

## **Yusuf Estes, Former Christian and Federal Prison Chaplain (part 1 of 5)**

Many people ask me how a preacher or priest in Christianity can ever go to Islam, especially considering all the negative things that we hear about Islam and Muslims everyday. Some people are simply curious, while others take a profound exception to my “conversion” to Islam. Some have asked how I could have turned my back on Jesus, or if I truly understood the Holy Ghost, and some even questioned whether or not I considered myself as “born again” or had ever really been saved at all. These are good questions to which I will offer answers to at the end of this writing. I would like to thank everyone for their interest and offer my humble story, God Willing.

One very nice Christian gentleman asked me in email why and how I left Christianity for Islam. This is more or less a copy of the letter I sent to him.

### **Introduction**

My name is Yusuf Estes now, but in years past my friends used to call me Skip. I have preached Christianity and worked in the entertainment and music industry since I was a boy in the 1950’s. My father and I have established music stores, TV and radio programs and outdoor entertainment for fun (and profit). I was a music minister and even used a pony ride and entertained the children as “Skippy the Clown.”

Once, I have served as Delegate to the United Nations Peace Conference for Religious Leaders. Now I am a retired former Muslim Chaplain for United States Bureau of Prisons, Washington, DC. and I join alongside many American Muslims, working with Muslim students and youth organizations as well as schools for Muslim children. As such, I travel around the entire world lecturing and sharing the message of the Christ of the Quran in Islam. We hold dialogs and discussion groups with all faiths and enjoy the opportunity to work alongside rabbis, ministers, preachers and priests everywhere. Some of our work is in the institutional area, military, universities and prisons. Primarily our goal is to educate and communicate the correct message of Islam and who the Muslims really are. Although Islam has grown now to nearly tie Christianity as the largest of religions on earth, we see many of those who claim Islam as Muslims that do not correctly understand nor properly represent the message of “Peace, Surrender and Obedience to God” [Arabic = ‘Islam’]

Dear me, I am afraid that I got a bit ahead of myself. I was trying to give a bit of background of our work perhaps to see if it would in anyway benefit those who

may be going through what I experienced while trying to resolve some of the issues of Christianity.

## **How It Happened**

This may seem quite strange, while we perhaps may share a few different perspectives and concepts of God, Jesus, prophethood, sin and salvation. But you see, at one time I was in the same boat as many folks are today. Really, I was. Let me explain.

## **Born a Strong Christian**

I was born into a very strong Christian family in the Midwest. Our family and their ancestors not only built the churches and schools across this land, but actually were the same ones who came here in the first place. While I was still in elementary we relocated in Houston, Texas in 1949 (I'm old). We attended church regularly, and I was baptized at the age of 12 in Pasadena, Texas. As a teenager, I wanted to visit other churches to learn more of their teachings and beliefs. The Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Charismatic movements, Nazarene, Church of Christ, Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Full Gospel, Agape, Catholic, Presbyterian and many more. I developed quite a thirst for the "Gospel" or as we say; "Good News." My research into religion did not stop with Christianity. Not at all. Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Metaphysics, native American beliefs were all a part of my studies. Just about the only one that I did not look into seriously was "Islam". Why? Good question.

## **Music Minister**

Anyway, I became very interested in different types of music, especially Gospel and Classical. Because my whole family was religious and musical, it followed that I too would begin my studies in both areas. All this set me for the logical position of Music Minister in many of the churches that I became affiliated with over the years. I started teaching keyboard instruments in 1960 and by 1963 owned my own studios in Laurel, Maryland, called "Estes Music Studios."

**(part 2 of 5)**

## **Business Projects in Texas, Oklahoma and Florida**

Over the next 30 years my father and I worked together in many business projects. We had entertainment programs, shows and attractions. We opened piano and organ stores all the way from Texas and Oklahoma to Florida. We had earned millions of dollars during those years, but could not find the peace of mind that can only come through knowing the truth and finding the real plan of

salvation. I'm sure you have asked yourself the question; "Why did God create me?" or "What is it that God wants me to do?" or "Exactly who is God, anyway?" "Why do we believe in 'original sin?'" and "Why would the sons of Adam be forced to accept his 'sins' and then as a result be punished forever." But if you asked anyone these questions, they would probably tell you that you have to believe without asking, or that it is a 'mystery' and you shouldn't ask - "Just have faith, brother."

