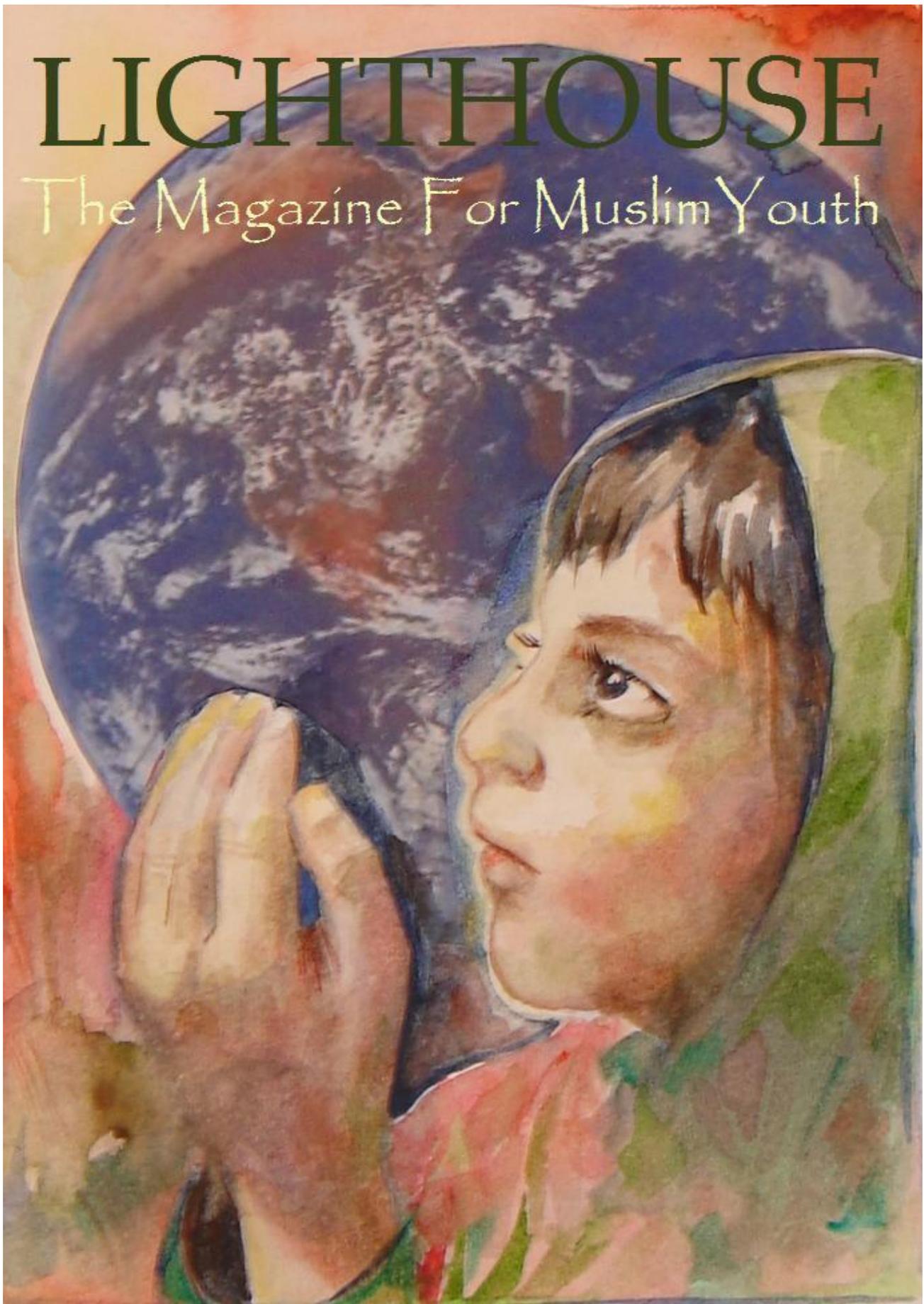
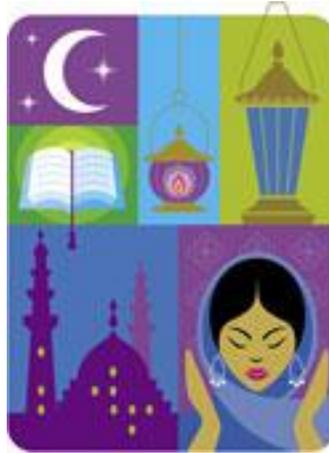


