

How I Became A Muslim

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In the Name of Allah, most Compassionate, most Merciful

I was raised in a moderately Christian home in Colorado. Religion was never much of an issue in my house. My father was raised as a Mormon, my mother as a Protestant. I can remember my parents dropping my brother off at Sunday School, but instead of going to church while we were in religious classes, they would go home.

As I grew to adolescence, I became curious about God, wondering whether He really existed and if so, what He wanted from us humans. I studied the Bible and other Christian literature earnestly. As a high school student, I was mature enough as a reader to notice apparent discrepancies in the Bible, particularly about the nature of Jesus (peace be upon him). In some

places, the Bible seemed to indicate that Jesus was the Son of God, and in others, a man. At that time, however, I did not believe that there was any problem with the Bible, I thought the problem was one of me being of limited capability to understand what I was reading. You see, as Christians we are taught that religion is somewhat mystical; religion does not have to make sense or be logical or stand up to reason because God can do things however He wants.

So, when things don't make sense, it is because we as humans are incapable of comprehending God's truth, and thus we must just accept on faith that which we cannot understand. Even so, I was unhappy with the way most Christians practiced their religion because it seemed like a mere pastime to me. I learned about a sect of Christianity called the

Church of God through their literature, and I liked very much some of the things they did. For instance, they abstain from eating pork because they are told to in the Bible, and they do not celebrate Christmas because it is not mentioned in the Bible. When I came to college at Colorado State University, I met a girl who attended this church and I went with her once, but I quickly became disinterested in the group.

The leaders of the church had recently divided and all its followers were arguing over which leaders to follow and I did not want to get involved in anything like that. So, I was back to being just a generic Christian again. I was involved in Bible Studies via Campus Crusade for Christ in my dormitory. At the studies, I was on a personal quest to figure out what the Bible was really saying, although at the time I didn't see that so clearly.

Also at that time, I met a Muslim man, the first Muslim I had ever met. I have always been

attracted to people from different cultures, and we soon became good friends. Slowly, I became curious about Islam.

I wondered, "Why does he pray a certain way?" I wanted to know why he believed what he believed and why he did what he did. Christians do not pray in any particular way. As a Christian, I learned just to ask God for whatever I needed or wanted, and to do it in the name of Jesus (peace be upon him).

The concept of actual worship in prayer instead of just asking for your wants and needs is largely lacking in Christian prayer, although we are taught to thank Jesus (peace be upon him) for dying for our sins. I wanted my relationship with God to be more than just asking for things.

So, in this state of curiosity and of searching, I started to read Pickthall's translation of Qu'ran. When I first started to read it, I had a mixed reaction. On the one hand I was amazed that many of the same histories of the prophets of Christianity and Judaism were in Qu'ran. I never before realized that there was a relationship between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; I had always thought of Islam as an Eastern religion, like Hinduism or Buddhism.

On the other hand, whenever I read verses about Jesus (peace be upon him) which clearly stated that he was not one of three, or the Son of God, I felt compelled to just shut the book. This went against everything I had ever heard, and yet everything else in the Qu'ran went along so well with everything I had learned. I began to question why I believed everything I had been taught about Christianity.

I asked the leader of my Bible study and the other members of that group to explain to me what verses in the Bible tell us that Jesus (peace be upon him) was God in the flesh come to save us from our sins, and that all we had to do to be saved was to believe that Jesus (peace be upon him) was the Son of God.

They all had answers, but for every answer they gave, I found a verse in the Bible which said the opposite. They told me we have to take it on faith, but I was now thinking that if God would give us a religion, it would be a logical religion that we could understand, so that we could do what He willed.

The leader of my Bible study had done missionary work to Muslims in Algeria, and I decided to talk to him because I thought he would know about Islam and could tell me what was wrong with it and right with Christianity.

