



EPISODE 4 | LOVE & THE MUSLIM COUPLE

Programmanus

Intro music

NARRATOR

This show was recorded when the world was a bit different.

Sound of a plane flying

NARRATOR

You could easily fly to the US, hug strangers and you didn't hesitate to share a can of soda.

Sound of a can of soda being opened

NARRATOR

You're listening to Preach Shorts, with Linda Ulfhielm.

Music / Sound of a doorbell

LINDA

Hi!

WAFFA

Hi!

NARRATOR

Over the course of eight episodes, Linda is in L.A. talking to people from different faith-based backgrounds about the big questions in life. You're listening to Preach Shorts, snackable edits from the podcast Preach.



WASI

Hey!

LINDA

Hi! Nice to meet you!

WAFFA

Nice to meet you, too! I'm Waffa.

LINDA

I'm Linda.

WASI

Nice to meet you, Linda.

LINDA

You get a hug.

LINDA

Hi!

WASI

Wasi, nice to meet you.

WAFFA

Come on in!

WASI

Come on in!

LINDA

Thank you!

LINDA

In this episode, I'm sitting down with Waffa and Wasi to talk about love and faith. We meet at Waffa's place. Her roommate recently moved out, and took most of the furniture with her, so we get comfortable on a rug in her living room. Waffa and Wasi have been together for a few years now, after meeting at their local mosque.

Music

LINDA

I know you're, uh, engaged. Is that right?

WAFFA / WASI

Yeah.

LINDA

Yeah. Yeah, that is right.



WAFFA / WASI

Yeah.

LINDA

Yeah. So, how...how did you meet?

WAFFA

So, we actually met at the Islamic Center of Southern California.

LINDA

Waffa is looking at Wasi in such a heartwarming way. They look so cute together! Waffa is wearing a dark red hijab, a big shirt and a pair of blue jeans. And Wasi looks more proper, with a button-up shirt and khakis.

WAFFA

Yeah...

LINDA

Was it like a spark?

WAFFA

Oh, no. We...we actually did not like each other. But... And then it turned into like, a, you know, a friendship. And then...

LINDA

Then eventually...

WAFFA

Dating.

WASI

Yeah, it was kind of like a...

LINDA

How long were you friends before you...?

WAFFA

I...well, I...

LINDA

What did you do?

WAFFA

Because I kind of had a feeling that, you know, he liked me. I...I liked him, actually, like, for, like, a year before. So I liked him, right, and he knew about it. We didn't do anything about it. And then I kind of felt like he started liking me, and then I kind of just asked him straight up. I was like, "Do you like me or not?" Over the phone...

LINDA

"Give me an answer!"



WAFFA

Because he was being so vague and whatever. And like, I called him and I was like, "Do you like me or not?" Whatever. And he's like, "Uh, I don't want to do this over the phone." And then, um, I was like, "Just answer the question because I'm tired of, you know, this..."

LINDA

This guessing.

WAFFA

Yeah. So, he's like, "Yeah," and I was like, "All right, cool."

LINDA (Linda and Waffa talking over each other.)

Yeah. Talk to me straight up.

WAFFA

And then we just proceeded from there. Yeah. So, I was...I was just straight up, and...

WASI

You know, classic guy with commitment issues. "I don't know..." Vague, you know.

Laughter

LINDA

I have that, too.

Music

LINDA

Do you think it was easier for you to trust another person, you know, because you belong to the same faith or community?

WAFFA

I think in my opinion, that's definitely...

LINDA

Or to let someone in?

WAFFA

Yeah, well... I... The reason why... People always ask me all the time, "How do you know, that like, you..." because engaged, married or whatever, "How do you know this...this is the person you want to spend the rest of your life with?"

LINDA

Yeah.

WAFFA

And the reason why I want to spend the rest of my life with him, is because of our...of our...you know, our faith, and the way we both practice our faith is very, like we... And we remind each other like, this is... You know, we have a... We have conversations about our religion and our...our beliefs, and he's definitely like the person that just like, gets me, um...



LINDA

Personality is very important to me, so I guess Tinder is not the place to be.

WASI

It's a process, too. Like, you know... I think with, like I think where the...the faith sort of helped is that there's almost um...

WAFFA

I feel like the faith... Our faith is like our foundation.

LINDA

Yeah.