LIGHTHOUSE

The Magazine For Muslim Youth



July/August/September Issue 2010



RAMADAN

Reaching for the stars

An early breakfast

Making an extra effort to be aware of Allah

A month of spiritual blessings

D(zzz...) dreaming about Eid

A time of sharing and caring, breaking the fast together

Night time prayers whispered to Allah

Such is the wondrous month of Ramadan

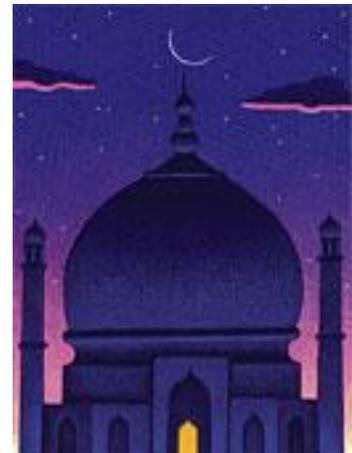
Are you ready?

TEMPTATIONS

Saleh tried to ignore the rumblings of his stomach as the other kids stampeded out of class and headed to the cafeteria. His head throbbed and he felt like curling up in his bed and taking a long nap, only to awake to the yummy smells and sounds of *iftar*. He looked at his watch. It was only 12:45 and half of the day was ahead of him. He pushed away images of pizza and brownies as he headed to the bathroom to make wudzu and pray *salat*. Saleh liked Ramadan, mostly. It was a special month and waking up early to eat and having a big dinner together at night seemed cool to him, yet more so on the weekends. On weekdays, it was hard to get up to eat *sahoor* and then barely sleep a little before it was time for school.

"Ramadan takes some getting used to," his mother would say. "Oh yes," added his big sister Rania, "and by the time I get used to it, it's over!" He did remember one great tip Rania gave him before she left for college. Keep yourself busy and distracted. Thinking too much about growling stomachs and food can make the day seem longer, and the fast even harder. She also told him to not get all hot and sweaty in the summer because that would make him really thirsty. He missed Rania, even though she teased him a lot and wouldn't let him put a foot in her room, but still, she always seemed to understand how he was feeling and could relate to it.

The day passed in a blur of math quizzes and band practice. As soon as he got home, Saleh collapsed in bed so he could catch up on his sleep. His bed seemed like a small piece of heaven to him. Before drifting off to sleep, he imagined what Rania would be doing. College classes lasted longer than school, he thought, and it must be harder to keep working and running here and there while fasting. Maybe keeping busy helped the days go by faster.



Saleh awoke to the sound of banging cabinets in the kitchen. His throat felt dry and scratchy and he felt like slurping up a cool mango smoothie. He leapt out of bed and ran to the kitchen to see what his mother was making for *iftar*. He could not smell anything good yet, and usually the house smelled great when she was cooking.

In the kitchen he found his dad with his head poked into the fridge. "What's up Dad," asked Saleh. "Where's mom? What are we having for iftar?"

"That's a good question, son. Do you have any bright ideas?"

"But where's mom? Isn't she coming home?" asked Saleh.

"She's on her way right now, but she's stuck in traffic. She had to work late today and guess what? She's bringing a guest home with her for iftar. We have to get something on the table really quick."

Saleh looked at the kitchen clock. It was almost 7:30 p.m! They did not have much time. He thought of the things his mother usually had ready for iftar. Samosas, fruit salad, egg and cheese sandwiches, apple fritters ... he hoped his dad knew how to make some of those things, because his specialty was peanut butter and banana sandwiches and not much else. He did help Rania make a fruit salad once so he decided to try that again. He grabbed some apples, pears and oranges from the fruit bowl and found the cutting board and a knife. Soon he had a bowl of fruit ready for iftar. Meanwhile his dad seemed to be doing something with boiled eggs. He dropped a peeled egg on the floor and it slipped away like a penguin sliding on ice. Saleh bent down to get it and bumped heads with his dad who had thought to do the very same thing.

"Owww" yelled Saleh and rubbed his forehead. His dad was giggling and pointing at the egg that has escaped under the kitchen table.

"Ok, we have dates, juice, fruit salad, egg sandwiches and ... what else can we add here?" asked his dad.



"We're home! *Assalam alaykum!*" called his mom from the driveway.

