

Abdullah

﴿ عبد الله ﴾

[English – إنجليزي]

2011 - 1432

IslamHouse.com

Abdullah was a young man with basic high school education. He was on active duty in the U.S. Army for a few years where he learned some technical skills. At present he earns his living by repairing photocopy and fax machines.

How he accepted Islam is interesting. Yet, it is more fascinating to know how he went through the Islamization process. During the Gulf War between the United Forces and Iraq he was posted in Saudi Arabia. Abdullah was shopping in a Saudi market. He picked up an item from the shop and agreed to pay its price to the shopkeeper. However, when he was about to pay for the article, the call for prayer was heard from a nearby mosque. The shopkeeper said, "That's it," and refused to do any business until after the prayer was over. He then closed his shop and hurriedly went to the mosque. Abdullah was stunned and wondered about this incident. Why did this man not take the money when there was a mutual agreement on the price? Abdullah never knew of anyone in his life who refused to take money. Usually in business, everybody runs after money one way or another. What kind of person was this shopkeeper? What kind of religion was it that had so much priority in the eyes of this shopkeeper? Abdullah was very inquisitive and wanted to know more about this religion. He read more and more about it and finally decided to embrace Islam after his return to America. In New York he had some good teachers who gave him basic Islamic education and taught him how to read the Quran. Abdullah became a very strict practicing Muslim.

I came to know Abdullah only when he moved to Detroit. He decided to reside near the Tawheed Center of Detroit and offered most of his prayers in this mosque. I happened to be voluntarily running the affairs of this mosque. Conducting the affairs of an Islamic organization can be a challenging task. Many things happened between brother Abdullah and me, which created some temporary problems between us. We were both sincere in our own ways. Our differences totally disappeared in the course of time. It is, however, a great test of patience to have differences with someone whom you meet several times a day in the house of Allah. Let me mention a few of them here.

Since brother Abdullah was very regular in all the prayers, I wished to have his participation in some activities of the mosque. One day I asked him to call the Adhan. He said he would do it outside the mosque on the main road. I informed him that we were presently going through the licensing process of the building with the local fire department and City of Detroit. The City of Detroit was holding a public hearing about it. But, my words did not concern him. I had to tell him firmly that I had to face the public, the attorney, the Zoning Commission and the City Planning Department. I said, "You guys come, pray and leave the mosque. You do not have any idea of the difficulties faced by us at City Hall. Some wisdom and caution should be observed in our Islamic practice. Why should we annoy and excite our non-Muslim neighbors? Furthermore, we should concentrate on reviving faith in Muslims rather than creating problems with our non-Muslim neighbors." My words did not

budge him at all. He refused to make the Adhan in the mosque. I, Allah forgive me, had to ask someone else to make the Adhan.

Incidentally, I know only one mosque in North America which has the permission to place its speakers outside the mosque. This is due to a court ruling in favor of the Muslims in Dearborn, Michigan, because of its mostly Muslim neighborhood.

Brother Abdullah asked me for the key to the mosque. I told him that the mosque is open for prayers and we are limiting access to the keys for insurance purposes.

After a few weeks brother Abdullah asked my permission to let his guest sleep in the mosque at night. I refused. I asked him, "Why don't you take him to your house?" He said, "Because I have a wife." I told him, "I shall take your guest to my house." He said, "Don't you have a wife?" I said, "Yes, but I shall find a room for your guest. Alternatively, I shall keep him in a hotel and pay for it." Brother Abdullah walked away angrily. He wanted to do it only in his own way. He complained to many Muslims about me. In spite of these hard feelings, he was committed to attending the congregational prayers in the mosque.

Brother Abdullah had memorized a considerable part of the Quran. His recitation was very charming and effective. I asked him to lead the Isha prayer daily. He was memorizing more and more Quran every day. He loved every new surah(chapter) he memorized and preferred to recite it whilst leading the prayer. There were always some mistakes in his newly learned surahs. This made many Muslims uneasy.

I talked to Abdullah about it. I suggested to him that he should recite only those surahs which he had mastered and that he should recite them in front of me a few times one day in advance. He liked my suggestion. Thus he improved and understood my point of view. The mistakes in recitation totally disappeared and our teamwork and co-operative attitude helped us to reconcile.

We faced another problem with brother Abdullah. He used to recite a long surah followed by Surah Ikhlas in each rakat(a unit of prayer). Thus, prayers took a long time. Sometimes the night prayer took twenty minutes. People did not have this kind of commitment and patience. I communicated these feelings of the people to brother Abdullah. He said he liked to recite the way one companion of the Holy Prophet(pbuh) did. He recited Surah Ikhlas in all his offerings of prayer. I told him, "As far as I recall, Surah Ikhlas was recited only in the second rakat." Brother Abdullah said, "He read in a Hadith that it was in both rakats." Hence, nobody could stop brother Abdullah reciting a long surah followed by Surah Ikhlas.

