangelism in a spiritual age* (London: CHP, 2005, p.85, see <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk>) Ireland suggests that, because the main courses are for people who are already serious enquirers, a Growth course such as on personal identity or prayer can be useful before running Nurture, and so by analogy before Alpha. This would offer those who are 'just looking' a short module on topics that may connect better with where they are.

The Emmaus Contact module may be used before any evangelistic course to help churches identify and develop their contacts, and fuller pre-Alpha programmes such as Stepping-stones (available on free CD-Rom from emmaus.south-west@tesco.net) can be built on the foundational principles that Contact puts forward. Contact can therefore work behind the scenes to supplement - rather than substitute - the well-established annual Alpha Invitations (formerly Alpha Initiatives) and its brand promotion.

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