

Former Muslim Woman Braves 'Hellfire,' Now on Fire for Jesus

Hanging from her hair in hellfire for all eternity—that was supposed to be Hedieh's punishment. What was her crime? She simply removed her head covering.

But now, after 22 years in Islam, she's no longer afraid of her eternal destiny because she heard the loving voice of Jesus Christ.

"In Islam, God is not a father. God is the ultimate judge. And He sits apart from us, judging absolutely every single thing that we do," she explains.

Hedieh's parents emigrated from Iran to the U.S. in search of the American dream. They found it. Hedieh grew up among the wealth and opulence of Beverly Hills but she says it wasn't enough.

"It never was fulfilling. I felt—I actually felt really guilty about having what the world would describe as just about everything, and yet being sad. And I always wondered what was that space in my heart that made me feel empty," she recalls.

While in college at UCLA she hoped religion would fill the void. Her dad pushed her to Islam and her boyfriend took her to a local mosque.

"It was somewhat of an extreme mosque," she says. "And they had all these principles about politics and what it would be like to turn America into a Muslim nation and-and very, very anti-Semitic. And I thought to myself, 'Oh, this is terrible. I don't want anything to do with this. If this is religion, I want nothing to do with it.'"

Repulsed by Muslim extremism and still wanting to know God she joined a different branch of Islam called Sufism. "It's a mystical practice in Islam which is all about love and harmony and finding a personal relationship with God, and I thought, 'Okay, this is perfect.'" She says, "This is where I could find peace and where I can find that relationship with God."

After law school, Hedieh began writing reports on Muslim extremism, her work led her to the FBI and a career working with government agencies combating terrorism.

She says, "It was a natural fit for me to be in Islam and in these communities and studying them and working against extremism at the same time. I really felt that I was contributing to my country and-and to my faith."

She got married and had a daughter. For years Hedieh maintained a strict adherence to Islamic law. She remembers, "It was this never-ending attempt to control your fleshly desires, your behavior in an effort to draw closer to God. You're, you're always afraid of what He's going to do to judge you, and it's not about love at all. You were constantly praying to a god that didn't answer you."

Eventually, she became frustrated that, despite her efforts, Islam gave her no assurance of salvation.

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