

MARCELA, EX-MORMON, EL SALVADOR

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My story begins in El Salvador. I was born in San Salvador, El Salvador, and at the age of 12 (19 years ago), I migrated to Australia with my mother, my brother and sister.

From the moment we arrived in Australia, I remember visiting different Christian churches of differing sects as we used to do back in El Salvador. Unfortunately, none were solid enough for us to remain in. I was originally baptised in the Catholic Church and as a teenager I found that being a Catholic was too comfortable. I began looking for more guidance in following God's commandments.

At the age of 15, my family and I started to attend "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" commonly known as the "Mormons." My auntie has been a long time member and we found it was making a lot more sense than many other Christian teachings we had heard. The only thing was that along with the good things came many that didn't seem to have a logical explanation at all, like the fact that there are prophets inspired with revelations within the church. So I just thought that with faith, one day I would understand them and they would make sense. A few months later I was baptised. A few years went by and I really liked the Church but once again I found that I was confused at the fact that they didn't seem to think there was anything wrong with young people enjoying the nightlife as long as you didn't drink, smoke and make any bad choices.

As a teenager, could you tell me how it could be possible to enjoy all of this but yet keep away from temptation? Staying away from a lot of temptation was kind of hard, so I was "inactive" as they say for a while.

At the age of 19 I met a guy who now happens to be my husband. He is a Muslim. He was not a practicing Muslim at the time, but what I liked about him was the fact that he had principles and loved God dearly. We talked about marriage and concluded that we wanted to be together. At the time, being an inactive Christian and he being a Muslim, we came to a mutual agreement to be married only through the marriage registry to avoid any preference of our respective religious beliefs.

As the years went by, I actually thought about going back to church – any church, as my love for Jesus was there and I felt the need to be close to God. But the thought would soon go away when I thought about one of the main reasons I had stopped attending church in the first place. There was too much bickering, back stabbing and criticising. This has always been going on in the many churches that I attended, which I found made people forget the real purpose of being there. Going to church felt more like a Sunday social event rather than worshipping God.

I can honestly say that, at that time, Islam was of no interest to me and believe me, becoming a Muslim would never ever had been an option on my “preference list” of ways to get close to God. There was no interest whatsoever, until recently.

A few months ago I had a dream that really shook me up. I felt quite scared and would wake up praying seeking guidance from God.

Two weeks later I had another dream very similar to the first, so I woke up saying in Spanish “¡En el nombre de Dios todo poderoso y todo piadoso!” (in the name of God all powerful and all merciful).

I prayed and asked God for guidance, to help me be close to Him and help me do His will and to show me how or what I needed to do to be closer to Him. I continually asked Him if he wanted me to go to church to worship Him, to please guide me to the correct one. But more importantly, I asked Him to make it clear for me to understand how and in which way He wanted me to get close to Him. I also asked Him to make it so clear that my heart could not deny any of His will.

Within that week I had a third dream. I was in the car heading up towards a very high mountain. I could not tell if I was the driver or a passenger. But as the car almost reached the top of the mountain, I had a really bad feeling that something bad was going to happen. I looked out from the car window and noticed that I had reached the highest point of the mountain and could see a blue lake at the very bottom. It was so tiny that you could barely see the blue water in it. In that split second the car lost control. I tried very hard to gain control of the steering wheel but it was impossible. I remember thinking how death had come my way and that there was no chance or hope of me surviving and that as soon as the car went over the cliff, I was going to die.

I felt so afraid and frustrated and really scared that there was no chance of salvation. I was actually facing death.

I began to feel extremely stressed from fear as the car was falling down towards the lake in the distance. As the car was falling, I then heard a loud voice echoing through the mountains. It was so loud that it made the mountains shake and tremble. The voice was loud but beautiful. It was so beautiful it gave me inner peace and made me lose the fear of dying but more importantly, what gave me this peace were the words being said.

I then heard the voice for the second time. This time it was carrying on for a longer period. A bright orange, yellow light then appeared between the mountains – it was the sunrise. As the car was about to hit the ground, a road appeared out of nowhere. It was the road to my salvation. But what had really saved me were the words spoken by this voice through the mountains, those words were

“Allah Akbar.” The call for prayer, the Adhan, is called out by the muezzin in the mosque.

