

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

164902 - He wants to become Muslim but he works as a tattoo artist

the question

I am a tattoo artist who is interested in Islam and would like to take my shahada. While I am aware that tattooing is considered haram, this is my profession for the past 15 years and I don't know what else I could do to support my family. Can I become a Muslim and remain in my profession?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

Firstly:

The greatest blessing that Allah can bestow upon His slave is to enable him to discover Islam and open his heart to believe in Him and to submit to Him. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whomsoever Allâh wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islâm, and whomsoever He wills to send astray, He makes his breast closed and constricted, as if he is climbing up to the sky. Thus Allâh puts the wrath on those who believe not”

[al-An'aam 6:125].

Shaykh al-Sa'di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah says - explaining to His slaves the sign of a person being blessed and guided and the sign of a person being doomed and misguided: if his heart is open to Islam and is filled with the light of faith and certainty, and he feels at ease with that in himself and he loves good and does it willingly, and he enjoys it and does not find it burdensome, this is a sign that Allah has guided him and blessed him by enabling him to follow the straight path.

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And the sign of the one whom Allah wishes to leave astray is that he finds his heart constricted and he feels uneasy with ideas of faith, knowledge and certainty; his heart is immersed in specious arguments and whims and desires, and no goodness can reach him; his heart is not open to doing good. In his constriction it is as if he is climbing up to the sky, i.e., as if he has been made to climb up to the sky, which he is reluctant to do.

This reason, the fact that they do not believe, is what dictated that Allah should put the wrath on them, because they closed the door of mercy and goodness for themselves. This is a rule that does not change. The one who gives (in charity) and fears Allah and testifies to the truth, Allah will show him the path of ease, but whoever is miserly and thinks he does not need any guidance and disbelieves in the truth, Allah will show him the path of evil.

End quote from Tafseer al-Sa'di, 272.

We ask Allah to guide you and open your heart to Islam, and to bless you by enabling you to submit to Him and accept His religion.

Secondly:

Your entering Islam is something that is obligatory and there can be no delay or hesitation, because it is the way to eternal happiness and salvation from disbelief and eternity in Hellfire. So there is no room for choice in that regard, and you should not place any obstacle in the way, no matter what it is. Rather you should hasten to enter Islam straight away, and throw off the life of heedlessness and confusion. When you do ghusl (full ablution) and pray and prostrate before Allah, you will realise the difference between being a person who is a slave to Allah the Almighty Creator, and being a person who is a slave to his own self and his whims and desires.

Perhaps you think now that you will never overcome the haraam deed that is tattooing, but we believe that when you become Muslim, you will gain an amazing strength by which you will attain

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victory over your nafs (self) and you will find your freedom and pleasure in obeying the command of your Lord and sacrificing worldly gains and pleasures to please Him.

Entering into the new religion means that one is breaking free from constraint, constriction, humiliation and a life of hardship.

It is freeing one's soul to soar in a vast world which can hardly encompass his joy and happiness, and one will be prepared to sacrifice what is dear and precious in order to retain this happiness.

Life is filled with dozens and hundreds of stories and cases in which people -- after becoming Muslim -- were able to overcome habits and attitudes that had been deeply rooted in their lives, such as zina (fornication, adultery) and drinking alcohol; giving up such things is much harder than giving up a job or profession.

Islam instills in the hearts of its followers the certainty that Allah is the Sovereign, the Provider Who provides for His slave from sources they could not imagine, and He does not disappoint anyone who puts his hope in Him.

“And whosoever fears Allaah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

3. And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allaah, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allaah will accomplish his purpose. Indeed Allaah has set a measure for all things”

[al-Talaaq 65:2-3].

These are not just words aimed at stirring up emotions; rather it is truth that one must believe in. Allah is the Creator and Sovereign of all things, and He has promised His slave that He will provide for him and suffice him and grant him happiness, if he fears Him and obeys Him. Allah never

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breaks His promise and what is beyond His power when He is Able to do all things?

Do you think that Allah would grant you provision when you disbelieve in Him and are disobeying His commands, then when you believe in Him and make sacrifices for the sake of His religion, He would abandon and forsake you??

O slave of Allah:

You must have heard of Makkah (Mecca), where our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was born, to which pilgrimage is performed to the sacred House of Allah, which is the fifth pillar of Islam (Hajj = pilgrimage).

Have you heard of the well of Zamzam from which water springs in Makkah?