## **Trinity Concept**

Strangely enough, the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible. And it has been a concern for religious scholars as early as 200 years after Jesus was raised up by Almighty God. I would ask preachers or ministers to give me some sort of an idea how 'one' could figure out to become 'three' or how God Himself, Who can do anything He Wills to do, cannot just forgive people's sins, but rather and had to become a man, come down on earth, be a human, and then take on the sins of all people; keeping in mind that all along He is still God of the whole universe and does as He Wills to do, both in and outside of the universe as we know it. They never seemed to be able to come up with anything other than opinions or strange analogies.

## **Father - Ordained Non-Denominational Minister**

My father was very active in supporting church work, especially church school programs. He became and ordained minister in the 1970s. He and his wife (my stepmother) knew many of the TV evangelists and preachers and even visited Oral Roberts and helped in the building of the "Prayer Tower" in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They also were strong supporters of Jimmy Swaggart, Jim and Tammy Fae Baker, Jerry Fallwell, John Haggi and the biggest enemy to Islam in America, Pat Robertson.

## **Distributing "Praise" Tapes for Jesus**

During the early 1980's my Dad and his wife worked together and were most active in recording "Praise" tapes and distributing them for free to people in retirement homes, hospitals and homes for the elderly. We were really "winning souls to the Lord - for Jesus" day after day.

## **Met a Man from Egypt**

It was early in 1991 when my father began doing business with a man from Egypt and told me that he wanted me to meet him. This idea appealed to me when I thought about the idea of having an international flavor. You know, the pyramids, sphinx, Nile River and all that.

## **He Was a “Moslem”**

Hijackers; Kidnappers; Bombers, Terrorists - and who knows what else? Then my father mentioned that this man was a ‘Moslem.’ First, I hated the idea of meeting an “infidel, hijacker, kidnapper, bomber, terrorist, non-believer.” Any normal person would be repulsed at the idea. I couldn’t believe my ears. A ‘Moslem?’ No way! I reminded my dad of the various different things that we had heard about these people.

## **Lies Against Muslims & Islam - They Told Us, Muslims:**

They don’t even believe in God. They worship a black box in the desert. And they kiss the ground five times a day. No Way! I Did Not Want to Meet Him! I did not want to meet this ‘Moslem’ man. No way! My father insisted that I meet him and reassured me that he was a very nice person. This was too much for me. Especially since the evangelists that we used to travel around with all hated Muslims and Islam very much. They even said things that were not true to make people afraid of Islam. So, why would I want anything to do with these people?

## **Idea - “Change Him to Christian”**

Then an idea came to me, “We can change this man to Christian.” So, I gave in and agreed to the meeting, but on my terms. Met Him With A Bible, Cross and Cap with “Jesus Is Lord!” on it. I agreed to meet him on a Sunday after church so we would be all prayed up and in good standing with the Lord. I would be carrying my Bible under my arm as usual. I would have my big shiny cross dangling and I would have on my cap which says: “Jesus is Lord” right across the front. My wife and two young daughters came along and we were ready for our first encounter with the ‘Moslems.’

## **Where Is He?**

When I came into the shop and asked my father where the ‘Moslem’ was, he pointed and said: “He’s right over there.” I was confused. That couldn’t be the Moslem. No way.

## **Turban & Beard?**

I’m looking for a huge man with flowing robes, a big turban on his head, a beard half way down his shirt and eyebrows that go all the way across his forehead with a sword or a bomb under his coat.

## **No Turban - No Beard - [No Hair at All!]**

This man had no beard. In fact, he didn't even have any hair on his head at all. He was nearly bald. Best of all, he was very pleasant with a warm welcome and handshake. This didn't make sense. I thought they are terrorists and bombers. What is this all about?

## **He Needs Jesus**

Never mind. I'll get right to work on this guy. He needs to be 'saved' in the 'Name of Jesus', and me and the Lord are going to do it.

## **Introduction & Interrogation**

After a quick introduction, I asked him:

"Do you believe in God?"

