

Sahar's Testimony, No Fear in Love



I was born and raised in a Muslim home in Saudi Arabia and speak both English and Arabic. The Arabic language is very fascinating, and Arab people are very proud of the tongue of the Arabs. Muslims also believe it's a heavenly language, for Allah speaks in Arabic, that's why it's sacred to them. Also, it's written from right to left. There is a famous Arabic saying: "The beauty of man lies in the eloquence of his tongue."

I have three sisters and two brothers. I am the youngest among my sisters, and I was daddy's little girl. We used to spend a lot of time together as a family, playing games, going to the beach, reading books. Being privileged to grow up in a loving family, I had a wonderful childhood until my father passed away when I was seven. The death of my dad was so hard on me; I didn't understand what "death" meant. When I asked my mom, "Where did my father go?" she replied, "He went on a long journey to God."

I was angry with God not just because he took my dad away, but I believed he destroyed our loving family and took my joy away. After my father's death, we moved to my maternal grandfather's house. I thought a lot about God and wondered why God would take my dad away? I remember doubting whether God really existed, and one night I asked him, "If you are there somewhere, help me wake up at 9:00 AM". And I did! For the first time I thought God might truly be real.

My mom's family are very strict Muslims, while my father wasn't at all. Let me give you a few examples: I was fully covered at the age of seven, I had a curfew to leave the house, I couldn't even order food by



phone. My father was a sweet loving man, who valued women. It was very hard to adjust to this new environment, the loss of my father and the harsh teachings of Islam were also very hard to tolerate.

I worked so hard in school and when I was nine, I came home excited that I got very good grades. My mom was so happy and proud of me. I went to one of my uncles to show him my certificate, how great my grades were, and he told me, "That's not what matters, you will get married someday and you will stay home at your husband's house. Being a good woman to your husband is what matters". He, too, broke my heart and shattered

my joy! I took it as a confrontational situation and became angry and aggressive.

I worked hard to prove myself and be someone. My dream was to leave Saudi and find the freedom I deserved as a woman, I wanted a better education, the educational system in Saudi is so bad for women. Men has better teachers and better schools. I even wished if that I weren't a woman.

Finally, that day came in 2006. I took the opportunity to come to the United States as a part of a Saudi Government scholarship program to leave behind the obvious challenges and narrow perspectives that women face in Saudi, and to obtain a higher quality of education.

Leaving Saudi, was like a dream to me. I felt like a prisoner leaving a jail and life had just begun. I was desperate for freedom from depression and the hopeless life I had! Culturally, I struggled to find Halal meat (which is similar to kosher where animals are killed the Islamic way) . But the most moving cultural transformation I underwent was finally deciding to take off my headscarf in 2009 and to dress in the American style. The transformation was very tough. In Islam, the point of wearing the headscarf is to be "modest", and the way I dressed after I took my headscarf off was considered very modest in American culture.



I still didn't feel free though. I knew there was something missing in my life; but I didn't know what it was and how to fulfill that need, I was afraid of God, afraid of death, afraid of hell. I read many books: "self-improvement" books, books about wisdom and famous sayings about successful and powerful people.

I also dated all kinds of crazy controlling Muslim men. Well, that didn't last for a long time! I knew they didn't value me as a woman, and they would never let me be the successful woman I wanted to be. I was longing for a wise man who knew my worth and would encourage me to accomplish something in life.

A few years earlier I had met a Christian lady named Cynthia on campus. She was like a glimmer of light in my life, pointing me to the truth. We became very close friends. We tutored each other in Arabic and English. Soon she started sharing her faith in Christ with me. I went to church with her many times, but I didn't really understand the idea of salvation since in Islam, Jesus is a prophet not God.



I graduated in 2011 from CSU, Chico with my degree in (MIS), Management and Information systems. and I began looking for a job in the US. After tasting the freedom in America, I didn't want to go back to my old life in Saudi. Cynthia offered me an internship at her father's company in Boulder, CO. She also arranged for me to live at Horizons International, an international student center, which is also a ministry to Muslims. I moved there in October of 2011, where I met Christian believers from a Muslim background, and they actually believed Jesus is God.

It was shocking for me to see people from different Arab countries leaving Islam and becoming Christians. They shared their testimonies with me, and I was amazed about God's work in their lives. This made me more openminded to ask questions and learn more about Christianity. One time I was invited to a Bible study at one of the Muslim convert's homes, and I loved that day. It was like heaven to me. They started their meeting with prayer requests, and then they prayed for each other genuinely. The love I experienced there touched my heart. We don't have love like that in Islam.

Out of curiosity I opened a Bible, and I began reading about the resurrection. The Bible said: "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:23-33). This description of heaven was lovely and holy to me.



