

ZAINAB, EX-CHRISTIAN, USA (PART 2 OF 2)

Rating: 3.7

Description: Zainab finds more in common with Muslim friends than Christians, and finally decides to read about Islam.

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I was also involved in Christian Student Ministries. I always preferred having Christian to non-Christian friends because we thought more alike. And, although I had many nice Christian girlfriends, I also felt a lack of closeness with them because of a difference in opinion as to what constituted Godly living, as far as, dating, alcohol, clubbing, etc. I was constantly asked if there was something wrong with me and made fun of when I turned down invitations to clubs, drinking, etc. It made me feel terrible inside.

One day, I met several Muslim sisters, and I felt an instant kinship, unlike any I had previously held. Like myself, they did not date, swear, drink, and the long list of other common vices. It was such a great feeling to meet others, with whom I held so much agreement about so many matters. I was surprised to learn that there was any other person on the planet so similar to myself. I had no idea such a creature existed.

Since this was the second time Muslims had been brought to my attention, I decided that I should at least investigate Islam, so I called a Mosque and went to it for direction. I was given a copy of the Quran, and so I started to read. Slowly my focus began to shift from Christianity to Islam. At first I stopped teaching the "Christ as Savior" part in my Sunday School lessons, and opted for morality lessons each week. However, soon I was not able to look the children in the eyes when I taught because I felt I was a hypocrite to them and their parents, who were expecting me to be a Christian role model.

Next, during my prayer, I felt that God was guiding me to stop teaching Sunday School, and go to different churches on Sundays and study church growth. For instance, when two churches are located on the same street, why does one have 50 members, and one have 5000 members? At the time it made no sense to me to do this, but I felt strongly urged by God to do this, and I had learned that if you are sure God is guiding you in a certain direction, and you are positive it is God and not your own instinct or desire, than you had better do it if you want to have the best life. I have ignored His guidance in the past and failed too many times. (More funny stories there for another time.)

I did not discuss Islam with anybody, because I felt I was betraying all my Christian family and friends, and I did not even discuss it with my Muslim girlfriends because I did not want my decision to have any pressure applied. Slowly, without my actually realizing it, I began to shift my beliefs from Christianity and towards Islam. It was not a quick or easy transformation, because my whole foundation of life was Christian based, yet, it, nonetheless, transformed.

One day, a Muslim friend at school had asked me what I enjoyed doing when I was not at school. I told her that my very favorite activity was teaching Sunday School. She asked me where I taught, and I told her I was not teaching anywhere. She asked, if that was my favorite thing to do, why I was not doing it? It was at this point that I realized that had changed, without my even realizing it had been taking place. I knew I would never go back to teaching Sunday School, because I was no longer Christian, but instead, maybe, possibly, Muslim. My beliefs were now solidly Islamic. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to admit to, I guess I was somehow hoping that I would eventually turn back to Christianity so that my life would be easier, but it had not. So I slowly replied to her, that I did not believe in Christianity any more, stunned and sad at this realization. It was very hard to utter those words. She asked why, so I explained that I had been reading the Quran and believed in its contents, as opposed to those contained in the Bible. She asked, "So, are you Muslim?" I said, "I do not actually know what defines someone as a Muslim." She asked me a number of questions about my beliefs, and then told me that I was a Muslim, and that I only needed to convert. I asked how a person converts, so she said you just need to repeat these words after me, and so I did. So, I experienced the death of my Christianity, and the birth of my Islam in a few minutes time. Needless to say, this moment is etched into my brain permanently, InshaAllah [God-willing].

I was so excited, but I had to be positive, that what I thought had happened actually did happen. I did not want to make a wishy-washy decision about this conversion, i.e., be Muslim one day, and Christian the next, Muslim the day after, and back to Christianity, so I made appointments with four Imams to find out exactly what it meant to be Muslim, concluding with the same realization that I was Muslim.

In the following month, I was overwhelmed with the sense that I was home. I felt that what I had been looking for all my life had been found, and for the first time I was home where I belonged. Often, I feel as though I was always a Muslim, but God decided that I best served His interest by being born into a Christian environment, as it places me in a position to serve Him from a much different angle than the born and raised Muslim. There are many things I have to learn from my Muslim brothers and sisters, yet there are many areas where Muslims can learn from those raised as Christian. InshaAllah, I hope I never forget the day that I converted, because once I did, the world suddenly looked different as if everything was suddenly in color. I know that sounds so silly, but that is the only way I know to describe the change I experienced. Things looked different, smelled different, sounded different, etc. I really cannot put it into words.

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