He said: "Yes." - (Good!)

Then I said: "Do you believe in Adam and Eve?"

He said: "Yes." - (Very Good!)

I said: "What about Abraham? You believe in him and how he tried to sacrifice his son for God?"

He said: "Yes." - (Even better!)

Then I asked: "What about Moses? Ten Commandments? Parting the Red Sea?"

Again he said: "Yes." - (Better still!)

Then: "What about the other prophets, David, Solomon and John the Baptist?"

He said:

"Yes." - (Great!)

I asked: "Do you believe in the Bible?"

Again, he said: "Yes." - (OK!)

So, now it was time for the big question: "Do you believe in Jesus? That he was the Messiah (Christ) of God?"

Again he said: "Yes." - (Fantastic!)

Well now - This was going to be easier than I had thought. He was just about ready to be baptized, only he didn't know it. And I was just the one to do it, too.

## (part 3 of 5)

### Shocking Knowledge - Muslims Believe in the Bible?

One day in the Spring of 1991, I came to know that the Muslims believed in the Bible. I was shocked. How could this be? But that's not all, they believe in Jesus as:

- \* A true messenger of God;
- \* Prophet of God;
- \* Miracle birth without human intervention;
- \* He was the 'Christ' or Messiah as predicted in the Bible;
- \* He is with God now and most important;
- \* He will be coming back in the Last Days to lead the believers against the 'Antichrist.'

After "winning souls to the Lord for Jesus" day after day, this would be a big achievement for me, to catch one of these 'Moslems' and 'convert' him to Christianity.

### Cup of Tea - Discuss Beliefs

I asked him if he liked tea and he said he did. So off we went to a little shop in the mall to sit and talk about my favorite subject: Beliefs. While we sat in that little coffee shop for hours talking (I did most of the talking) I came to know that he was very nice, quiet and even a bit shy. He listened attentively to every word that I had to say and did not interrupt even one time. I liked this man's way and thought that he had definite potential to become a good Christian. - Little did I know the course of events about to unravel in front of my eyes.

### Agreed to Do Business

First of all, I agreed with my father that we should do business with this man and even encouraged the idea of him traveling along with me on my business trips across the northern part of Texas. Day after day, we would ride together and discuss various issues pertaining to different beliefs that people have. And along the way, I could of course interject some of my favorite radio programs of worship and praise to help bring the message to this poor individual. We talked about the concept of God; the meaning of life; the purpose of creation; the prophets and their mission and how God reveals His Will to mankind. We also shared a lot of personal experiences and ideas as well.

## **Moved to Our Home**

One day I came to know that my friend Mohamed was going to move out of the home he had been sharing with a friend of his and was going to be living in the mosque for a time. I went to my dad and asked him if we could invite Mohamed to come out to our big home in the country and stay there with us. After all, he could share some of the work and some expenses, and he would be right there when we were ready to go to out traveling around. My father agreed and Mohamed moved in.

## **Continued Ministry & Preaching**

Of course I still would find time to visit my fellow preachers and evangelists around the state of Texas. One of them lived on the Texas-Mexico border, and another lived near lived the Oklahoma border. One preacher liked to carry a huge wooden cross that was bigger than a car. He would carry it over his shoulder and drag the bottom on the ground and go down the road or freeway hauling these two beams formed in the shape of a cross. People would stop their cars and come over to him and ask him what was going on and he would give them pamphlets and booklets on Christianity.

## **Preacher Has Heart Attack**

One day my friend with the cross had a heart attack and had to go to the Veteran's Hospital where he stayed for quite a long while. I used to visit him in the hospital several times a week and I would take Mohamed with me with the hopes that we could all share together in the subject of beliefs and religions. My friend was not very impressed and it was obvious that he did not want to know anything about Islam. Then one day a man who was sharing the room with my friend came rolling into the room in his wheelchair. I went to him and asked him his name and he said that it didn't matter and when I asked him where he was from he said he was from the planet Jupiter. I thought about what he said and then began to wonder if I was in the cardiac ward or the mental ward.