Saleh looked around at the messy kitchen: apple peels and dirty bowls covered the kitchen table, egg shells, jars, and bottles filled the counters and the floor badly needed to be swept. His mom would freak out for sure when she saw how her usually spotless kitchen looked like. If there was one thing his mom hated, it was a messy kitchen.

Saleh rushed out to meet his mom and her friend. He was surprised to see a boy a little younger than him with the lady.

"Saleh, come and meet Mrs. Owen and her son Ali," said his mom.

Saleh shook hands politely and slipped away to the kitchen. He had barely managed to dump the peels when his mom came into the kitchen.

"Oh, how sweet of you to make *iftar* for us," said his mom.

Then she looked around the terrible mess in her usually spotless kitchen and sighed. Saleh held his breath. He knew that people often felt even more angry than usual when they were fasting, because they were so tired and hungry.

Before anyone could say anything, the *adhan* sounded and the guests came into the kitchen to share dates that Saleh's dad was holding out. Mrs. Owen and her son were so grateful and happy by the simple *iftar* that Saleh felt as if they had prepared a grand banquet for their unexpected guests.

Everyone offered their *Maghrib salat* together and then Mrs. Owen insisted on cleaning up the kitchen while his mom made kebab sandwiches, sweet potato fries, and tea for everyone. Saleh discovered that Ali loved basketball as much as he did and was a great shot. He



thought as he played that the blessings of Ramadan were multiplied when shared, and a little effort, when sincere, counted for a lot. Also, it did not matter if the iftar was a fancy or very simple affair, as long as it was offered from the heart and accepted graciously! He couldn't wait to call Rania and tell her about his new iftar-preparation skills. Who knew, maybe next time the two of them could invite all their family and friends over for a big iftar bash. Saleh remembered that his grandma always used to pray for the next Ramadan in advance, hoping to see the blessed month again the following a year, with good health and faith. He made a mental note to do the same and to remember even when his stomach growled out loud that it *was* a very special month, in which all the day's hunger and thirst was forgotten with a few bites of simple *iftar*.

Charity

By Haady and Ali Khalil, 7-year old twins.

What is charity?

Charity is when somebody falls down and you help them get up.

When you see someone getting bullied and you help them.

When someone is thirsty and you give them water.

It is taking canned foods to the Food Drive at school.

Charity is when you see garbage at the park and you throw it away in the trash can.

Charity is listening to your parents.

It is going to a church and serving food to the homeless people.

Charity is making someone happy when they are sad.

When my brother really wants my favorite toy, and I give it to him.

Charity is giving money to the needy.

Charity is helping your mom around the house.

When you see somebody without a friend, you try to be their friend.



Charity is opening the door for the person behind you.

If you say a nice word to someone or give them a smile – that is charity.

The Holy Quran says, "And give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask....." (Ch. 2:177)

The Principles of Faith

By Zaighum Khalil

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the best Knower.

2. This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who keep their duty

3. Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them,

4. And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee, and of the Hereafter they are sure.

5. These are on a right course from their Lord and these it is that are successful.

The verses that I just recited are from the beginning of the 2nd chapter of the Holy Quran. The name of this chapter is, "The Cow."

The cow stands for love for wealth. Muslims are reminded in this chapter to only worship the Divine Being. They are asked not to worship their animal desires of material wealth. In the first chapter of the Holy Quran, Al-Fatihah, which we recite in our daily prayers, we ask God to be our Spiritual Guide.

The second chapter, "The Cow" is an answer to our prayers. We, as believers are given assurance that this message is from Allah, Who is the Author of the Holy Quran. The message of the Holy Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. The message through revelation was memorized and written down, so that it could not be forgotten. We are given the fundamental principles of Islam right in the beginning of this chapter. These principles stand for both belief and practice. Let us examine these principles one by one.

1. Belief in the Unseen: This stands for belief in Allah, Who is the Unseen. We cannot see or hear Allah, but He is Ever-Hearing and Seeing. He knows everything we do or say.



2. We are asked to remember Allah in our prayers and seek His help and guidance to do good.

3. Charity, or giving to others out of what Allah has given us, is important. We should try to share our money, food and other material things with those in need. Charity begins at home and extends to our relatives, friends, neighbors and those in need. If we cannot afford to give material things, we can use our God-given physical faculties to help. For example, we can help an old person with his daily chores, teach someone something we know, or do any community work. Both prayer and charity are mentioned together in the Holy Quran to show the importance of both.

