

KRISTIN, EX-CATHOLIC, USA (PART 1 OF 2)

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Description: A former Christian discusses the things she found illogical with Christianity and her interest in Judaism.

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By: Kristin

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My search for a religion began in high school when I was 15 or 16 yrs old. I had been associating with a bad group of people whom I thought were my friends, but in time I realized these people were losers. I saw what direction their lives were heading in, and it wasn't a good one. I didn't want these people to have any affect on my success for the future, so I cut myself off from them completely. It was hard in the beginning because I was alone without friends. I started to look for something to associate myself with and something that I could rely on and base my life on....something that no person could ever use to destroy my future with. Naturally, I turned to seeking God. Finding out who God was and what the truth was wasn't easy, however. What was the truth anyway?! This was my primary question as I began my search for a religion.

In my own family, there have been many shifts of religion. My family has Jews and a few kinds of Christianity in it, and now, Alhumdulillah (all praise is for God) Islam.

When my Mom and Dad were married, they felt the need to decide what faith to bring there children up in. Since the Catholic Church was really the only option for them (our town just has 600 people) they both converted to Catholicism and raised my sister and I as Catholics. Going back through the stories of conversions in my own family, it seems that they are all conversions of convenience. I don't think they were truly seeking God, but just manipulating religion as the means to achieving an end. Even after all these changes in the past, religion was never of extreme importance for my Mom, Dad, sister or I. If anything, ours was the family you saw at church during Christmas time and Easter. I always felt that religion was something separate from my life, 6 days a week or life and one day a week for church, on the rare occasions when I did go. In other words, I wasn't conscious of God or how to live according to His teachings on a day to day basis.

I didn't accept some Catholic practices including:

- 1) Confessions to a priest: I thought why couldn't I just confess to God without having to go through a man to get to Him?

2) The "Perfect" Pope- How can a mere man, not even a prophet, be perfect?!

3) The worship of saints- wasn't this a direct violation of the first commandment? Even after 14 years of forced Sunday school attendance, the answers I received to these questions and others were, "You just have to have faith!!" Should I have faith because someone TOLD me to?! I thought faith should be based on the truth and answers that appealed to logic, I was interested to find some.

I didn't want the truth of my parents, or friends, or anyone else. I wanted God's truth. I wanted every idea I held to be true to me because I believed it entirely, heart and soul. I decided if I was to find the answers to my questions, I would have to search with an objective mind, and I began to read...

I decided that Christianity was not the religion for me. I didn't have anything personal with Christians, but I found that the religion itself contained many inconsistencies, especially when I read the Bible. In the Bible, the inconsistencies I came across and the things that made no sense at all were so numerous that I actually felt embarrassed that I had never questioned them before or even noticed them!

Since some people in my family are Jewish, I started to research Judaism. I thought to myself the answer may be there. So for about a year I did research on anything concerning Judaism, I mean in DEPTH research!! Everyday I tried to read and learn something (I still know about Orthodox Jewish kosher laws!). I went to the library and checked out every book on Judaism within a two month period, looked up info. On the internet, went to the synagogue, talked with other Jewish people in nearby towns and read the Torah and Talmud. I even had one of my Jewish friends come visit me from Israel! I thought maybe I had found what I was looking for. Yet, the day I was supposed to go the synagogue and meet with the rabbi about possibly making my conversion official, I backed out. I honestly don't know what stopped me from leaving the house that day, but I just stopped as I was about to go out the door and went back in and sat down. I felt like I was in one of those dreams where you try to run but everything is in slow motion. I knew the rabbi was there and waiting for me, but I didn't even call to say I was coming. The rabbi didn't call me either. Something was missing...

After learning that Judaism was also not the answer, I thought (also after much pressure from my parents) to give Christianity one more try. I had, as I said, a good background in the technicalities from my years of Sunday schools, but I was more concerned with finding the truth behind the technicalities. What was the beauty of it all, where was the security of it and how I could accept it logically? I knew if I were to seriously consider Christianity, Catholicism was out. I went to every other Christian church in my town, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Latter Day Saints (Mormon), and non-denominational churches. I didn't find what I was looking for - answers!! It wasn't the environment of the people which turned me away; it was the discrepancies between denominations which disturbed me. I believed there had to be one right way, so how could I possibly chose the "right" denomination? In my estimation it was impossible and unfair for a Compassionate and Merciful God to leave mankind with such a choice. I was lost...

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