

IMAN YUSUF, EX-CATHOLIC, USA (PART 2 OF 4)

Rating: 4.9

Description: Finding a major truth in her life through the mercy of glorious Lord.

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By: Iman Yusuf

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Further, I deduced that God's path had to be for all people, for all time. No one was special, no one was chosen, and no one was excluded. Neither those of us living, those who had gone before us, nor those who would come after.

I could not believe in a merciful God if He had not made his religion known to mankind since time began. Somehow, back at the beginning, from the creation of Adam, I knew there had to be a "secret". Something I had missed from the very beginning that was the key to it all.

There were problems in my family. My brother, younger than me, was already an alcoholic. He was mentally unstable and given to fits of rage. My mother however, always took his side in any confrontation. I was so extremely stressed. I had to drop out of college because I could not concentrate properly on my studies.

I also hated having to leave my daughter in daycare to attend classes. I wanted to care for her full time. My grandfather was getting worse by the day — early one morning after my mother had gone to work, he set his chair on fire by dropping a lit cigar between the cushions.

I thought I was dreaming when I heard the buzz of the smoke alarm going off in the house. Even the acrid smell of the smoke didn't awaken me. It was my daughter calling from the nursery "Mommy, Mommy" that finally got me up and out of bed.

I opened my bedroom door to a house full of smoke. I grabbed her from her crib, woke my brother, and we left the house. The fire department came but by that time my brother had already carried the smoldering chair into the yard.

He had to first move my grandfather out of the way, as he was sitting on the floor in front of it, trying to put the fire out by beating the chair with a yardstick. It was obvious my grandfather was now in need of more supervision than any of us could provide.

It was at that time my mother began to think seriously about putting him into a nursing home. And thus, my "services" would no longer be needed. She told me in no

uncertain terms I would have to move out. There was no room for me or my daughter in her life...

Without grandfather to worry about, and my brother out getting drunk most of the time, my mother found she would have more time to spend in privacy with her boyfriend. She felt it was her time to “live her life the way she wanted”.

I was petrified. My husband and I were still in the process of a divorce. I could not get welfare payments while still married to him. If I tried, they would have first gone after him for child support — something of which I hadn't seen a penny.

He threatened me if I tried to take child support from him, he would fight for custody of our daughter. His mistress was behind him, urging him on. I didn't know how I would survive unless I got a job. And that meant putting my child in daycare again.

It was agony to feel so alone and with no solution in sight. I was beginning to feel as if I was the only sane person amidst all the insanity, yet sometimes I even questioned that.

I felt like a square peg being hammered into a round hole. I just didn't seem to fit into the family after my grandmother died, and was slowly being pushed out of it entirely. In desperation, I turned to God yet again, begging for the answers to my problems.

One day I found myself alone in the house. My daughter was with her father and my mother and brother were off somewhere. In the silence of my bedroom, I felt a strong urge to pray. But how? I stood in the middle of my room not even knowing where to begin.

I stood as if listening, trying to find some guidance in this simple matter of how to pray. The idea came to me that to talk to God, I must be clean. As if overtaken from a force beyond myself, I headed to the bathroom for a shower. I bathed from head to toe.

Returning to my room, once again I stood, waiting for something — or Someone — to tell me what to do next. Again, I was guided towards the answer — I felt the need to cover myself — completely.

Donning a long-sleeved, ankle-length robe was not enough. I felt I had to cover my hair as well. I wrapped a long scarf around my head and stared into the mirror, feeling strangely comfortable with my appearance. And even though I had no idea what a Muslim was or how one dressed, there I was, basically wearing the hijab.

Anyone who knew about Islam would have thought I was a Muslim preparing for prayer. But glory to God, at that time, I still knew nothing about Islam.

So there I was dressed for prayer, yet still having no idea what to do next. I turned towards the window and just stood there, looking outside on that sunny day. What next? I didn't want to kneel down — that was too much like church.

I felt I needed to humble myself before Him. I wanted to be in a position of complete submission to my Creator (remember that word submission — it's important). The only idea in my mind was to lay flat on the ground.

Again that conjured up images of the church, when would-be priests and nuns taking their vows lay themselves out flat on the floor, arms extended at their sides, basically in the shape of a cross. As much as I wanted to totally humble myself in front of my Creator, I had no idea how to do it.

Finally the thought came to me that I must kneel down on my knees and put my face on the floor. Before I did that though, I realized the floor might not be clean enough, even though my bedroom was clean, I felt the need to prostrate on something I was sure was pure.

Beside me on my daughter's crib was a small blanket I had crocheted for her stroller. It was, I realized later, exactly the size of an Islamic prayer rug. And it was freshly washed! So, I took the blanket and laid it out in front of me on the carpeting.

And amazingly I would later learn that was the exact direction of the Kabah, the direction Muslims face for prayer. Satisfied that all was well, I dropped to my knees, then lowered my upper body onto my hands, and placed my face on the floor.

It brings tears to my eyes and a shiver runs through me as I remember that day. I picture myself in that room, in that position, and see that I was clearly dressed and praying like a Muslim. *Subhan Allah* (far removed is Allah from every imperfection) how merciful was God to guide me this way!

In that position, feeling as if I had finally connected with God, I cried and begged Him again and again to show me the way He wanted me to believe... the way He wanted me to live.

The tears would not stop. I finally felt as if I had found a major truth that day. I just needed to fill in the blanks. And thanks to the guidance and mercy of my glorious Lord, I would soon find all the answers.

Since my mother was still considering a nursing home for my grandfather, and I was still forced to look for a new place to live, Thanksgiving came upon us and I was yet at home.

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