4. Belief in the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, along with all the prophets of God before him, is another principle

of Islam. This means that we should follow the footsteps of all the prophets of God, the Holy Prophet Muhammad being the last of them.

5. The last is the belief in the Day of Judgment. According to this we are responsible for our good and bad works in this world, and will be held accountable in the life after death.

It is very important that as Muslims, we follow these beliefs in our daily lives and stay away from doing wrong. By following the right path of the Holy Quran, we will have the blessings and protection of Allah. This is the best success and happiness one can ask for.

Should Muslim kids go to Muslim schools?

By Aafia Ahmad, age 11

For children around the world there are many choices for schools, whether they are schools run by the government, or private, Muslim schools. Kids end up going to school for at least 14 years to complete their basic education, so it is important to consider where they are being educated. People have different ideas about what kind of schools Muslim kids should attend. For example, my mom thinks that it is best for children to be with others in a Muslim setting. I don't agree with her. I am not sure that one can only fit in with people of one's own religion. Many things affect how a person can fit in.

I don't think it is true that you will pick up bad habits only from people who have different religions. My best friends are not Muslims but I don't learn anything bad from them. It is possible to learn good things from people of all religions. I've met some Muslims who are a bad example. I think it depends on how strong a person's own character is.



It is true that some middle schools and high schools have mixed dances and other un-Islamic activities but you always have the choice not to attend. After all, if we are living in a diverse country, we will have to make careful decisions all our lives. At my dad's work, sometimes the people go out to a bar for drinks together, but my dad stays away from those things. He also misses out on the Christmas party and other activities that he thinks are better to avoid.

It is very important to be careful about the kind of friends a person makes, in school or at work, and to realize what kind of influence they are exerting on us. **Good friends can help us on our journey through life, while bad friends can destroy our life by leading us towards evil deeds. It is important to think about the ways our friends are affecting us, whether we are in Muslim schools or other schools.**



In order to understand the similarities and differences between Muslim and public schools, we have to look at them one by one. Here are the good things of Muslim schools: One can learn more about Islam during the school day and it is easier to perform the daily prayers while in school. In Muslim schools one would not have to worry about haram foods being served in the cafeteria. I once almost ate a pork corn dog in the cafeteria. The menu said that the corn dogs were chicken but I felt suspicious and checked with the lunch ladies and it turned out that they were pork. In a Muslim school, people won't question the different things like not eating pork and gelatin stuff. It may be easier to dress modestly and avoid some of the temptations that affect other people who do not have Islamic values. But then kids who attend Muslim schools come from all sorts of homes and backgrounds and the home environment has a huge influence on the manners and morals of children.

Here are the disadvantages about Muslim schools: Parents have to pay extra money to send their kids to go to Muslim school.

The schools do not get tax money so there will probably be fewer resources, like libraries, computers and science equipment.

Hijabs are usually mandatory for girls 4th grade and above. I wish that girls were allowed to choose if they want to wear a hijab or not. The Quran tells us that there is no compulsion in religion.

Uniforms are required in most Muslim schools and I think that is a disadvantage. I think it would be terrible to have to wear something that I don't like and that is uncomfortable every day.

I also feel that if one attends a Muslim school one won't get to know people from other faiths. We should be able to know about other religions and let other people learn about ours. If we are in a public school with people of all religions, we have the opportunity to have an interfaith dialogue every day. I know most kids do not go around talking religion with their friends. But if we think about it, religion is a way of life so what we think and say and how we act reflects on our religion. Hopefully it reflects in a good way.

Usually Muslim schools don't have music programs because some Muslims think music is forbidden. In school, the songs we learn are not disrespectful and there isn't anything bad that I can see about learning to play an instrument. It is a skill like any other. Music helps people come together and being in a band or orchestra teaches kids to be kind, patient, helpful, and peaceful. Some people might feel differently and they have a right to their own opinion.

I believe that kids should get to choose if they want to go to a Muslim or public school. A girl I know chose to go to a Muslim school because she thought it would be easier to fit in. Some other kids I know go to a Muslim school because their parents want them to. Each way is fine. Since both types of schools have good arguments towards them, I think they should be equally considered and the kids should be involved in the decision. Sometimes families do not have a choice about the kind of schools that the kids attend. In that situation, it helps to remember that all schools teach the universal values of kindness, respect, tolerance, acceptance, sharing, hard work, honesty, and decency. It is our job to appreciate and learn those values, for they are the common things that all religions share.



