

Khalil Ibrahim Abdulmajid, Ex-Christian, USA (part 1 of 2)

Description: How God blessed him with Islam when he traveled to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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Published on 23 Feb 2009 - Last modified on 23 Jun 2009

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In 1988, I began to work on a project in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with my father, who was a physician working in Saudi. He was in Kingdom and I was in the United States. That same year I came on a trip to the Kingdom and stayed in the city of Dhahran and visited the city of Al-Khobar to further that project. What I saw there captured me immediately in so many ways, but when I heard those first prayer calls, something deep within me stirred. I saw shopkeepers just close, but not lock their doors, "how can that be?" I asked. I saw Muslims going to prayer and returning looking so fresh and renewed. I saw that and wondered. I asked my Saudi hosts many questions and was allowed to come to a large city mosque and I sat at the back. I was nervous but my eyes and my heart were open. No one else, including my father, was invited. I guess Mohammed, our personal host, saw something in me that I did not even see back then. I was given a copy of the Holy Quran in Arabic and English. Among all the items, I took home to the States from that trip the Quran was at the top of the most valuable. I didn't read it back then, I treated it as a possession, sad to say. Something to look good on my bookcase, what a mistake! I was left with vivid memories of a place fully and completely unknown to me before. The mold was cast deep within me as a result.

Years later, I returned on my own, with my then young family, wife, and two sons. Everyone fit into life in Saudi Arabia swiftly. My world revolved around work, family, and exercise. Any and all prayer that I did was personal and done only once a day at most. Don't get me wrong, I was Christian, and not much is asked as a follower. I did more than most. I began to watch my employees as they went about their work before and after prayers. Inwardly I now know Allah was calling me, but I did not listen even though I was right there in Riyadh working in a hospital with a Mosque next door, surrounded by caring Muslims. I kept everyone at bay, holding tight to my understanding of Christianity, almost defiantly! The years rolled by and honestly, I even lost interest in prayer and doing anything but maintaining an occasional link to God directly. Eventually my family's stay in the Kingdom ended in 2001 at which point we all returned to Florida in the USA.

While in the States we all as a family returned to church, but I knew I was not the same person. As hard as I could try to follow the Trinity concept I could not embrace it enough to "witness" it all to someone else. Something was wrong, but I did not quite know what was wrong. So I talked to God alone. Made sense to me, He created everything so why did I need others to pass on my prayers to Him? Same time in my life back then sin came heavily into my life, either by me directly or brought into my life by my now ex-wife. I sank into a most disappointing time of my life. The road to hell is wide and easy, which I was taking, while the path to heaven is narrow and difficult to traverse. Frankly I was not

just going to Hell, I was living in hell on Earth. All the time I tried to balance "things" with prayer and occasional church attendance for one hour which I did not want to do. For years this continued until I accepted the role I now maintain with the hospital here in Al-Khobar.

This last year was filled with tears and sadness in that a twenty-three year marriage failed due in part to those bad years just previous to my arrival to Al-Khobar. I didn't think I could get so low but you know it, He took it all away, took me to the bottom, where all there is, is up. Really, I use to say I had to jump up to touch bottom. Those around me knew I hurt all the time and that my life was empty, yet each day sometimes second by second I continued onward. My daily morning prayers were rarely missed and I read the Bible often, entire books at a time. Life at work and with me personally was improving even during the divorce for which I had to attend to back in the USA. Shortly after my return one of the senior managers in my division gave me information on Islam, which I welcomed but did not read nor look at. Into the drawer they went! Yet this man and others around me saw something in me that I had not yet realized, but they did, how I do not know but they did. One member of my staff gave me prayer beads. I carried them in my right pocket every day and counted them over and over with my right hand in my right pocket all day long. I was able to remain so calm in most difficult meetings while rolling those beads with my fingers. Life continued to be one good day then three bad, but my life and work continued. Then in November of last year I went back to the USA for a divorce trial and to visit my family. Sad times and good times but never did I ever feel at home there, never. I did not go to church either.

When I returned to the Kingdom in early December I was restless inside. Decisions were difficult to make, so I did not make them. So I just eased up and eased up some more and just listened with my heart and my mind. For days many people must have wondered what was on my mind, for I must have looked preoccupied, but I was not, I was cutting layer upon layer away, listening thinking sending out questions and messages, not knowing what would return. At the hospital I began to come over to the Mosque, near but not too near, and hear the call to prayer watching the men enter or exit. They would be standing there talking with each other oblivious of the world around them, you could see they were different than before they entered. I was drawn; I knew it, but denied it at the same time. The ditch between the two roads seemed to be too wide to cross and I did not have an idea how. Yet I wondered, and wondered some more.

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