

Fall 2022 Vineyard Columbus Alpha Course Survey Results Report

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Context

This survey was delivered to participants in the city-wide Alpha Course that was delivered, and hosted by, Vineyard Columbus (OH) church in the fall of 2022. This is a summary of 207 responses to the survey.

Executive Summary

How did it go?

- People felt listened to, appreciated, and listened to during the discussions, and they mostly didn't feel forced to come to a conclusion during the discussions.
- People felt the Holy Spirit discussions were important:
 - "The Videos on the Holy Spirit were so powerful, and really were healing to me. They were my favorite ones"
- People felt less alone in their exploration:
 - "I will say that it has helped me process through some big questions graciously and kindly. And it has helped me see that I'm not alone in my exploration"
- One person simply said "God spoke to me."
- There were criticisms that Alpha was too religious:
 - "I invited a non-Christian who is seeking under the pretense that it was an open & free conversation w/no agenda. That WAS NOT true. We both were very disappointed & felt it was dishonest."

Was there change in participants awareness of God?

- Participants indicated a stronger sense of God being nearer to them, and a stronger impression of God's presence at the end of the course in comparison with the beginning of the course.
- Participants indicated a stronger sense of God being nearer to them, and a stronger impression of God's presence at the end of the course in comparison with the beginning of the course.
- There wasn't any indication of change from the beginning to the end of the course in God's prompts, sensing how God is working in their lives, listening to God, awareness of God responding in a variety of ways, God attending to them in times of need, and God being impactful.

Marketing

- Most people came to the course because they wanted to deepen their faith and strengthen their relationship with God, and because their church encouraged them to come to the course.
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Marketing & Why

How did you hear about Alpha	Age 18-30	Age 31-40	Age 41-51	Age 52-60	61+
Friend Relative or Co-Worker Invited me	30%	20%	19%	23%	18%
Billboard	2%	0%	3%	5%	0%
Alpha Sticker	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Postcard	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
614	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
YouTube Ad	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Google Ad	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Facebook	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Instagram	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Meetup	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Eventbrite	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
OSU Dorm Ad	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
My Church	26%	20%	19%	23%	16%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

*Note: These responses don't align with the data from Google Analytics and other sources because self-report is known to be fallible (Kagan, 1990; Robertshaw, 2013).

Number of ways someone heard about Alpha

	Age 18-30	Age 31-40	Age 41-51	Age 52-60	61+
1 way	89%	85%	94%	91%	90%
2 ways	6%	15%	6%	9%	6%
3 ways	5%	0%	0%	0%	4%: 0 ways

Why did you decide to come to Alpha?	Age 18-30	Age 31-40	Age 41-51	Age 52-60	61+
I had questions and I wanted a place to process	24%	11%	3%	9%	14%
I am seeking community	55%	16%	24%	14%	10%
I am working on my relationship with God	50%	26%	24%	18%	20%
I am curious about faith	5%	5%	3%	9%	2%
I am seeking to deepen my Christian faith	45%	26%	45%	23%	27%
I want to feel like I belong somewhere	18%	21%	7%	5%	6%
I was invited by someone	26%	21%	10%	9%	16%
There was free food	34%	11%	0%	5%	0%
My church encouraged me to attend	55%	53%	34%	50%	43%
Other	5%	11%	17%	14%	24%

‘Other’ responses included: Being invited to be a leader or a host/helper, being encouraged by a pastor to come, wanting another tool to connect with others, and wanting to explore questions.

Faith Growth

Before Alpha, how would you describe your faith practice?	Age 18-30	Age 31-40	Age 41-51	Age 52-60	Age 61+
Searching	11%	0%	9%	9%	2%
Spiritual but not religious	11%	10%	6%	5%	2%
Skeptical	9%	5%	3%	0%	2%
Christian	85%	85%	94%	77%	90%
Undecided	6%	5%	3%	5%	2%
Other	4%	0%	0%	0%	4%

After Alpha, how would you describe your faith practice?	Age 18-30	Age 31-40	Age 41-51	Age 52-60	61+
Searching	13%	5%	12%	9%	4%
Spiritual but not religious	9%	15%	3%	5%	2%
Skeptical	2%	5%	3%	0%	0%
Christian	89%	80%	88%	77%	90%
Undecided	4%	15%	3%	0%	0%
Other	4%	0%	0%	0%	4%

Awareness of God

This is a subscale from the Spiritual Assessment Inventory: A Theistic Model and Measure for Assessing Spiritual Development (Hall & Edwards, 2002). This subscale was chosen because it meets the objectives of Alpha and psychometrically it stands on its own.