The Islamic concept of heaven was totally different. It is totally unholy. Heaven in Islam is basically just for men; supposedly there will be 72 virgin women that the men can enjoy, and rivers of wine. If a woman made it to heaven, she will be one of the 72 virgins he has, and Islam teaches most women are going to hell because women are evil and make men sin!

The heaven I wanted to go to, is the one TRUE heaven. My spirit was happy with the eternity Christians looked forward to; but even so, my mind was telling me “You are Muslim, and it is better to die a Muslim.” The three months I spent at Horizons International passed by very fast, and I moved back to California. I realized I missed my time with those “crazy” Christians, they were very nice people, but I believed they were worshiping a man.

Everything they shared with me started coming back in my mind. I started questioning my faith in Islam and I watched a lot of testimonies of people leaving Islam and becoming Christians through dreams, visions, and from reading the Bible. I was thinking to myself, “This God is really alive, the God I worship is far, distant and never talked to me!”

I left Islam and started looking for the One and Only living God. I felt empty and purposeless; life was meaningless, I didn’t know God and why I was here on this Earth. I remember Christians kept telling me “Jesus loves you”, I didn’t know what that meant and why would He love me? I decided to figure out more about this Jesus who loves me. I started going to two services, Arabic and English churches every week. I started reading the Bible to see who Jesus really is, and what he said about himself. Then I came to a conclusion that Jesus was just a human like me, he wasn’t God!

However, soon after, I called my friend Cynthia to share with her that I left Islam and I was reading the Bible to learn more about Christianity. She introduced me to one of her friends, and I asked him; “Why do you worship Jesus as God?”

It appeared to me at the time, that Jesus was just a human being like you and me. If you tell me he is only a prophet, I will be a Christian right now, because I loved Jesus’ teaching.” He explained to me that Jesus has two natures, a Godly nature and a human nature. If Jesus wasn’t God, there is no point in Christianity. No man can save us, only God. We are all sinners and need a Savior, Jesus saves us from our sin by dying on the cross and raising again. Sin is something we are born with, because sin entered the world through one man, Adam. Sin leads to death; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned and fall short of a perfect and Holy God.



I told him, “OK! If God wants to save you he can saves us just like that! Why would God be a baby? And then people killed God? That makes no sense to me!”

Then he, Nabeel Qureshi, gave me an example. He said: “Just imagine yourself dressing up to go to a very important meeting, and you see your kid is falling in a hole. Would you go help him?” I replied, “Of course!” He asked me, “Why?” I said, “Because I love the child!” He asked me, “Would you send

somebody to help him since you are already dressed up?" I said, "No, I would go myself." He told me, "That's what Jesus did!"

I loved his analogy; I couldn't say anything after that. He also told me, If you are a sinner and you are willing to do that for your child, how much more God will do for you?

I went home, and started reading the Bible again. This time I was looking for God's love. I was desperate for His love for me. I lifted my eyes up and prayed to Jesus for the first time. I said, "Jesus, if you are God, please show me something."



I went back to my Bible and I read, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." I John 4:18. As soon as I read this verse, all the fear I had melted away. The Presence of God was so powerful in the room, I even though he was there with me. I thought he was behind me. I turned back, I didn't see Him physically, but I knew He answered me. After a six-year journey, I gave my heart and life to the Lord Jesus in July of 2012.

I finally realized that Jesus is God. The love of the Lord Jesus captivates my heart, and I am no longer who I was. In Islam, God was distant, but in Christianity, He is loving, always with me and His spirit now lives in me. Jesus' love came to me, and I felt His power, which gave me joy and peace. I had never experienced this before! Jesus died in my place for my sin, was buried, and rose again the 3rd day! He conquered the grave and gave me a new life through The Holy Spirit who dwells in me and gives me a new heart and a new Identity. The Bible says: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

I didn't know that the God I was angry with (for a long time) was my Heavenly Father and every good gift I have comes from His hand. It was Jesus I was searching for. The Lord Jesus is everything I need. He gives me HOPE in life and continues to transform me. I no longer need to work hard to prove myself. Jesus already died in my place to redeem me. He paid it all!

I know now I am a daughter of God the most high! I have more joy than I have ever thought possible, and I know my future is safe in His hands. Even though I had strong Islamic values, and Islam was deeply ingrained in me and my thinking, now by the grace of God, I am set free from my past.



I am no longer afraid of, God, dying or hell. I know I am going to go to heaven. I am not one of the women Islam said are going to hell. I am a "new creation" in Christ. The Bible says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is (or she is) a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17. I am entering a new dimension of experience and understanding, with new horizons to

explore. The Lord is leading in a totally new direction. I AM FREE!

Sahar, 2014

Note: For security, some names and some images have been changed.