

## **I was a born and raised Catholic/Christian**

new muslim,convert to islam,convert to shia,

I recently came to Islam at the young age of 16. When you're 16, you are right in the middle: not yet an adult but certainly not a child. Some people believe as teenagers, we don't make smart decisions or know what we want at this age. But I'm not like most teenagers. For once in my life, I knew what I wanted and I knew that this was going to be the greatest, smartest amazing decision I'll ever make. In all honesty, I don't believe I made this decision. Allah [swt] made this decision. He put me on this path to Islam and He is patiently guiding me throughout it all.

I was a born and raised Catholic/Christian. I celebrated every little holiday known to Christianity. I made all my sacraments. At the time of these sacraments, I was still a young child & did what my parents told me to do in church. All I knew was that I'd be getting a lot of gifts and a huge party afterwards. I didn't really care for what was "really" going on. From the young age of 5 until I was about 14, my mother enrolled me in Religious Education. It was every Wednesday from 1:45 to 3:30pm. I was supposed to sit and learn about God, Jesus & The Holy Spirit ... but I wasn't really interested. I was also a difficult child. The teachers I had couldn't handle me, and I don't mean behavior wise ... I mean, my questions. When you're a young child, you question EVERYTHING. And you don't want some dumb answer. You want to be answered as if the person you asked is talking to someone mature. Well, I never received that. I'd hear stories and ask: "Why did God do that?" or "Why did Jesus do this?" and "What really is the Holy Spirit?" I'd get the same dumb answers: "Because God said so.", "Because God/Jesus can do that." and "Because it just is. Don't ask questions/don't question God." I wasn't questioning God, oh no. I'd never do that. God knows what He is doing. I was questioning the story I was just told and my beliefs, ever since a young age.

When you are born and raised into a religion, and your immediate family isn't so religious ... it is very hard to believe or follow that religion on a daily basis. I've tried to follow Christianity. But it just wasn't working for me. By the time I was 15 and entering high school, I

basically gave up on a religion all together. I did believe that there was God, but that's pretty much it.

High school opened up my eyes and made me realize a whole new world. Not only did I come face to face with obstacles I never thought I would, friendships, relationships, boys, how to juggle schoolwork - friends & family all at once ... but my eyes opened up to Islam, more than ever. I've seen many women in a hijab before and I never understood what it was for. I was kind of used to it so I never really questioned it. My freshman year of high school, **I befriended a girl named Nour**, who at the time, didn't wear hijab. In my next year, my sophomore year, we became very close and I began liking a Muslim boy. The only thing I knew was that he wasn't really supposed to date outside his religion. So I became interested in Islam just for him *[Stupid girl, I was. But hey, I was a young - immature teenage girl ]*. I began asking Nour random questions: **Who is Allah? What is Islam? What are these Pillars you are trying to explain to me?** Then I realized, I wasn't interested in Islam for him anymore... I was asking these questions for myself.

Months passed, I still liked this boy. He told me I'd be going to meet his mother and she is very religious. I told Nour and she warned me about not wearing tight or revealing clothing and to cover my head. So I said "You want me to wear a hat ... in front of his mother? What if we eat? Then what? Yea, you're real smart. Nice goin', Nour!" She gave me a look that said "Quiet, I'm not done ..." She explained hijab to me. That's what REALLY hooked me on to Islam, believe it or not. I finally understood what girls in my school were wearing on their head and the whole meaning of hijab. I never did meet his mom officially so I didn't have to wear a hijab. But I wanted to, all of a sudden. In the middle of my Chemistry Lab, I asked Nour if the next day, I can try hijab. She said sure. I was happy and anxious for tomorrow to come . TOMORROW FINALLY CAME!, and I ran to Chemistry Lab and waited. Nour and one of her friends came in. She pulled out the hijab. She told me to put the underscarf on first and that her friend will wrap the hijab for me. At the time, no one knew how interested I was in Islam ... so I told her friend "Please, don't think I'm mocking you or making fun of you or anything in that nature. That's not what I want to do. I just ... I don't know ... want to try it, I guess?" I wore the hijab for 3 whole periods in school.

When I took it off, I felt weird, as if I didn't want to take it off.

The rest of the year continued and so did high school. I started making more Muslim friends, friends of Nour's, friends of mine and I'd ask questions. I don't remember the one question I asked to my friend Lubna, but she told me this great story about a prophet. She was talking about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and at the time, I had no idea] and his wife and about Allah [swt]. Then she told me "If you don't believe me, look it up in the Qur'an." That lead to "What's the Qur'an?" and that lead to me saying how Islam has all the answers and proofs that Christianity doesn't.

I was now in my Junior year of high school, I had more Muslim friends and I still didn't have a belief. But I loved Islam. It was Ramadan 2008, and my friend Sarah was fasting. One day, I was talking to her about my beliefs and how much I love Islam. That's when I really came out & said: "Sarah, I want to convert." She told me how her mother is a convert just like I would be. She said that if I fasted these last 2 or 3 days before the end of Ramadan, it will help clear away my sins. I fasted for the whole weekend. Sarah's mother, sister, Sarah & I went to the mall to get our minds off of food. Her mother spoke to me about her conversion. I was absolutely convinced that I wanted to be a Muslim.

The next day, I admitted it again to my friend Dania. She is extremely religious so she was just bouncing off the walls with happiness. I can't even count how many times she must have hugged me! Her reaction made me know I was doing the right thing for me. She promised me she'll walk me through EVERYTHING, I can ask her anything and that she will be my personal teacher of Islam.

I started researching on how to become a Muslim. I held off on my shahada for about 3 months. Then I joined a forum, that's when I was told not to [And Alhamdulillah, I didn't]. One night, I was sitting on my bed, researching and reading and more researching. I wanted to be educated before I became a Muslim. Every page I clicked on to read about, had "Ash-hadu anla ilaha illal-Lahu Wahdahu la Sharika Lahu wa-ash-hadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa rasuluhu" written somewhere within the beginning lines or at the top. I became a bit freaked out, I'm

not going to lie. But I knew that this was a sign from Allah [swt], telling me not to hold back. It clearly meant I must say this now. And it was funny because earlier that day, I recieved my first Qur'an in the mail. So I knew I had to declare my faith. And I did.

When I said those words, something came over me. I felt very light, very happy and joyous. And so many other things I really can't explain. Compeltely overjoyed. I felt as if someone was smiling down on me or I had a blue sky with sunshine following me around! I performed ghusl and immediately texted Sarah and Dania. From that night on, I've been trying to live my life as a good Muslim. I don't have the money to change my whole, entire wardrobe ... but I'm dealing with it now and knowing what to wear. I've been very anxious to wear hijab. Going into college, I shall wear hijab insha'Allah. I read the Qur'an daily. I just recieved a new one from Dania with the Arabic lettering, transliteration and English words for each surrah. My friend Lubna has invited me over countless times & I'd get hijabs from her and learn a lot. Dania has, also. Between t he both of my friends, I have learned so many new things. I have also been invited to many Ramadan 2009 dinners by their parents!

My parents and my family do not know about my reversion. I know I need to tell them soon but I'm scared of reactions. Insha'Allah, they'd be happy that I found belief in something instead of being a non-believer in anything. It gets tough being the only Muslim in a Catholic household, especially when it comes to fasting. But Allah [swt] will certainly help me out! Being a Muslim girl has changed my whole life and has made it wonderful. I am so very thankful for this path.

Thanks, everyone!