This was delivered as a retrospective pre (Pohl, 1982), meaning that participants rated how they felt their awareness of God was before Alpha, and were then asked to rate how they felt their awareness of God was at the end of Alpha – or “Now” as the survey was delivered at the end of the Fall Alpha Vineyard Columbus Course.

Summary of findings

- Overall, there is no overall change in how participants rated their awareness of God from the beginning to the end of the Alpha Course.
- Participants did indicate a stronger sense of God being nearer to them, and a stronger impression of God’s presence at the end of the course in comparison with the beginning of the course.
- There was also a slight positive change in feelings of God communicating with them, a slightly stronger sense of the direction God was guiding them, God’s presence in interactions with others, God’s presence in times of need from the beginning to the end of the course.
- There wasn’t any indication of change from the beginning to the end of the course in God’s prompts, sensing how God is working in their lives, listening to God, awareness of God responding in a variety of ways, God attending to them in times of need, and God being impactful.

See the tables on the following two pages for the mean, median, standard deviation, whether the change from ‘Before’ to ‘Now’ (beginning to end) was statistically significant, and the size of the difference from beginning to end (small, medium, or large). Statistical significance was determined using paired-samples t-tests, and the size of the difference was determined using the Cohen’s d effect size.

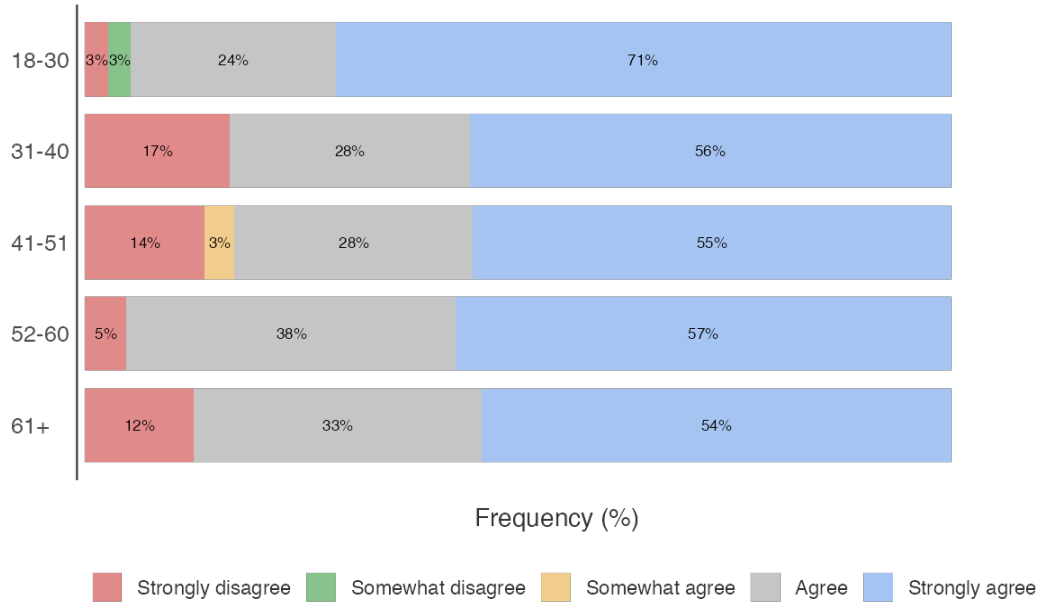
NOTE: THE VALUES WERE : 1: VERY TRUE, 2: TRUE, 3: NOT TRUE, 4: NOT VERY TRUE. The Lower the number, the more true the statement is.

Question	Time	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Is the difference significant?	How big is the difference?
I am aware of God prompting me to do things	Before	1.6	1	0.716	1	4	No	None
	After	1.64	2	0.638	1	4		
I have a sense of how God is working in my life	Before	1.56	2	0.614	1	4	No	None
	After	1.57	2	0.595	1	4		
Listening to God is an essential part of my life	Before	1.61	1.5	0.696	1	4	No	None
	After	1.59	2	0.632	1	4		
My experiences of God's responses to me impact me greatly	Before	1.49	1	0.68	1	4	No	None
	After	1.54	1	0.636	1	4		
I am aware of God's presence in my interactions with other people	Before	1.66	2	0.687	1	4	Yes	Small
	After	1.57	2	0.624	1	4		
I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways	Before	1.65	2	0.697	1	4	No	None
	After	1.68	2	0.677	1	4		
I am aware of God attending to me in times of need	Before	1.54	1	0.704	1	4	No	None
	After	1.6	1	0.696	1	4		
My experiences of God's presence impacts me greatly	Before	1.56	1	0.659	1	4	No	None
	After	1.54	1	0.638	1	4		
I have a sense of the direction in which God is guiding me	Before	1.82	2	0.704	1	4	Yes	Small
	After	1.66	2	0.647	1	4		
I am aware of God communicating to me in a variety of ways	Before	1.75	2	0.72	1	4	Yes	Small
	After	1.65	2	0.704	1	4		
I am aware of God's presence in times of need	Before	1.62	2	0.688	1	4	No	Small
	After	1.56	1	0.648	1	4		

