

A Muslim at Thirteen!

Description: Eesa Ashby's acceptance of Islam at a young age, what drew him to Islam, and also his experiences as a new Muslim

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Eesa was only thirteen years old when he became a Muslim. Before Islam, when he was still a ten-year-old child he had a normal life of going to school and hanging out with his friends.

Then in secondary school his cousin, who was fifteen years old at the time, embraced Islam and she used to come around to the house and tell his family about Islam. The family members all had different opinions and there were many debates but he was quiet and simply listened.

One day when he was at home she called and asked him to come to her house which was about a 15 minutes walk away. This was his aunt's house. His cousin showed him the Quran and asked him if he knew what it was, at which he said he didn't. She explained that as the Christians have the Bible, the Muslims have the Qur'an.

He admitted that he did not know anything about Islam or Muslims. He only knew what his mother had taught him about Christianity. His cousin spoke to him about Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad saying that he was the Messenger from Allah and that he had brought the Quran from Almighty Allah. She clarified that Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, did not write it; rather it was a revelation revealed to him.

It was the scientific miracles in the Quran that caught his attention. What stood out for him, were the facts and figures mentioned in the Quran. It was simply amazing to read the details mentioned in the Quran about the formation of the baby in the mother's womb, the stars, the oceans and how science today acknowledges all these facts. He was blown away by this; he didn't know that there were people long ago who accurately talked about the stars and so on.

Praying five times a day, following the dietary code, and the dress code wasn't difficult. After his cousin explained the basics of Islam, he started reading about prayers and the dress code and he decided that he would concentrate on one thing at a time.

He began his journey into Islam by starting with the most important thing, the prayers. He had basic books with Arabic transliterations and diagrams of stick figures. Since then, a lot more material has become available to help new Muslims.

At first, he did not tell anyone he had become a Muslim because he felt he was not ready to face the comments and criticism. Even at this point, he did not know exactly

what Islam meant.

As the years passed and he travelled from country to country, he was fortunate to have studied in Egypt and Yemen where he learnt about the vastness and mercy of Islam. But back then, he thought he would keep his conversion secret and to himself for a while. He did not know anyone else who was Muslim except his cousin. He got books on monotheism from the local Islamic book shop and books on prayer, fasting, the life of the Prophet and the Companions as well as the four rightly-guided Caliphs.

After three or four months he attended a talk at the house of Abdur-Raheem Green in South London. The talks were in the front room of the house and everyone was sitting cramped up but listened attentively and it was there that he learnt many of the basics of Islam.

Growing up a Muslim got Eesa through school and college without getting into any trouble! He noted that it is very easy to get involved in the wrong crowd but all he could think of when he was young was if he had performed ablution to be ready for prayer or when the next prayer was due. Such concerns filled his mind while everyone else at school or in his neighborhood were talking about a rave or other insignificant things.

When he turned fifteen, he decided to speak to others about his conversion to Islam. He had a friend who also became a Muslim and the two of them were in their own little world. They hung around together and even went to the Mosque together. They often got into trouble for leaving the school in order to attend the Friday Prayer.

Despite his young age, Eesa did not think Islam was strict; he found that it just made sense. He understood why alcohol was prohibited. It made sense to him that people should not drink because he could see all the harm that came from it.

Some may believe that becoming a Muslim at such a young age would indefinitely isolate a person from non-Muslims, but with Eesa this was not the case, he interacted and functioned normally, but there was always a line he would not cross. He would not join classmates and in when they would want to engage in something that went against his beliefs and in wrong activities such as raves and what not. When his non-Muslim class-mates invited him to such events he would give a number of excuses and not attend.

Finally here are a few words from brother Eesa:

"I suggest that new Muslims should do some research on the lives of the Companions and see how they put Islam into practice. The Companions received Islam from the hands of the Prophet. You can find real information on Islam but you have to search and you should not be lazy. The best place to get knowledge and be sure it is the right knowledge, is to read the Quran and then look to the Hadith, especially Bukhari and Muslim."

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