## **Man in Wheelchair - Needed the Lord**

I knew the man was lonely and depressed and needed someone in his life. So, I began to 'witness' to him about the Lord. I read to him out of the book of Jonah in the Old Testament. I shared the story of the prophet Jonah who had been sent by the Lord to call his people to the correct way. Jonah had left his people and escaped by boat to leave his city and head out to sea. A storm came up and the ship almost capsized and the people on board threw Jonah over the side of the ship. A whale came up to the surface and grabbed Jonah, swallowed him and then went down to the bottom of the sea, where he stayed for 3 days and 3 nights. Yet

because of God's Mercy, He caused the whale to rise to the surface and then spit Jonah out to return back home safely to his city of Nineveh. And the idea was that we can't really run away from our problems because we always know what we have done. And what is more, God also always knows what we have done.

## **Catholic Priest**

After sharing this story with the man in the wheel chair, he looked up and me and apologized. He told me he was sorry for his rude behavior and that he had experienced some real serious problems recently. Then he said that he wanted to confess something to me. And I said that I was not a Catholic priest and I don't handle confessions. He replied back to me that he knew that. In fact, he said: "I am a Catholic priest."

I was shocked. Here I had been trying to preach Christianity to a priest. What in the world was happening here?

## **(part 4 of 5)**

## **Priest in Latin America**

The priest began to share his story of being a missionary for the church for over 12 years to south and Central America and Mexico and even in New York's Hell's Kitchen. When he was released from the hospital he needed a place to go to recover and rather than let him go to stay with a Catholic family, I told my dad that we should invite him to come out and live with us in the country along with our families and Mohamed. It was agreed by all that he would so, he moved out right away.

## **Priests Must Study ISLAM? - YES!**

During the trip out to our home, I talked with the priest about some of the concepts of beliefs in Islam, and to my surprise he agreed and then shared even more about this with me. I was shocked when he told me that Catholic priests actually study Islam and some even carry doctors degrees in this subject. This was all very enlightening to me. But there was still a lot more to come.

## **Different Versions of the Bible**

After settling in, we all began to gather around the kitchen table after dinner every night to discuss religion. My father would bring his King James Version of the Bible, I would bring out my Revised Standard Version of the Bible, my wife had another version of the Bible (maybe something like Jimmy Swaggart's Good News for Modern Man. The priest of course, had the Catholic Bible which has 7

more books in it than the Protestant Bible. So we spent more time talking about which Bible was the right one or the most correct one, than we did trying to convince Mohamed about becoming a Christian.

## **Quran Has Only ONE Version - In Arabic - And Still Exists**

At one point I recall asking him about the Quran and how many versions of it there were in the last 1,400 years. He told me that there was only ONE QURAN. And that it had never been changed. Yet he let me know that the Quran had been memorized by hundreds of thousands of people in its entirety, and were scattered about the earth in many different countries. Over the centuries since the Quran was revealed, millions have memorized it completely and have taught it to others who have memorized it completely, from cover to cover, letter perfect without mistakes. Today, over 9 million Muslims have memorized the entire Quran from cover to cover.

## **How Could This Be?**

This did not seem possible to me. After all, the original languages of the Bible have all been dead languages for centuries, and the documents themselves have been lost in their originals for hundreds and thousands of years. So, how could it be that something like this could be so easy to preserve and to recite from cover to cover.

## **Priest Goes to the Mosque**

Anyway, one day the priest asked the Mohamed if he might accompany him to the mosque to see what it was like there. They came back talking about their experience there and we could not wait to ask the priest what it was like and what all types of ceremonies they performed. He said they didn't really do anything. They just came and prayed and left. I said: They left? Without any speeches or singing? "He said that was right."

## **Priest Enters Islam!**

A few more days went by and the Catholic priest asked Mohamed if he might join him again for a trip to the mosque which they did. But this time it was different. They did not come back for a very long time. It became dark and we worried that something might have happened to them. Finally they arrived and when they came in the door I immediately recognized Mohamed, but who was this alongside of him? Someone wearing a white robe and a white cap. Hold on a minute! It was the priest. I said to him: Pete? -- Did you become a 'Moslem'?

He said that he had entered into Islam that very day. **THE PRIEST BECAME A MUSLIM!!** What next? (You'll see).