RAMADZAN

By Malaika Sahukhan, age 8

Ramadhan is the ninth month of Islamic calendar. The month of Ramadhan starts when we see a new moon called the hilal. Muslims fast in this month. Fasting means to stay away from eating and drinking from dawn to sunset. Fasting helps us to feel closer to Allah and stay away from bad actions. We also learn to take care of the needy people .



Allah loves this month. We receive more blessings, mercy and forgiveness from Allah during this month. Quran started to come to Prophet Muhammad (S) in this blessed month. This month ends with

the sighting of another new moon and next day is Eid al-Fitr. We enjoy this day with our friends and family.

The Sunnah for Eid-ul Fitr:

- 1.Wake up early.
- 2.Offer Fajr prayers.
- 3.Prepare for personal cleanliness and take care of details of clothing etc.
- 4.Take a ghusl (bath) after fajr.
- 5.Brush your teeth.
- 6.Dress up, putting on best clothes available, whether new or clean old ones.
- 7.Use perfume (men only).
- 8.Have breakfast on Eid-ul-Fitr before leaving for Eid prayers.
- 10.Go to the prayer ground or mosque, early.
- 11.Offer the Eid prayer in congregation in an open space or a mosque; wherever it's being held.

12. Recite the following Takbir (glorification of Allah) on the way to prayer and until the beginning of salaah (prayer) on Eid. The Takbir is:

Allaho-Akbar, Allaho Akbar. La- ila-ha-ill-lal-lah.
Allaho-Akbar, Allaho-Akbar. Wa-lillahill-Hamd. (Allah is great. Allah is great. There is no god but Allah. Allah is great. Allah is great. And all praises are for Allah.)

9. Pay Zakat-ul-Fitr (charity given for needy so that they too can celebrate Eid).

MY MEMORIES OF RAMADZAN

BY Dr. Ayesha Khan

Most of my memories of Ramadan are about food. Yummy samosas, yummy donuts, yummy cakes, yummy brownies. My mom used to let me eat 7 layer burritos in the morning because they were my favorite! Chicken nuggets, ice cream, sweet rolls, pakoras, chicken drumsticks, chips, brownies...ahh Ramadan you're delicious!

WHAT? Wait a minute! If Ramadan is about fasting, why is food all I remember?! Why is food all I think about when I'm fasting?! Hmmm. That gave me some food for thought (pun intended!).

I started thinking back about Ramadan, and it's true, a lot of my memories are about breaking the fast and getting to eat yummy things rather than about the fasting itself. You know why I think that is? Whenever someone tells you not to think about something, you naturally think about it. Try this: don't think about an elephant. What were you thinking about? An elephant, right? It happens automatically. Whenever we are told not to do something,

we think about doing it more. But that can't be what Ramadan is all about, right? Right!



Thinking back, I remember when I was eight years old or so, my dad called a family meeting. This was a big deal because we never had family meetings. I'll be honest, I thought we were in trouble and I was scared. We walked somberly to the dining table. I snuck a glance in at my older brother to see if he knew what was going on. He looked as confused as me. We all sat down, hearts racing. I was sure I was in trouble for something even though I couldn't think of anything I had done that would call for a family meeting!

OK, yeah, I had used my little sister's art stuff so mine wouldn't get finished. Yeah, I had stayed up till midnight reading when I should have been sleeping. Yeah, I had been eating candy at my friend's house even though I wasn't supposed to...but c'mon! A family meeting for that? Uh, oh. What if they were going to tell me that I was adopted? What if my brother was adopted? What if my sister was adopted, that would explain so much!? What if we were moving back to where we were adopted from? What if—

"I called the family meeting," my dad began, "because Ramadan is coming up." Ooh. I felt all of us let out a sigh of relief. Ok. We weren't in trouble. It was just Ramadan. Yummy, delicious Ramadan.

"Ramadan is not about food," my dad continued.

What? I thought that's exactly what it was about. Giving up food in the day so you could eat yummiier food at night.

"It's about giving up the worldly things that Allah has allowed us so we can focus on our spiritual life."

Huh? Now I was really confused but I had a feeling my dad was about to explain.