First, I asked him what would happen to my Muslim friend, and he sighed and told me that he would undoubtedly go to hell unless he "accepted Jesus [peace be upon him] into his heart, but Muslims rarely do that." I had trouble accepting this, because my Muslim friend seemed so much more pious and sincere in devotion to God than most Christians are, and I couldn't

understand why someone like that would go to hell.

Then, I asked him how the Qu'ran could be so similar to the Bible and yet be totally rejected by Christians? He told me that the Qu'ran was sent by Satan to trick and deceive men into unbelief, and that its similarities to the Bible were part of the deception.

I was almost crying at this point, but then I asked him if he had read the Qur'an, because I wanted to ask him about some specific verses. I was shocked at his answer. He answered that he had briefly looked at parts of it, but couldn't continue because it made him sick to his stomach.

I left quickly, amazed at the realization that I, who had been reading Qur'an for only a few months, had studied more about Islam than my respected Bible study leader who had missionary work to Muslims in Algeria!

I realized that he could not correctly make such a judgment as he had made about the Qur'an if he had not even read it. I was so angry at him and at all the Christian religious leaders who told us all these things without study and without explanation. It was nothing more than heresy, yet it was being preached as divine doctrine.

This was a turning point for me, because at this point I concluded that I couldn't trust anyone to help me in my search, but that I had to do it within myself. Slowly, I found myself tearing down the belief that Jesus (peace be upon him) was one of three or the Son of God. It was difficult, because always in the back of my mind was the thought that if I am wrong, I will go to hell.

Yet, I could not deny that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) had to be the prophet of Allah, and that the Qur'an had to be the Word of Allah, and if the Qur'an were the Word of Allah, then what was in it had to be true. So, a few months after the talk with the leader of my Bible study, I became muslim.

That was a little more than a year ago as of today (2/14/96). Learning about Islam has not always been easy. That muslim man whom I met is now my mut'ah husband although we live in different states, and we hope for a permanent marriage when we are done with college. He is Shi'a, and so after several months I was to the point that I needed to learn the difference between Sunni and Shi'a.

I started by reading web pages, and I found the Shi'a Encyclopedia to be so helpful. I used to get so frustrated, though, because I would learn something and think that I knew it, and then someone who was Sunni would tell me something that I had no answer for, and so I was left wondering how I would ever find the truth when it seemed to be entangled in contradicting traditions.

Also, I wanted to be sure not to become Shi'a just for the sake of my mut'ah husband; I really needed to believe in its truth. But the Shi'a Encyclopedia convinced me, as did Tijani's books, by the Grace of Allah. Since then, I was introduced to the Ahlul-Bayt Discussion Group which has been very helpful. I have met some wonderful people who have helped me greatly, and they should get a good reward for all the help they have given me.

This semester, I started wearing hijab, and I am so glad that I did. I feel much better about myself, I feel more feminine and I think that God has helped me more than ever before since I decided to wear it. My non-muslim classmates and friends don't mind my hijab; some even like it. My family, however, hates it.

They have never understood or accepted my conversion, and they try to tell me that I converted only to please my husband and that I don't really believe in it, even if I can't see that now. They tell me I am going to hell. They tell me I am abandoning my American culture and trying to be something I'm not.

They tell me I am turning away from them, and that my wearing hijab is a slap in the face to them and is very disrespectful. My mother cries about me, my father doesn't like to talk to me. I know they are concerned for their daughter and that they mean well; I love them and only want to be kind to them and I hate to see them this way.

No matter what I say, they just don't understand me; logic doesn't work because emotions are too strong. Still, I think there is hope for our relationship, and I know that my conversion to Shi'a Islam is the best thing that ever could've happened to me.

Despite the little troubles I may have, I feel more complete as a person, more directed, and more at peace than any Christian on this earth could ever know. I wish more people on this earth could experience the revelation that I have experienced.

Looking back, I can't see anymore how Islam could ever have been so hard to understand or accept; it is so obviously the truth to me now that it practically screams it out.

Alhamdulillah-Lah!

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