One day I saw him lying on the floor of the mosque on his right side with his arm under his head waiting for the time of Fajr Prayer. I got worried and approached him and asked him if there was something wrong. He said he was fine and that Prophet Muhammad(pbuh)

used to take brief rest like this, as he was doing. Abdullah would try to practice anything he read from the Quran or Hadith without being shy.

His family life was remarkable. His wife and his sister-in-law accepted Islam through his efforts. His in-laws also accepted Islam. He had many children. All were very good in the recitation of the Quran. His oldest son was about seven years old and had memorized a considerable part of the Quran under his father's supervision. His son regularly came to the mosque to offer prayer with the congregation, even in Fajr Prayer. I do not know anybody who would bring his seven-year-old son regularly to Fajr Prayer, even during severe cold, snow or storm. Brother Abdullah used to teach his son Quran after Fajr Prayer in the mosque. His son's Islamic knowledge, practice and behavior were superb. His recitation of Quran was excellent like his father. He behaved like a thirty-year-old mature person. He would be a good Imam of mosque.

Later brother Abdullah not only had the key to the mosque, but he was also made responsible for conducting the prayers in the mosque. I thought Abdullah was also ready to deliver the Juma' Khutbas(Friday Sermons). He reluctantly accepted one. He did extremely well. He was, therefore, assigned one Juma' Khutba at the Tawheed Center of Detroit and one at the Tawheed Center of Farmington Hills, Michigan each month. He was voluntarily carrying out his assignments extremely well.

Without exaggeration many people came to me from both the mosques requesting that he be the Khateeb(the person who gives the Friday Sermon) permanently. They loved to hear his recitation of the Quran as well. Truly speaking, we collected more donations for each mosque whenever brother Abdullah delivered the Friday Sermon in Salatul Juma.

One day brother Abdullah came to the Tawheed Center of Detroit with another local Muslim brother. Fajr Prayer was over and everyone had left the mosque. I was reciting the Quran when both these brothers entered the mosque. They offered their prayers. I welcomed both of them since they had just returned from Hajj. I insisted on taking them to my house for breakfast. Brother Abdullah declined, telling me he had not yet gone to his house. He was coming directly to the mosque from Hajj. He told me that Prophet Muhammad(pbuh) used to go to mosque upon his return from a journey before going home and meeting with his family. I wonder how many born Muslims follow this practice.

Brother Abdullah now laughs on his past rigid behavior. He now accepts variation in Islamic practice. He even started calling the Adha inside the mosque.

After his first Juma' Khutba I introduced him to the audience. While introducing him I mentioned how he accepted Islam and how his son is proud to be in Fajr Prayer daily. After this introduction he was anxious to know how his khutba was. I told him that it was excellent, so much so that he finished on time which happened to be a problem with other Khateebes. He left quietly. After Isha Prayer brother Hani wanted to talk to me. He said,

"Brother Abdullah is upset. He feels that by praising him in his presence, it was like cutting his neck, as mentioned in a Hadith." I told him that you should see another Hadith also, which instructs us to give due respect and credit to whosoever deserves it. Prophet Shuaib(pbuh) also insisted that his people not belittle credit if it is due. It is also mentioned in the Quran in many places. Some people focus only on one Hadith and draw their own conclusions. Thank God I did not exaggerate anything in the introduction. Furthermore, people should know all about the new Khateeb. I expressed my opinion to brother Abdullah the next day. He was satisfied with my explanation.

After one month once again I introduced him for the benefit of the new audience after his second khutba. I said, "I am not praising brother Abdullah, but I feel I should do justice in pointing out the facts and the real qualities of our new Khateeb." After the introduction, I added that authority and responsibility go together.

Brother Abdullah and brother Hani are now responsible for the mosque in my absence. Both are handling their responsibility and authority superbly well.

Brother Abdullah attended some Arabic classes in the local community college offered by Dr. Sheikh Ali Suleiman. Now he speaks Arabic, understands some grammar and recites and memorizes surahs of Quran. He also learns new Ahadith, delivers the Friday Sermons and guides many disbelievers to the light of Islam. A high school graduate with sincerity and commitment can do all these wonderful things and introduce and propagate Islam amongst people of other faiths.

Brother Abdullah is the by-product of the Gulf War. Many other soldiers accepted Islam after visiting Saudi Arabia.

From the book of "How Islam touched their hearts" By Imtiaz Ahmad