

Ms. Helena

Growing up in a supposedly Christian, but in fact non-religious family, I never heard the name of God being uttered, I never saw anyone pray and I learned early on that the only reason for doing things was to benefit yourself. We celebrated Christmas, Easter, Midsummer and All Saints Day and even though I never knew why, I never questioned it. It was part of being Swedish. As a Christian (protestant) you can go through something called confirmation when you are about 15 years of age. This is meant to be a class to take to learn about your religion and then confirm your belief. I wanted to do this to learn about Christianity so I was signed up for this 3-week camp which was a combined golf-and confirmation camp. In the mornings we had classes with a senile priest and our thoughts wandered off to the upcoming game of golf. I didn't learn anything. I went through high-school with a breeze. I felt that nothing could harm me. My grades were the best possible and my self confidence was at the top. Religion never came to my mind. I was doing just fine. Everyone I knew that was "religious" had found "the light" after being either depressed or very sick and they said that they needed Jesus in their life to be able to live on. I felt that I could do anything that I put my mind to and that religion only was an excuse to hide from reality.

In college, I started thinking about the meaning of life. I had a hard time accepting any religion because of all the wars and problems relating to them. I made up my own philosophy. I was convinced that some form of power created everything but I couldn't say that it was God. God for me was the Christian image of an old man with a long white beard and I knew that an old man could not have created the universe! I believed in a life after death because I just couldn't believe that justice wouldn't be served. I also believed that everything happens for a reason. Due to my background and schooling I was fooled to believe in Darwin's theory, since it is taught as a fact. The more I thought about the meaning of life, the more depressed I became, and I felt that this life is like a prison. I lost most of my appetite for life.

I knew a lot about Buddhism and Hinduism since I was interested in these things in school. We learned in detail about their way of thinking and worship. I didn't know anything about Islam. I remember my high-school textbook in Religion showing how Muslims pray. It was like a cartoon strip to show the movements but I didn't learn about the belief. I was fed all the propaganda through mass media and I was convinced that all Muslim men oppressed their wives and hit their children. They were all violent and didn't hesitate to kill.

In my last year of college I had a big passion for science and I was ready to hit the working scene. An international career or at least some international experience was needed to improve my English and get an advantage over fellow job hunters. I ended up in Boston and was faced with four Muslims. At that point I didn't know who Muhammad was and I didn't know that Allah was the same god as "God". I started asking questions and reading books, but most importantly, I started socializing with Muslims. I never had any friends from another country before (let alone another religion). All the people that I knew were Swedish. The Muslims that I met were wonderful people. They accepted me right away and they never forced anything on me. They were more generous to me than my own family. Islam seemed to be a good system of life and I acknowledged the structure and stability it provided but I was not convinced it was for me. One of my problems was that science contradicted religion (at least from what I knew about Christianity). I read the book "The Bible, The Quran and Science" by Maurice Bucaille and all of my scientific questions were answered! Here was a religion that was in line with modern science. I felt excited but it was still not in my heart.

I had a period of brain storming when I was thinking over all the new things I learnt. [I felt my heart softening and I tried to imagine a life as a Muslim. I saw a humble life full of honesty, generosity, stability, peace, respect and kindness.](#) Most of all I saw a life with a **MEANING**. I knew I had to let go of my ego and humble myself before something much more powerful than myself. Twice, I was asked the question "What is stopping you from becoming Muslim?" The first time I panicked and my brain

was blocked. The second time I thought for awhile to come up with any excuse. There was none so I said the shahada, Al-Hamdulillah.

Love,
Helena