## (part 5 of 5)

### **My Wife Announces Her Islam!**

So, I went upstairs to think things over a bit and began to talk to my wife about the whole subject. She then told me that she too was going to enter into Islam, because she knew it was the truth.

### **Shocked!**

I was really shocked now. I went downstairs and woke up Mohamed and asked him to come outside with me for a discussion. We walked and talked that whole night through.

### **Truth Had Come!**

By the time he was ready to pray Fajr (the morning prayer of the Muslims) I knew that the truth had come at last and now it was up to me to do my part. I went out back behind my father's house and found an old piece of plywood lying under an overhang and right there I put my head down on the ground facing the direction that the Muslims pray five times a day.

### **Guide Me! O God! Guide Me!**

Now then in that position, with my body stretched out on the plywood and my head on the ground, I asked: "O God. If you are there, guide me, guide me."

### **Sign Inside of Me**

And then after a while I raised up my head and I noticed something. No, I didn't see birds or angels coming out of the sky, nor did I hear voices or music, nor did I see bright lights and flashes. What I did notice was a change inside of me. I was aware now more than ever before that it was time for me to stop any lying and doing anything sneaky. It was time that I really work at being an honest and upright man. I knew now what I had to do.

### **Wash Away the "OLD"**

So I went upstairs and took a shower with the distinct idea that I was 'washing' away the sinful old person that I had become over the years. And I was now coming into a new, fresh life. A life based on truth and proof.

## **And Become New!**

Around 11:00 A.M. that morning, I stood before two witnesses, one the ex-priest, formerly known as Father Peter Jacob's, and the other Mohamed Abel Rehman, and announced my 'shahadah' (open testimony to the Oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him).

"I bear witness, there is no deity to worship, except Almighty God, alone and He has no partners and I bear witness that Mohammad is His messenger and servant."

## **My Wife Was Next**

A few minutes later, my wife followed along and gave the same testimony. But hers was in front of 3 witnesses (me being the third).

## **Then My Father**

My father was a bit more reserved on the subject and waited a few more months before he made his shahadah (public testimony). But he did finally commit to Islam and began offering prayers right along with me and the other Muslims in the local masjid (mosque).

## **Children Too!**

The children were taken out of the Christian school and placed in Muslim schools. And now ten years later, they are memorizing much of the Quran and the teachings of Islam.

## **Father's Wife (Stepmother) Next**

My father's wife finally acknowledged, before she died, that Jesus could not be a son of God and that he must have been a mighty prophet of God, but not God. She passed away within a few months of this statement at age 86. May God accept her statement of faith, ameen.

## **Houseful of New Muslims - What's next?**

Now stop and think. A whole entire household of people from varying backgrounds and ethnic groups coming together in truth to learn how to know and worship the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Think. A Catholic priest; a minister of music and preacher of the Gospel; an ordained minister and builder of Christian schools; and the children, even a great-grandmother - they all come into Islam!

## His Mercy and Guidance

Only by His Mercy were we all guided to see the real truth of Islam, by removing the coverings over our ears and the blinders on our eyes, no longer having seals over our hearts - He was Guiding us now.

So, now you have the introduction to the story of my coming into Islam and becoming Muslim. There is more on the Internet about this story and there are more pictures there as well. Please take the time to visit it and then please take the time to email me, and let us come together to share in all truths based on proofs for understanding our origins and our purpose and goals in this life and the Next Life.

Now since writing my story and publishing here on the internet many other websites have picked up this story and it had become a famous example of how "Priest and Preachers Are Coming to Islam."

Again, I thank you for visiting. And I thank our Christian friend for his email. If he hadn't sent it, I probably would still not have completed this task of putting down the story once and for all of how my family, friends and myself all came to Islam.

Please feel free to share this story with others. You should print it out and make copies for everyone. Give them our links, add our story to your website or blog page, and send out emails to everyone you know. Maybe it could make a difference for others like us, God Willing.

May God guide you on your journey to all truth. Ameen. And May He open your heart and your mind to the reality of this world and the purpose of this life, ameen.

Peace to you and Guidance from God the One Almighty God, Creator and Sustainer of all that exists.