



Church is a movement that tells a better story

By Steve Chalke

CHAPTER ONE.

Church is when you work with Islamic Relief. Genesis 12

This episode will help you **engage, reflect and respond** to Church is. We encourage you to explore each episode with friends - if you do, let us know! We'd love to hear about it and your thoughts and ideas.

Each episode has a companion video and each episode title mirrors one of its key themes. Thanks for downloading.

Companion video: churchis.co.uk/stevechalke

Chapter: ONE of FOUR



W W W . C H U R C H . C O . U K



Church is when you work with Islamic Relief

Genesis 12 (NIV)



² *'I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.*

³ *I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.'*

Just around the corner from the church I lead in central London are the headquarters for both Christian Aid and Islamic Relief, and the children who attend the schools we run locally come from all sorts of backgrounds. Collectively we are a vibrant, multicultural community. Our church is full of people with questions, figuring our life together.

We were devastated last year by the scenes of unprecedented migration as people fled the devastation and horror they faced in Syria in search of safety. We wanted to respond as a community, as one community. So we worked with both Christian Aid and Islamic Relief to set up a project called *'Harvest for Hope'*.

But I believe that it's more than disaster which binds us together. I believe there is a deeper theological root that will challenge the perceptions and ideologies that shape how we approach people from other faiths.

The following text is from a book I wrote recently exploring these issues more deeply. It's called *'Radical'*.

*Please continue to the next page to read the passage
from 'Radical' - Chapter 8 - Time to Talk*



Three and a half billion people – half the world’s population – profess Christianity or Islam.

The tragedy is that, historically, most literature written by Christians about Islam, or by Muslims about Christianity, has been either polemic or apologetic in nature. Indeed, it has usually been written as a resource for a readership that sees interfaith encounters purely as a smokescreen to preach, proselytise and recruit the other side to their cause. The problem is, of course, that any presentation of one religion through the filter of the values and theology of another is bound to misrepresent the ‘other’.

In this context, although it seems obvious, it is worth making the point that Islam is not like Christianity, or vice versa. Traditional and popular comparisons between the two have often fallen into the trap of, for instance, equating the roles of Jesus and Muhammad, or the Qur’an and the Bible, or Lent and Ramadan. Not only are these conclusions very inaccurate, but also they inevitably reinforce misunderstandings on both sides.

The three monotheistic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – all refer to the one true, universal, creator God ^[i] and trace their roots back to the same man: Abraham.^[ii] And, as both the Qur’an and the book of Genesis record, as part of this, Abraham was given a promise by the one God of everyone and everything:

‘He [Allah] said, "I am appointing you as the leader of humanity.”’
- Qur’an 2:124

‘I [God] will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.’ - Genesis 12:2-3

This Abraham was not Jew, Christian, or Muslim, but he is the father of all. Perhaps, therefore, the starting place for dialogue between the three Abrahamic faiths is to take a fresh look at this ancient prophecy delivered to Abraham, and consider our joint track record on living up to it. Are we a ‘blessing’ to humanity? Do we offer clear moral and spiritual leadership to the nations of the world? Or, does this prophecy remain unfulfilled? The

ultimate question must therefore be simply this: will our generation play its part in moving toward its fulfillment through the courage and trust we are willing to demonstrate in taking steps towards one another? Or is our legacy one wherein we are to be tragically remembered only as having been part of the problem?

Questions:

Follow

- Are the ideas presented in this chapter challenging or surprising? How so?

Church

- Looking at the challenge from the final paragraph of the chapter - are we a 'blessing' to humanity?

Action

- How can you and your church take steps to embrace differing points of view from within your church community?
- What action could you take to extend this attitude out towards others across your community?