Do you know the story behind this amazing water, which has continued flowing for thousands of years until today?

It is an amazing story, which is like your story to a large extent.

The Prophet of Allah Ibraaheem (Abraham -- peace be upon him), took his wife Haajar (Hagar), the mother of Ismaa'eel (Ishmael -- peace be upon him) to settle her in the place that would become the location of Makkah (Mecca); it was an uninhabited place at that time, with no inhabitants, no water, no agriculture, nothing...

... Then Ibraaheem brought Haajar and her son Ismaa'eel when she was still breastfeeding him, to a place near the Ka'bah under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Makkah, nor was there any water. So he left them there and left with them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ismaa'eel's mother followed him saying, "O Ibraaheem! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is

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there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look at her. Then she asked him, "Has Allaah commanded you to do this?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not forsake us," and went back while Abraham proceeded onwards. When he reached al-Thaniyah where they could not see him, he turned to face the Ka'bah, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayer:

"O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House (the Ka'bah at Makkah) in order, O our Lord, that they may perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah). So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allaah) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks"

[Ibraaheem 14:37].

Ismaa'eel's mother went on breastfeeding Ismaa'eel and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at him (i.e. Ismaa'eel) tossing in agony. She left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found that the mountain of al-Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from al-Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached al-Marwa where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between al-Safa and al-Marwa) seven times.

Ibn 'Abbaas said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "This is the (origin of) the people's saa'i (walking) between them between them (i.e. al-Safa and al-Marwa)." When she reached al-Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she said to herself "Shh!" and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, "O, (whoever you may be)! You have

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made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?" Then she saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), until water appeared. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it.

Ibn 'Abbaas said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "May Allah have mercy on the mother of Ismaa'eel! Had she let Zamzam (flow without trying to control it) (or had she not scooped from that water) (to fill her water-skin), Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." And he said: "The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid of being neglected, for this is the House of Allah which will be built by this boy and his father, and Allah never neglects His people'..."

The story was narrated at length in Saheeh al-Bukhaari, 3364.

See how the mother of Ismaa'eel (peace be upon him) had certain faith that Allah would not forsake them so long as Ibraaheem did what Allah commanded him to do.

Look at the angel who came to her to bring forth water for her and her thirsty child from the depths of the earth; He said to her: Do not be afraid of being neglected ...

So do not be afraid of being neglected, for Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is too generous and kind for that and He is greater than you can ever imagine.

This does not apply only to you; rather this is something that is repeated with thousands of Muslim people... They are afraid to repent and follow the path of righteousness because they are working in haraam jobs, in banks that deal in riba (usury), or in casinos, or in haraam types of entertainment, and so on. The Shaytaan makes them fear poverty and makes them think that there is no alternative way of earning a living, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "Shaitân (Satan) threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit Fahshâ (evil deeds, illegal

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sexual intercourse, sins); whereas Allâh promises you Forgiveness from Himself and Bounty, and Allâh is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower” [al-Baqarah 2:268].

But reality demonstrates that most of those who repent find that opportunities to earn a halaal income open up for them that they could never imagine.

Hence we say: hasten to become Muslim and free yourself from the shackles of disbelief; remove its darkness from your eyes and save yourself from the Fire. Do not fear poverty when you are under the protection of the Lord of the Worlds, the Sovereign Whose stores are never empty. And be certain that He will never forsake His slaves or abandon His people and close friends.

Let us assume, for argument’s sake, that you do not find any halaal means of earning a living after you become Muslim, so you go back to your haraam job. What comparison can there be between your situation before and your situation after? It is a comparison between a believing Muslim who affirms the oneness of Allah but commits sin, and a person who disbelieves in Allah. There is no comparison between them at all. The wise man, if he chooses between two bad things or two evils, will choose the lesser of the two. So he will not choose a combination of disbelief and sin; rather he will choose Islam and guidance, and if he falls into sin after he disciplines himself in obedience to Allah, then in that case he will have the hope of forgiveness.

However we say that this is only an assumption; we think that Allah will honour you, provide for you and bestow upon you from His bounty that which you cannot imagine, because He is the Most Generous, the Kind, the Most Merciful Who says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islâmic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)”

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[al-Nahl 16:97].

Finally, the best news you can give us is the news that you have become Muslim and a believer, and we are waiting for this wonderful news.

O Allah, open his heart to faith and guide his heart to Islam, and bestow upon him the bounty of Your mercy.

And Allah knows best.