"You see, Allah has made this world pretty awesome for us. It is full of good things for us to eat and things we can enjoy doing like reading or watching TV or a movie, or hanging out with good friends. Going outside and taking a walk or run or hike in His glorious beautiful earth, or running around in the park. Allah has made all of these things for us and we are allowed to spend our time doing them. However, we sometimes get so caught up in them that we forget to spend time doing things for our spiritual life.

We rush through our prayers so we can watch TV. We go hang out with our friends instead of reading the Quran. We order way too much food because it looks so good and we even let it go to waste when we can't finish it, without thinking of those that have no food. We buy more and more fashionable clothes or toys or whatever just to keep up with all the latest trends without thinking twice of spending our money for better causes. We get so used to all the great stuff we have, that we sometimes lose sight of the fact that we have nothing if we don't have Allah in our hearts."

Whoa. Now my dad was getting philosophical, and I was getting bored. Still, I felt he was working up to something so I stayed tuned.

"So Allah, who provided all the things in this world for us to enjoy, has also provided us with guidance for how not to get lost in this world. In the month of Ramadan, he revealed the Quran to us so we would have some guidelines for how to navigate this life without getting lost. He tells us we are allowed to enjoy the great stuff He has given us. In the Quran, He tells us,

'O you who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you, and give thanks to Allah if it is (indeed) He who you worship" (2:172).

Also

'They ask you (O Muhammad) what is made lawful for them. Say: (all) good things are made lawful for you. (5:4)'

"However," my dad went on, "Allah knew that we were likely to get carried away with all this great stuff if we weren't careful. So also, He gave us the month of Ramadan as a month to bring us back to basics and a month of

training for the rest of the year. See, Ramadan isn't about just giving up food. It's about us being able to give up many of the things we usually indulge in so that we can focus on Allah. Food is just one of them but when we give up food, we aren't supposed to think about how hungry we are. Instead we are supposed to think about how fortunate we are to even have food; so many people don't. When we feel hungry and weak, we aren't supposed to lay on the couch in front of the TV and watch it until the clock ticks down to sunset."

What?! That's what I always do. The best way to make half an hour go by is to watch a TV show! What are we supposed to do then? I had a feeling my dad was going to tell us...

"Instead of occupying your time with stuff that won't benefit your spiritual life at all, we should spend Ramadan occupying our time with things that will bring us closer to Allah and bring Him into your heart.

Let's try and give up TV for the month of Ramadan.

Instead let's do other things that will help our community or help those less fortunate.



We can spend our time volunteering at a soup kitchen. We can bake cookies and have a bake sale and donate the money from it. We can read a story from the lives of the prophets together after dinner. As a family we can prepare a family meal and invite another family to come participate in our iftar. They don't even have to be Muslim. We can take the opportunity to teach someone else about our religion and show them it isn't a scary thing. We can talk about whatever real life questions you have about being one of the few Muslims in your school. Let's make some extra time for each other as a family and focus on doing something beneficial for our spiritual lives.

Also, I want all of you to pick one thing you are going to give up this month that has to do with this worldly life and pick one thing you are going to start doing that has to do with your spiritual life. It can be reading a little extra Quran. Learning Arabic. Doing an extra prayer. Whatever you want. I want it to be your choice. Oh, and one more thing. No TV during Ramadan."

We all looked up at my dad, wide eyed. No TV? But what would we do without TV? *What would I tell my friends when I didn't know what happened on the next episode. I had to know what things were cool and trendy! I had to keep up with watching. I just had to!*

Wait a minute. Isn't this what my dad had just explained? I was so caught up in TV that it was running my life. It was telling me what I had to do instead of me deciding what I wanted to do. I was going to give up TV. That's right. I was going to give it up because I decided to and I was going to tell my friends just that. And if they asked why, I would tell them I was doing it for Ramadan. I remember when Jill gave up chocolate for Lent and no one thought she was weird. This is kind of the same thing. I could do it! I was excited about Ramadan now and seeing it in a whole new light. It's not about someone making me give up stuff. It's about me deciding to get my life back on track.

I was going to give up some things because it would help me get stronger and focus on what was better. It would remind me about what things are most important in life. It's not about not thinking about the elephant. It's about all the things you can do because you aren't focusing on the elephant! Insha'Allah, I think this Ramadan is going to be more than yummy, delicious treats at iftar because Insha'Allah I am going to focus on being a better person. How about you?



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