I woke up instantly and was so emotional that I could not stop crying. I think I seriously cried for a good two hours, but it was the most beautiful feeling ever. I couldn't even talk and my husband kept asking what was wrong. I told him my dream. I then told him I wanted to read the QURAN. I felt this was a message from God wanting me to seek knowledge.

The next morning I started to look into Islam. It's so funny, for the last 13 years I had been surrounded by so many Muslims and was never aware of the true beauty of Islam. I remember my brother in law, a practicing Muslim, explaining the divinity of God alone and the importance of worshipping God alone and that no other being should be worshipped along with Him or instead of Him, but my heart was completely sealed. I was never interested in knowing anything about it. In fact I would get offended and at times I felt like telling him how misguided he was. I was convinced that it was not the right religion – definitely not the one for me anyway.

When I was seeking knowledge, I investigated so much that I learned quite a lot. I even began emailing people with knowledge from the other side of the world. I discovered how Islam is not only for Middle Eastern people or Arabs as most people think. Islam is for everyone regardless of their race, nationality or ethnic background. It's for those who truly love Jesus' (peace be upon him) teachings just the way I do. It is for those who love all the servants, messengers and prophets of God, and most importantly for those who acknowledge the importance of the benefits that follow when you truly worship God alone.

Alhamdulillah (All praise is to God) I was so fascinated about the treasure I had just discovered, the beautiful truth, the evidence and benefits of the teachings of Islam. I read the history of Christianity and I studied a few verses from the Bible. I read not only from the Islamic side but the real history of all of these beliefs that had so blindfolded me into following for so many years.

Who would have thought that hearing the call for prayer not only saved me in my dream but was the truth and salvation I had been asking for in reality? God had answered my prayers.

I put my spiritual feelings aside and looked at the evidence that I had in front of me, and my conclusion was this:

“Ashhadu Alla Ilaha Illa Allah Wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammad un rasulullah”

“I bear witness that there is no true god but God, that none has the right to be worshipped but God alone, (and that God has neither partner nor son) and I bear witness that Muhammad, may the blessings and mercy of God be upon him, was a true Prophet (and messenger) sent by God.”

Now in 2010, after 13 years of being married to my husband I have reverted into Islam. My husband is still shocked that I have reverted into Islam, so is his family and of course mine too. But when you know that all that you are doing is for the sake of Allah, and no one but him, it feels so right.

Some of my closest friends were very supportive as they know that Islam has given me inner peace and humility. Others think I have become an extremist just because I pray 5 times a day and have changed my dress code completely Alhamdulillah. (All praise be to God)

When I started to pray, I remember feeling so strange at first but it seemed so right at the same time. Islam is not just a Religion but a way of life.

Alhamdulillah, wearing a Hijab now makes me feel so free and so respected. People who don't know me automatically get the impression that I'm Middle Eastern and when they find out I'm Latin American, they get shocked as a Latina Muslim is odd here in Australia. I still have not met one. They ask me why the dramatic change, but Alhamdulillah, it's a good thing because it gives me the chance to actually give them a small explanation of the beauty and wonders of Islam. Wearing the Hijab gives me a sense of pride because I feel I have contributed to the good values most of us have forgotten. The Hijab is not a responsibility, it's a right given to me by my Creator who knows us best. I definitely feel like I'm contributing to today's society in stopping women from being oppressed by having to dress or behave in a certain way to fit in. I cannot say how happy I am, Alhamdulillah, that Allah has guided me into His path and I know that we plan things but Allah is the best planner. Just like the Aya (verse) from the Quran says:

“He it is Who gives life and causes death. And when He decides upon a thing He says to it only: “Be!” and it is.” (Quran 40:68)

In just a matter of weeks, I knew that this was the right path. My heart felt the complete opposite of the rejection I had for Islam. Reverting into Islam helps me to strive to be by His side in the hereafter—my life in this earth is not for ever. Therefore I have to strive to be a good servant of God to be in Paradise one day. The happiness I get here is not eternal, but if I return to my Creator's side I will have eternal happiness.

Please ask God alone with full submission for guidance and seek knowledge because you will be rewarded by our Creator.

My name is Marcela, I was born in El Salvador and I'm very proud to be a Muslima. I'm truly grateful to Allah for guiding me to revert into Islam. Those that Allah guides can never be misguided. Insha'Allah (God willing) my story will be an encouragement to bring more Latinos into the true beauty of Islam

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