

The purpose of my research for this class project was to further my understanding of faith and religion, and how I could apply aspects of what I learn to apply to my own journey in faith and discovering my beliefs. The first person I interviewed to discuss the topic of faith was Radwa Khan. She is a phlebotomist and has been one of my closest friends since the early days of grade school, where we met. I felt she was a qualified candidate for this research project as she is a Muslim who has extensive knowledge about her faith and religion, and she is an introspective person who has had many life experiences that shaped her beliefs and values.

Radwa is a Muslim, or a follower of Islam. Islam's fundamental beliefs come from their Holy Book, the Quran, and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. Radwa was born into her faith, with her parents providing her with education of Islam and its teachings. She, however, hasn't always followed the religion - at the age of 16, she was raped and this traumatic event shifted her worldview completely, and came to believe in no God. "I became an atheist out of the thought process of why horrible things happen to good people. How could God allow that? Why didn't God protect me?" Her father was also a negative impact on her faith - a verbally and emotionally abusive parent, Radwa knew her father as the man who preached religion but chose not to practice it. He didn't provide a healthy, nurturing environment that should have been bountiful with the fruits of God, and it contributed to her becoming an atheist. "I didn't want to believe in anything my dad believed in because I began to think if I believed in what he believed in, I would become him." As time passed, she began searching for faith again, and chose Islam. She has since then followed the teachings and beliefs of the religion, practicing it in her daily life and using it to form a unique perspective on the world and life itself.

Radwa's faith in God and belief in Islam are significant in her understanding of the world. "It brought a kind of discipline that even inpatient and outpatient programs couldn't in certain areas of my individuality. For starters, strengthening my relationship with God ultimately gave me a sense of fear and love for a higher power." Radwa then continues to speak about her experiences with outpatient and rehab programs, and mentions how having fear in a higher power helped her with abstinence, and explains that this abstinence can be applied to anything in life. I asked her how else her religion helped her with sobriety - "My discipline and faith in God is what kept me in check, helped me maintain my sobriety thus far, and the result of meditation humbled my character and calmed my personality."

It seemed to me that most religions shared the same basic principles - love thy neighbor, display respect to others, help those in need, etc. - but I wanted to know more about how the principles of religion affected Radwa. What were her most sacred ideals? She spoke about how today's society undervalues intimacy and promotes hookup culture. "Through my faith and through personal experience, you realize at a point of maturity that you are exchanging precious, sacred energies. Because of this, I strictly believe in a form of commitment as my faith has taught me. There's a beauty in being selective. And I believe that is a beautiful mentality for anyone and everyone to have." In Islam, it is forbidden to drink alcohol, so I decided to ask her about that too. She maintained that sobriety is the purest form of existence, and today's society glamorizes partying and drinking as positive experiences. There are also a number of other

factors that alcohol can lead to, such as addiction, criminal activity, “and the abusive, impulsive, reckless behaviors that transpire from being under the influence.”

One of the things I wanted to discover was how faith can change a person, from their beliefs to their personalities and ways of thinking. Radwan was someone I wanted to personally ask about this question because she is a kind, thoughtful, introspective, reflective, and self-aware person. She offers great guidance and is the most forgiving person I know. When I relayed this question to her, she responded with “It has educated me, brought me awareness, broadened my mind in ways sitting in a classroom couldn’t/learning from my elders couldn’t. Due to faith, I can confidently say I have reached the most raw and purest state of peace all around.”

During this interview, I learned a significant amount of information about her religion and its impact on her life, but I also learned more about how she functions and how her beliefs propel her in life. The guidance that she gets from her God is the guidance that she gives to me, and it appears that who she is as a person is because of her faith in God and the teachings that her religion brings her. My understanding of faith has increased and I can see how applying certain values can improve my life and bring me direction and hope.