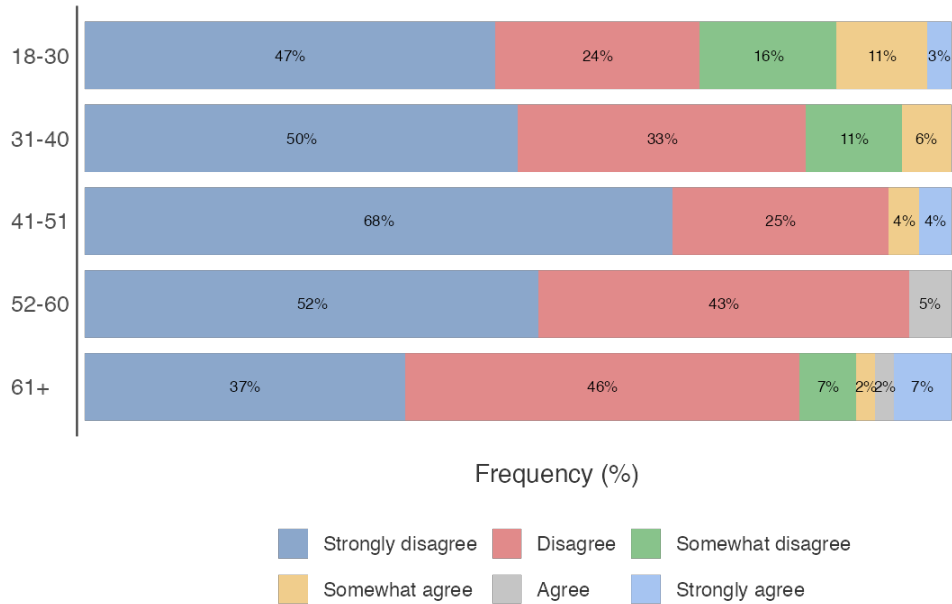
Question	Time	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Is the difference significant?	How big is the difference?
From day to day, I sense God being with me	Before	1.76	2	0.774	1	4	Yes	Small
	After	1.63	2	0.712	1	4		
I experience an awareness of God speaking to me personally	Before	1.88	2	0.798	1	4	Yes	Small
	After	1.77	2	0.785	1	4		
I have a strong impression of God's presence	Before	1.84	2	0.735	1	4	Yes	Medium
	After	1.69	2	0.706	1	4		
I am aware of God being very near to me	Before	1.82	2	0.729	1	4	Yes	Medium
	After	1.66	2	0.707	1	4		
Mean Total	Before	1.68	1.6	0.583	1	4	No	None
	After	1.62	1.6	0.578	1	3.93		

Experience during the Alpha Discussions

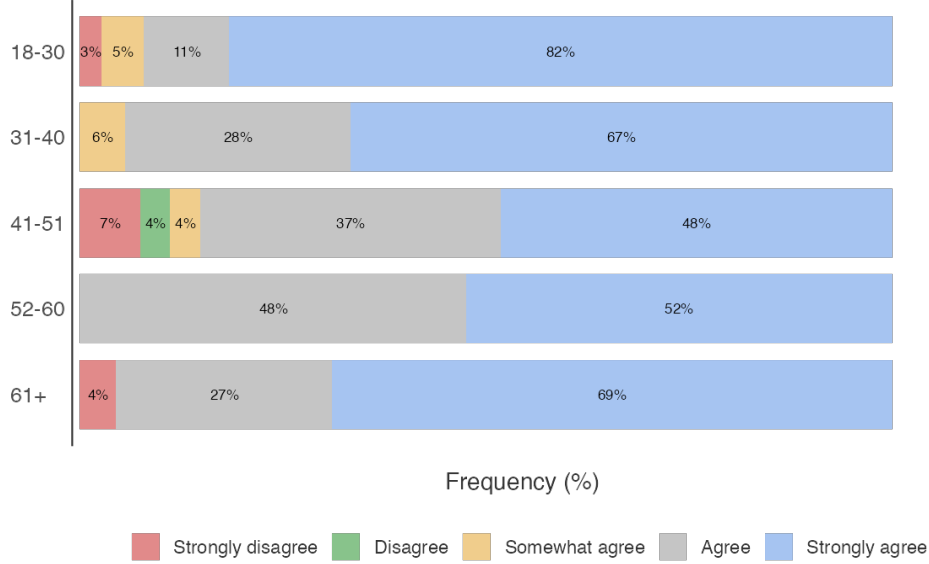
I felt listened to during the discussions



