

### *Advice for New Muslims or those considering Islam*

#### **Practical tips from fellow convert,**

**Saraji Umm Zaid.**

So, you are a new Muslim. Mabrouk, congratulations. Or perhaps you are thinking about taking your shahada (profession of Islamic faith). I would like to offer some advice, if I may. Having been through what you may be about to experience, I pass this on only in the hopes that you may avoid some of my mistakes, insha'Allah.

#### **1. Don't jump feet first.**

This is so important, not just when coming to Islam, but in any aspect of your life. A lot of times, new shahadas are overwhelmed with what is happening. A new religion, new life rules, new politics. Many are eager to join every Islamic group on the face of the earth. Others start playing scholar within a few months. Many people feel like they have to speak Arabic within a month. This is not so. Language doesn't make the Muslim. Take it slowly and pay attention.

#### **2. LEARN YOUR PRAYERS!!!**

Make it the first thing you do. Forget about learning Arabic, memorizing hadith, becoming involved in politics, or anything else! LEARN YOUR PRAYERS. I would recommend that you start learning them before your shahada, when you become seriously interested in Islam. I can't stress to you how important this is! I learned the hard way. I am still struggling with part of the prayer now, almost one year later! In the Qur'an we read: **{Successful indeed are the believers. Those who offer their prayers with humility and attentiveness}** [Quran 23: 1-2], Also: **{Verily, Prayer prevents one from shameful and evil deeds}** [Quran 29:45].

There is also a saying from Hadith: The Prophet (saws) said: **«Between a man, and between shirk and kufr there is the abandonment of Prayer" (shirk is the worship of objects other than Allah, and kufr is disbelief in Allah and the Message He sent»** [Reported by Muslim].

#### **3. Don't let set backs keep you down.**

Many new shahadas report that they encounter racism from Muslims. Others say that there is a visible lack of support when they seek it, leaving them feeling alienated. This is a dangerous place to be. Your feelings of resentment and loneliness, your hurt pride could turn you away from Islam, even though your heart longs to submit. I emphasize here that this doesn't happen to every Muslim, and many Muslims open their hearts and homes to new shahadas! But I have seen it enough to know that there are people who slip through the cracks. If you can't find a Muslim community or people willing or able to help you, there are other resources. There are websites, mailing lists, and Islamic support groups that can help you learn your prayers.

All it takes is a little effort. And in the end, Islam isn't about other people, or how many friends you make. It is about you and your Creator. On the last day, you, and no one else, will be responsible for your actions (or lack thereof).

**Finally, I have this to say: Allahu Alim, Allah knows best.**

He knows better than you do what is good for you and what is bad for you. He has a plan for you, and His Love and Mercy is so great that your only choice is to trust in Him and submit to His Will. Sometimes you won't like it. Life gets "ugly" sometimes. It is hard, it is scary, and it is messy. Nothing comes gift wrapped with a bow on top. Islam reminds us that this short, messy, hard and beautiful life is short. The life after this one is what counts! The goal is Heaven, Paradise, Jennah.

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