

## STORIES FROM CONVERTS:

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In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Giver of Mercy

Before I write about my actual conversion to Islam, let me just say that at that period of my life I was not looking for religion nor spiritual enlightenment. I was a typical 'go to the club on Saturday then church on Sunday' kind of Christian and I was perfectly content with that.

During that time I was teaching English as a second language at a community centre. There was a Somali (Muslim) family who attended there, a mother and her two daughters. Right away I was drawn to them for reasons unknown to me at the time. I was invited to their home a few times. I noticed that every time that I was there, the mother was always reading the Qur'an and she always looked so content as though it brought some kind of tranquillity to her. Even though I noticed it, I did not comment or ask about it because I had "bigger" issues on my mind. I knew that they were Muslims, but I was not interested in "that" religion.

I was born and raised on a remote island in the Caribbean. I was raised as a Methodist and although we were not very religious, I went to church almost every Sunday probably because I lived right next to the church. Going to church seemed to be just something that you did on Sundays; we never really talked about God/Jesus at home. I had always wondered though, why could I not talk to God directly, why did I have to go through someone else? I also remember asking my mother about the Trinity and she, herself, could not explain it, she told me that I just had to believe in it if I did not then I would go to hell!

Being from Dominica (Commonwealth of) I had never really heard much about Islam nor had I seen any practicing Muslims. So when I immigrated to Canada at the age of eighteen, everything that I came to know about Islam came from the media. Islam, as portrayed in the media, is not a religion to be desired especially being a woman. Whether it is from the newspaper or on the

television, we can all agree that Islam is portrayed as a barbaric, extremist, sexist religion. Who would want to be a part of that? Certainly not me!

One summer night I was riding the train home with my young Somali friend when she turned to me and said, "You are Christian, right?" I told her that I was. "Then tell me about Christianity" she said. "What do Christians believe?" So I started to tell her about the story of Jesus being the son of God. She turned to me and with the innocence of a four year old and asked "how does God have a son, does he have a wife?" "Oh, he does not need a wife" I retorted, "because he can do anything that he wants". I later learned that although Allah (God) can do anything that he wants some things are just beneath his station as the Lord of all creation. I proceeded to tell her about the Trinity – God existing in three. And as I heard myself struggling to explain it, I realized that it sounded like absolute gibberish. I was surprised that this had not occurred to me before and I felt so foolish. But even with that realisation I still was not ready to look seriously at Islam as a religion. I was convinced that even though my religion sounded foolish, nonetheless, Islam could not be the correct religion.

The next day I went to the centre again, back to work as usual. I met the computer teacher for the first time. He was wearing a *thobe* (male Arabian garment) and he was so polite and helpful. He was so unlike any of the young men that I had known such that I was quickly impressed by his good manners. He saw me reading some literature on Islam and gave me a pamphlet to read. It was called "the twenty most frequently asked about questions about Islam." He also gave me a copy of the Qur'an to read. Like I said at the beginning of my story I was not interested in finding religion, I already had mine. I wanted to prove to him that his religion was false. I wanted to find errors and contradictions in the Qur'an. Allah says in the Quraan, as translated "were it from other than Allah then surely you would have found much contradiction therein". I dug deep into it and was struck by what I read, the more I read, the more I wanted to read. More so I could not find any contradictions in it. I was struck that God himself was talking directly to me. When I used to read the Bible there was always a third party (the New Testament) reporting what God said and what he meant. I always yearned to have God himself speak to me. It was always "we" (majestically) or "I" whenever I read the words of Allah (God), this was one of the things that appealed to me. There are also many scientific discoveries that are stated in the Qur'an, which at the time that it was recorded, no person would have known about. For example the Qur'an talks about the stages that an embryo goes through and even what it looks like at each stage of its development. At that time there were no scientific research let alone instruments that would allow for that kind of discovery. I realised that this Qur'an must be the truth. I wanted to know more about Islam. I had so many questions and my friend at the centre was very patient with answering them and whenever he did not know the answer he would say that he did not know but would either find the answer for me or ask someone who knew. I finished reading the whole Qur'an in two nights and by the end of that I knew that there was no escaping the truth, this was the correct religion and I had no choice but to submit to the will of my Lord. I took my *shahadah* (testament of faith) two nights later in my home and I feel at peace with this decision and I know with full conviction that I have found the religion of Allah, the religion that the Lord who has created everything has legislated for his creation.

