

STEPHANIE, EX-CATHOLIC, SOUTH AFRICA (PART 6 OF 6)

Rating: 5.0

Description: Finally her joy returned.

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Published on: 11 Apr 2011

Last modified on: 01 Dec 2013

In the midst of these trials, I went to the mosque a second time and, after a week of having had practice, prayer came much easier and I wasn't nervous anymore. That evening, I felt so strengthened and said to God that I commit myself to Him as a Muslim; that I want to be faithful in this Path. Since then, I have felt new strength. I needed this strength, for I was about to go through a very grave trial which threatened to tear my heart in two.

I had just watched a TV program about *dhikrs* and felt such joy within. Then when I went to my mom's room, she told me that a woman, whom she didn't know, came up to her after church and told her that she had a dream about her – but it wasn't for her, it was for her younger daughter – me. This woman said that in the dream she was warned that I must stop what I am doing (that is, practicing Islam). Growing up Pentecostal (and being overprotected somewhat) I was terrified to do anything my mom did not approve of – or her church. (It was hard enough becoming Catholic; becoming Muslim was even more so!) This dream deeply disturbed me, because knowledge of it attacked my very depth where I am most vulnerable – my fear of Hell.

I started to get angry at my mother, who wasn't to blame, but she said she had to tell me or she felt that God would hold her accountable. This made me even more scared: was Islam really bad for me? How could it be; I was so happy and alive! I told this to my mom and she said just talk with God about it. So I went to my room, send text messages to two friends to make *dua*'s for me, and pleaded with God to help me. I said that if He wants me to go back to Christianity, I would be willing, but He must put that desire in me, or keep my desire to be Muslim if He wants me on this road. I submitted to Him completely (this in itself making me Muslim), sobbing, my heart torn in two at the idea of leaving Islam – and with resurging resentment towards the Pentecostals. I felt as if I was being emotionally manipulated by them. All my life it was an issue; hence I never felt secure to make choices unless others agreed with me. I felt all that they said was from God and it was hard to think that the devil could use them to attack me, but I really also felt this was the case now. I recited the *Fatiha*, *Shahada*, *Ta'awwudh* and another *du'a* over and over and over again until I calmed down.

The next day, still feeling miserable, I contacted a friend who fetched me and she took me to see the Imam at our Mosque. There was a learned sheikh who happened to be there too and they sat and listened to me as I related this trial, giving me advice. I was strengthened once more, and joy returned. This is what every revert needs – lots of support! If it wasn't for these wonderful brothers and sisters in Islam, I would have found it very hard to go on. More trials will inevitably come, but as I grow in Islam, my courage will be greater and this will indefinitely help me face these trials.

It is amazing how much of my life I had taken for granted or not noticed. Simple little things like whether what I eat (or eat from) is *halaal* or not, how I clean, groom, and purify myself, whether my clothes are clean when I pray, how I must constantly remember to step with my left foot into the lavatory and out with my right foot, and keep our dog out of my room...etc, etc. What a different life Islam brings, and how beautifully attentive to every detail of living! It is like being born again into a new life! And although it is presently a lonely journey, I must give my mom and dad credit for letting me have my freedom. Although they were unwilling to take me to Islamic places, they let me go with my friends. May God bless them for that; I am truly fortunate!

If there is one thing which I could ask Christians, it would be this: Why would there be another major religion and Scripture sent after Christianity, if the latter was the final revelation? Also: Why would the Quran be sent and preserved from corruption if the Bible was the final word of God? Finally: Why would God ask us to believe in something blindly and not use our reason? If beliefs are reasonable, then people could not deny them. These are truly witnesses to the truth of Islam!

I became Muslim because I felt Islam aligned with my heart and shows us the best way to live. It was truly my heart's choice. If I ever had to raise a family in this chaotic world, I wouldn't want to raise them any other way. In fact, if I couldn't raise them Muslim, I wouldn't want a family at all! Islam has set me free to be myself and to belong. It set me free from an inordinate attachments to images which had plagued me for 15 years, and simplified my life. It gave me new friends, who rallied around me, lending me books, and giving me embraces and encouragement, more books, a Quran, kitchen utensils and even their spare underscarves and robes – one so smart I would keep it for Eid! It removed my bitter hatred for Feminism, because it embraced and purified it, retaining the modesty and dignity, whilst letting women take her place at the side of men. It made me feel more loving, and less critical. It gave me a healthy and pure view of God. And although my journey is only now beginning, my life is finally aligned.

My hijab and my identity match. No more mistaking me now. I am a Muslim.
Alhamdulillah!!! (Praise be to God)

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