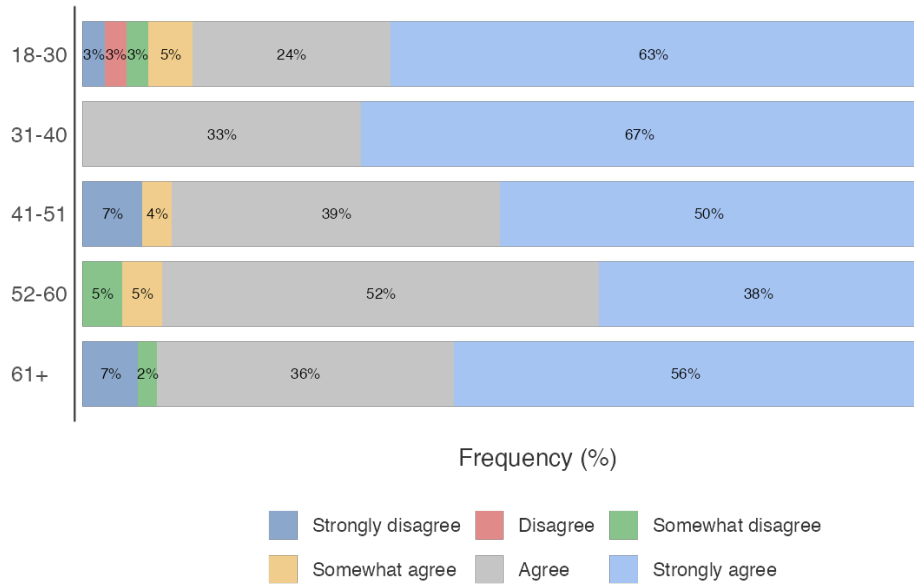
I felt forced to come to a conclusion



I felt appreciated by the host and those organizing it.



I felt like all perspectives were valued



What was important, what went well, what could be improved?

The final evaluation questions were three questions asking:

1. Describe any important moments during Alpha.
2. What went particularly well?
3. How can Alpha be made better in the future?

Many of the comments spoke about positive moments

- Comments about appreciating prayer times, especially in the last week. One person described having a positive experience when asking the Alpha leaders and their parents to pray with them.
- Appreciating the diversity of the people that God brought together
- Many people spoke about the discussions of the Holy Spirit. One person said:
 - “Discussions about the holy spirits were very impactful to my growing relationship with God” and another said “The Videos on the Holy Spirit were so powerful, and really were healing to me. They were my favorite ones”
- One person simply said “God spoke to me.”
- Lastly, one person described no longer feeling alone in doubts
 - “I spoke up for the first time - in a group of people I barely know - about how I had true doubts about the Bible. I sat there waiting for someone to beat me over the head with phrases like "I've been there... you just need to read the Bible even when you don't feel like it." Instead, two other people in the group voiced similar opinions. For the first time in 8 years, I was actually IN a conversation. And I appreciated that so much. I won't say that I emerged from Alpha with clearly defined beliefs. But I will say that it has helped me process through some big questions graciously and kindly. And it has helped me see that I'm not alone in my exploration. I'm so thankful for the people who have shared their homes and their food and their wine with wandering strangers :)”

There were some harsh responses criticisms of the program in response to this question

- People felt they were coming to open discussions of God, rather than being directly pointed to God as we see him in Christianity. One person said:
 - “I invited a non-Christian who is seeking under the pretense that it was an open & free conversation w/no agenda. That WAS NOT true. We both were very disappointed & felt it was dishonest.”
- Another person who had criticisms also had a solution:
 - “I really think there needs to be a shorter pre Alpha. One that truly is for unbelievers and unchurched that doesn't dive in to trying to convince and convert. One that really opens up for discussion and brings them to a place that they desire to learn more which then would be invited to the actual Alpha course. Which I think they would be ready for that, as well as the time commitment. That way being invited to the pre Alpha doesn't present that they were misled to a safe place for questions and discussion which really was something else entirely.

References

Hall, T.W. & Edwards, K.J. (2002). The Spiritual Assessment Inventory: A Theistic Model and Measure for Assessing Spiritual Development. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(2), 341–357.

Kagan, D.M. (1990). Ways of evaluating teacher cognition: Inferences concerning the Goldilocks principle. *Review of Educational Research*, 419-469.

Pohl, N.F. (1982). Using Retrospective Pre-Ratings to Counteract Response-Shift Confounding. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 50(4), 211-214, DOI: 10.1080/00220973.1982.11011826

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