

I want to be a Muslim but... Myths about Converting to Islam (part 1 of 3)



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The most fundamental belief in Islam is that there is no true god (deity) but Allah. He, the One, the Only, the First and the Last, has no partners, sons, daughters or intermediaries. He is Alone in His Dominion and in His Omnipotence. It is a very simple concept, it is simply the truth. Nevertheless sometimes the pure belief in God can be overwhelming. Often we are surprised when we call for God and He answers immediately.

The religion of Islam encompasses that simple concept – that God is One and wraps it in a package called submission. Islam means, submission to the will of God. The root word of Islam (sa-la-ma) is the same that is shared with the Arabic word meaning peace and security. In essence, peace and security comes from living life according to God's will. Like a circle of life it always begins and ends in the same place – there is no god but Allah. When we submit to the will of God, we are Muslims and to demonstrate our sincerity we testify that we are Muslim by saying, alone or in the company of other Muslims, La ilah illa Allah, Muhammad rasoolu Allah. There is no true god (deity) but Allah and Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, is His messenger.

Whenever any human being experiences and understands God's mercy, Satan tries his best to harm that individual. Satan does not want us to feel comfort and mercy; he wants us to feel anxious and depressed. He wants us to make mistakes and commit sins. Satan despairs of ever feeling God's love therefore he wants to corrupt as many human beings as he can.

(Satan said) "...surely I will sit in wait against them (human beings) on Your Straight Path. Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left..." (Quran 7:16-17)

Whenever a person realises the truth and wants to become a Muslim, Satan introduces the word ‘but’. I want to become a Muslim...BUT! But I am not ready. But I don’t speak Arabic. But I am white. But I don’t really know about Islam. God warned us against Satan and his cunning ways.

“O children of Adam. Let not Satan deceive you.” (Quran 7:27)

“Surely Satan is an enemy to you so take him as an enemy.” (Quran 35:6)

Satan’s whispers try to prevent us from converting to Islam. These ideas should not stand in the way of a person connecting, or reconnecting with the Most Merciful God. In this series of articles we will discuss some of the most prominent myths, lay them open to scrutiny and see that God is indeed Most Merciful. He makes converting to Islam easy, not difficult. No buts!

1. I want to be a Muslim but I do not want to change my name.

A person embracing Islam does not have to change his or her name. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said that everybody was entitled to a good name, a name that had meaning or character. For the vast majority of people it is not an issue, however if you discover that your name has a bad meaning or an association with sinners or tyrants it is better to change it to something more acceptable. If the person’s name is a name of an idol or reflects servitude to something or someone other than God, then it has to be changed. Remember though that Islam is easy. If changing your name officially would cause hardship, distress or harm, it would suffice to change it only among friends and family.

2. I want to be a Muslim but I do not know any Arabic.

The religion of Islam was revealed for all people, in all places, at all times. It is not a religion exclusively for Arabs or Arabic speakers. In fact the majority of the world’s 1.4 billion Muslims are not from an Arab background. A person can become Muslim without knowing a single word of Arabic; it does not affect his or her ability to accept Islam. However, the language of Quran is Arabic and the daily prayers are performed in Arabic, so although it is not necessary to learn the whole language, after conversion it will be necessary to learn some Arabic words.

If a person is unable to learn enough Arabic to perform his prayers because of a speech defect or because he is not able to pronounce the Arabic, he must try as much as he can. If learning at least some Arabic is not possible, then he is relieved of this obligation, because God does not burden people with more than they are able to bear. However God also says that he has made learning Quran easy, therefore it is obligatory for a person to try his best.

“God burdens not a person beyond his scope.” (Quran 2:286)

“And We have indeed made the Quran easy to understand and remember” (Quran 54:17)

A man came to the Prophet and said: “O Messenger of God, teach me something of the Quran that will suffice me, for I cannot read.” He said, “Say: Subhaan-Allaah wa'l-hamdu Lillaah wa laa ilaaha ill-Allaah wa Allaahu akbar wa laa hawla wa la quwwata illa Billaah (Far removed is God from every imperfection, praise be to God, there is no god except Allah and God is Most great, there is no god except Allah and there is no power or strength except with God).”^[1]

Entering the fold of Islam is easy. It is a simple process, free of complications. In part 2 we will discuss circumcision, the fact that Islam has no ethnic or race restrictions and becoming Muslim without knowing very much about Islam.

