

## Shannon Abulnasr, Ex Christian, USA (part 1 of 3)

**Description:** In this part of her story of conversion, Shannon tells how she moved from the tiny country farm town she was born in to Irving, Texas, where she endeavoured a lot to know anything about her Creator and Islam, but merely got very little.

By Shannon Abulnasr

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Category: [Articles](#) > [Stories of New Muslims](#) > [Women](#)

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I am from a tiny country farm town of only about 2,000 people in East Texas, and NO foreigners...meaning no Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, ....nothing. Everyone in that town was Christian...predominantly Baptist.

My family was Christian, although not practicing, but I was raised with good morals as a Christian should have. However, I knew from the age of 6 that I was not a Christian because I was told that I had to believe that Jesus was the "son of God & was God". I didn't feel that I had to ask someone to negotiate my sins with God....so, I thought I was lost forever, because I was told that if I didn't believe this, that I was not a Christian.

I believed in God, and I believed in Jesus, but I just didn't see him 'as God'. I remember going to "Vacation Bible School" and asking questions and the only answer I was always given was "you just got to have faith!". I didn't accept that as an answer because I felt that religion and God shouldn't be that complicated that we as humans can't understand our creator and had to have blind faith.

It just left too many gaps for a person to 'not have faith' and be lost forever. Going to church just lost all its meaning for me because of this. In 2001 I started going back to church, but instead of going to a Baptist Church, I went to "Church of God". It was a more exhilarating experience, but one that was still lacking. This congregation was different from the Baptist congregation, as 80% of the time was spent singing hymns. I didn't see the point of that, and I thought it was strange. I just wanted to find God, but it just didn't happen even though I wanted it so much.

I reverted to Islam in May 2006 in Irving, Texas on the day after my 27th birthday. Ever since my sixth birthday, I have always asked God to guide me; although I found Islam, I never expected to find Allah the way I did!

### How I found Islam:

I moved to a city about 30 miles away when I was in college of about 100,000 people, and still kind of isolated to other cultures and religions.

Only a handful of Muslims lived there as well as just a few Hindus. Any others were students at the university there. There were no international grocery stores or anything

for other ethnicities, therefore, the population of these minorities was prevented from growing larger.

I lived with a Hindu friend in 2002 for about a month when my apartment lease finished because I didn't want to sign a new lease, and I was trying to move to a bigger city (Dallas). During this month, I had a discussion with my Hindu friend about religion because they were asking me what my religion was. I wasn't so sure what I was...but I knew that I was not a Christian because I didn't believe Jesus was the "son of God". I didn't understand why I had to ask Jesus to forgive me if God was "All-Knowing". My natural logic told me that I should be able to just ask God directly, why should I have to ask Jesus to do it for me? All Christians had told me that if I didn't believe that Jesus was God, then I wasn't Christian. I didn't know about other religions so I didn't know where that left me. I thought I was Atheist and didn't have a religion. One day, my roommate asked me what my basic beliefs were, and when I mentioned them...they told me "you're a Muslim!" So, I was first told I was a Muslim by a Hindu...*SubhanAllah*.

They told me that they knew several Muslims that lived in our apartment complex (which served as a dormitory for international students of the college they were going to). I was later introduced to them and found out they were all from Algeria.

I learned I was allergic to something in my friend's apartment and had to move out. So, the Algerians offered to let me stay with them for a month or so. I did. During this time, it was Ramadan, and I fasted with them. So, my first Ramadan was in 2002 and I wasn't even "Muslim" at the time.

I actually learned very very little from them...as most of them were not really practicing themselves. I only saw one of them pray.....one time! I did not know at that time that they were not "practicing" Muslims, but looking back I feel really bad for them, as they would spend most of their time drinking and partying. In fact, there were over 50 Muslims in the nearby apartments, and out of them all, I only saw one of them pray, one time, in the entire time I knew them. Even during Ramadan, and I had five roommates! This saddens me since I know what it means to be a Muslim now. I did receive a copy of the Quran from one of them as a gift, but it was a tiny one and all in Arabic. I still have it to this day. This roommate was actually the only person that shared any knowledge with me about Islam, and told me that Muslims believed in Jesus and Mary as well. *Alhamdulillah*, at least one of them shared something with me!

Later, when I moved to Dallas, I didn't know a single person there. I was starting my life from scratch there. I wasn't so much into studying religion at that time, but eventually in 2005, I started studying because of an incident that happened to me one night.

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