



Church is a movement that tells a better story

By Steve Chalke

CHAPTER TWO.

Church is a story of hope. A story of meaning. A story of purpose.

Matthew 6

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: TWO of FOUR



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



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Matthew 6 (NIV)



⁹ *“This, then, is how you should pray:*

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

¹⁰ *your kingdom come,
your will be done,*

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ *Give us today our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

When I was fourteen my life was utterly transformed by my local church. The youth group that I attended helped me see that my life was wrapped up in a greater story. It lifted my ambitions and aspirations far beyond those which I had before.

I chose to believe a story of hope, transformation and forgiveness instead of one based on the limitations of my family’s circumstances and background.

Since then I have been motivated by the example and sacrifice of Jesus to tell everyone else about this great story, and find ways to make it accessible to everyone. That’s why I started Oasis, so we could work with local communities and help people experience the love of God in real, tangible and practical ways.

There are two pieces of scripture that I would like to draw your attention to through some chapters from my book called *‘Being Human’* - The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 and the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. Let’s start with the Lord’s Prayer and revisit the Good Samaritan in Chapter 4, which you can download at church.co.uk/stevechalke.



'Being Human' - Chapter 4 - Punching Holes

That's our job – our mission, should we choose to accept it – to punch holes in the darkness of poverty, of prejudice, of injustice, of loneliness, of intolerance, of rejection and of hatred; to follow Christ and work with God as agents of change.

The most famous prayer that Jesus taught those who choose to follow him begins with the words:

*Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.*

I've slowly learnt that to pray a prayer that big is to do more than say some words. To really pray any prayer is to allow its content to become your vision, your passion, your longing, your commitment. To pray Jesus' prayer is to allow it to shape you; to become the story by which you choose to live your whole life. As Søren Kierkegaard observed, 'The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.'

So, what is the 'kingdom of God', or the 'kingdom of heaven'^[2] as it is sometimes called in the Bible? There's a joke about the fact that what Jesus spent most of his time teaching about was the kingdom of God, but what he got was the Church! It is based on the fact that although Jesus only ever used the word 'church' on two occasions, he talked about the 'kingdom of God' or 'kingdom of heaven' all the time, every day, almost every hour. He seems to have had a bit of a one-track mind!^[3]

I've realised that Jesus' prayer is really an invitation to me – to you – to all of us – to follow him in the way we live, thus joining in with the unfolding story of the establishing of the 'kingdom of God' which is simply another way of talking about what life would be like if God were king; if *his* will was done here on earth, rather than that of the financiers, the markets and the politicians. And, as the rest of Jesus' life, teaching and example make plain, the will of God is simply this; that every person, every community, indeed the whole of creation, should flourish, free from oppression and enjoy living well.

The kingdom of God is a way of doing things; a way of doing things differently. The excluded are welcomed, the hungry are fed, difference is celebrated rather than scorned, injustice is banished, greed is no more, no one is oppressed or abused, disease is eradicated, joy and fulfilment become a reality rather than a distant dream.

Questions:

Follow

- If someone was talking about you, what do you think they'd say your story was?
- Are you satisfied with what they'd say? What do you want to be about?

Church

- If someone came to your church, what story would they experience?
- Does your church reflect what we see in Jesus' words through the Lord's Prayer?

Action

- Is there anything you can do in response to the challenge, what do you want to be about?
- What can your church do in this reWhat action could you take to extend this attitude out towards others across your community?