Footnotes:

^[1] *Abu Dawood, An Nasai.*

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There is no god but God. It is a simple statement that should make converting to Islam easy. There is only One God, and only one religion, nothing could be more uncomplicated. However, as we discussed in the previous article, whenever a person realises the truth and wants to become a Muslim, Satan introduces the word but. I want to be a Muslim...BUT. But I am not ready. But I don't speak Arabic, or but I do not want to change my name. Today we will discuss more myths that prevent people from converting to Islam.

3. I want to be a Muslim but I do not want to be circumcised.

Prophet Muhammad said that every child was born in a state of fitrah, with the correct understanding of God.^[1] and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad tell us that the conditions related to fitrah (the natural state of being) are five.

“Five things are part of the fitrah: shaving the pubic hair, circumcision, trimming the moustache, plucking the armpit hairs, and cutting the nails”.^[2] This is believed to be the ancient way, the natural way, followed by all of the Prophets, and enjoined on the believers by the laws that they brought.^[3]

The majority of Islamic scholars agree that circumcision is obligatory for men providing they do not fear that it may harm them. When assessing the degree of

harm a man must look to the Quran and the authentic teachings of Prophet Muhammad for guidance. If a man is not able to be circumcised due to fear of injury or any other valid reason that may make his life miserable, the obligation is waived. It is not permissible for the issue to become a barrier that prevents a man from accepting Islam[4]. In other words, it is not a condition for becoming a Muslim. Also, it does not prevent a man from leading the prayers.[5]

There is no requirement for female circumcision in Islam.

4. I want to be a Muslim but I am white.

Islam is the religion that was revealed for all people, in all places, at all times. It was not revealed for a particular race or ethnicity. It is a complete way of life based on the teachings found in the Quran and the authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad. Although the Quran was revealed in the Arabic language and Prophet Muhammad was an Arab, it would be wrong to assume that all Muslims are Arabs, or for that matter, that all Arabs are Muslims. In fact the vast majority of the world's 1.4 billion Muslims are not Arabs.

There are no racial or ethnic requirements for one to be a Muslim. In his final sermon Prophet Muhammad reiterated this fact very succinctly.

“All humankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab and a non-Arab has no superiority over an Arab; a white person has no superiority over a black person nor does a black person have superiority over a white person, except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood.”[6]

“O humankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another.” (Quran 49:13)

5. I want to be a Muslim but I do not know anything about Islam.

There is no need to know a lot about Islam to become a Muslim. It is enough to know the meaning of testimony and the six pillars of faith. Once a person has embraced Islam, there is time for him to learn about his religion. There is no need to rush and be overwhelmed. Take things slowly, but steadily move forward at your own pace. There is time to understand the inspirational beauty and ease of Islam, and to learn about all the prophets and messengers of Islam including the last prophet, Muhammad. A Muslim never stops learning; it is a process that will continue until death.

Prophet Muhammad said, “The believer will never have enough of listening to good things (seeking knowledge) until he reaches Paradise.”[7]

6. I want to be a Muslim but I have committed too many sins.

When a person says the testimony of faith (Shahada), I testify that there is no god but God and I testify that Muhammad is His messenger, he becomes like a new born baby. All his previous sins, no matter how great or small are washed away. The slate is clean, free from sin, shiny and white; this is a new beginning.

“Say to those who have disbelieved that if they cease, what has previously occurred will be forgiven for them...” (Quran 8:38)

There is no compulsion for anyone to accept the truth of Islam. However if your heart tells you there is only One God, do not hesitate.

“There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in evil and believes in God, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And God is All-Hearer, All-Knower.” (Quran 2:256)

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[3] AS-Shawkaani, *Nayl al-Awtaar*, Baab Sunan al-Fitrah

[4] *Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah*, 5/115, *Al-Ijaabaat ‘ala As’ilah al-Jaaliyaaat*, 1/3,4

[6] The text of the Farewell Sermon can be found in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari* and *Saheeh Muslim*, and in the books of *At Tirmidhi* and *Imam Ahmad*.

[7] *At Tirmidhi*

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We finished Part 2 by mentioning that when a person converts to Islam all his previous sins, no matter how grave or small, are eliminated. The slate is clean, free from sin, shiny and white; this is a new beginning. However there are some people who may hesitate to accept Islam because they fear they will be unable to stay away from sin. We begin part 3 by discussing this topic.

7. I want to be Muslim but I know there are some sins I cannot stop doing.

If a person truly believes that there is no god but Allah, he or she should accept Islam without delay, even if they believe they will continue to sin. When a person is used to living a life unencumbered by any set of moral principles, Islam may at

first seem like a set of rules and regulations that are almost impossible to fulfil. Muslims do not drink alcohol, Muslims do not eat pork, Muslim women must wear scarves, Muslims must pray five times every day. Men and women find themselves saying things like, “I could not possibly stop drinking”, or “I would find it too difficult to pray every single day let alone five times”.

The reality is however, that once a person has accepted that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah, and developed a relationship with Him the rules and regulations drift into insignificance. It is a slow process of wanting to please God. For some, accepting the guidelines for a happy life is a matter of days, even hours, for others it can be weeks, months, or even years. Every person’s journey into Islam is different. It is important to remember that God forgives all sins. A believer can, by the mercy of God, be admitted to paradise no matter what sins he has committed. On the other hand, a non believer, one who worships something or someone other than the One True God, will be admitted to eternal Hellfire. Therefore given a choice between not accepting Islam altogether or being a Muslim who is sinning, the second choice is certainly much better.

8. I want to be a Muslim but I am afraid to inform others.

As we have stressed repeatedly there is nothing in the world that should prevent a person from embracing Islam. If one fears the reaction of others, such as his or her parents, siblings or friends, and feels that they are not ready to inform them, still they should convert and try to practice Islam in secret as much as they can. As time passes, and the connection with God is established, a person’s faith will become stronger and they will know how to handle the situation better. In fact the new Muslim will almost certainly feel liberated and begin to feel the need to inform the whole world about the beauty of Islam.

In the meantime it is a good idea to slowly and subtly prepare your friends and family for the changes that will obviously take place. Perhaps one could begin to talk openly about God and religion in general, express an interest in other faiths or Islam in particular. When a person begins to practice Islam, which is in fact a way of life, those close to them often notice a difference. They will see a new found respect for them, the family and society in general; they will also see a change in demeanour often from anxious and unhappy to relaxed and contented.

Islam is a way of life and it's difficult to hide it for long. It is important to remember that when people learn of your conversion to Islam there will be a reaction. It will range from those that are happy and accepting, to those who feel upset and disappointed. Often those upset, with time get over it and begin to accept the change. And when they see many positive changes in you, they may actually begin to appreciate your conversion. One needs to stay strong, determined and know that God is with you. Your words and experience may very

well lead others to follow your example. Trust in God, learn all you can about your new found faith and let the light of Islam shine through your eyes.

9. I want to be a Muslim but do not know any Muslims

Some people learn about Islam from reading, others from watching the behaviour of Muslims they see in their cities and towns, some even learn about Islam from programs on TV and for others, it is the sound of the call to prayer. Often people seek and find the beauty of Islam without ever meeting a Muslim. It simply is not necessary to know Muslims before accepting and converting to Islam.

Conversion to Islam is as easy as saying the words, ***I testify that there is no god but God and I testify that Muhammad is His messenger.*** The conversion does not have to be done in a mosque (Islamic centre) and nor are witnesses needed for the conversion. These things however, are manifestations of the brotherhood of Islam and mark the beginning of a new faith with the moral and spiritual support of others. If there is no Islamic centre nearby or Muslims to help, one can simply follow the procedure explained in the “How to convert to Islam and Become a Muslim”.

Consequently after conversion it could be very helpful for the new Muslim to make contact with other Muslims. Members of your new spiritual family can be found by approaching local mosques and Islamic centres, or introducing yourself to the Muslim who lives down the street, catches the same bus, or works in the same company. However, even if a new Muslim is totally alone, he or she is connected to 1.5 billion other Muslims.

Before or after conversion this website is available to help new Muslims orthose thinking about converting to Islam. There are literally hundreds of easy to understand articles about Islam. After your conversion, this website will help you get started as a new Muslim by giving you useful resources and online support through Live-Chat.