WASI

I think our faith allows us... It gives us... It gives us almost like a framework, in...in...in...in that like you have the idea... The relationship isn't just this like, open-ended thing, like you do it for a reason and a purpose, and it's to...to find someone that...who, you know, you want to share the journey of life with.

LINDA

You... You have the same faith and the same values, but, uh, do you have, like your upbringing... How was that? I was thinking about the faith, how you were practicing? Is... Is there any difference between how you were brought up?

WASI (Wasi and Waffa talking over each other.)

Culture is a big part of it. Like, you know, she comes from...

WAFFA

I'm Palestinian.

WASI

Her family is Palestinian, right, and Arab. Sort of uh... My...my parents are from India. She grew up in San Gabriel Valley, which is kind of like...like a...like a...

WAFFA

It's still the suburbs of...

WASI

...suburbs of L.A. Like, I'm a city boy, city kid, right? Grew up in Los... That's a huge difference.

LINDA

Yeah.

Music

LINDA

Waffa tells me that she struggled with her faith as a teenager, until she finally understood the meaning of prayer.

Music



WAFFA

We pray five times a day, and it's actually one of the Pillars in Islam, one of the Five Pillars, and I wouldn't be praying, and that's... And...and I thought I was... I felt terrible, because everyone my age was supposed... You're supposed to be praying, like that's...that's a part of the religion but I didn't do it. And it turns out, like, a lot of kids my...at the...at the time, my age, struggled with that, because it's like, you're in your teen years, you're trying to figure out who you are, and...

LINDA

Of course.

WAFFA

So I wasn't strong in my faith, I wasn't strong in my prayer, kind of questioning religion, and um...

LINDA

What made you think differently? What happened? Was there a turning point?

WAFFA

Yeah, there was...

(Unknown Whisperer)

What happened?

WAFFA

What happened? There was...

LINDA

What happened? Tell me.

WAFFA

There was a turning point. So, um, part of it was going to youth group and, you know, I'm not saying like, you know, going to like, the Islamic Center of Southern California... It's... It's going...just going to be with your Muslim community, and...and one where everyone...like everyone gets along with and is very like, confident in their identity. So there was... I... I was going to youth group for a couple of years and I was kind of solidifying like, my identity, and then... You know, I still kind of struggled with like, the reasoning why we...why we pray, and... You know, I...I...I was told that it's like, you know, it's a part of the religion. "You have to do it." And I was like, "But why?" And there was... There was one night in Ramadan... Ramadan is the holy month of Islam, where we fast for 30 days. And um, we...we fast from food and drink, um... You're supposed to be like, focusing on your spirituality, and so after you break your fast, um, sunset, we have nightly prayers. And there was... The was one night where the imam was leading the prayer, and, um, he was doing just like, an additional prayer in English.

Music

WAFFA

Because in the...in...we...we... We recite our prayers in Arabic, and the Arabic that I speak with my family is different than what the proper Arabic is in the Koran.

LINDA

So you speak Arabic?



WAFFA

I speak colloquial Arabic. I'm still learning the proper Arabic, that's like written in the Koran and that's um...

WASI

It's like the difference between like, Old English or like, Shakespearean English versus like, what's spoken today, and different parts of the world actually speak different kinds of Arabic. It's not like the one...the same sort of thing.

LINDA

Oh, okay.

WAFFA

Yeah. Then when I finally understood what the words meant, is when... And...and my entire life every time I prayed those nightly prayers during Ramadan, I would see... I would hear people crying, like, sobbing. And I was like...like, "Why are these people crying?" I did *not* understand it. And when I finally understood it, I was praying and like...I...uncontrollably started crying, because I finally can... I'm going to start crying right now. Um... It was like a... It was like an instant connection to God, like, that...that he's always going to be there for me, and um...

LINDA

That's beautiful.

WAFFA

Um... Sorry I'm getting so choked up.

LINDA

No.

WASI

It's okay. He's always going to be there.

WAFFA

It was because I... The reason why I was, like I'm crying now is because I...I didn't know, like, who I was or where I was in life, before that moment. And, since then, like, every time I pray and I put my head to the floor, and you kind of just like breathe and be in the moment, that's when I feel most connected to God. So at that moment, it was like to feel centered and when you go...especially when you're praying at a mosque and it's quiet and you're praying...and everyone is doing the same thing you are, you're...you're kind of focused and just focusing on your relationship with God, because you're speaking to him in that moment. I mean you... You can do it anytime and anywhere, but in a mosque and during the...the time of prayer is like when you're really just... You know...

LINDA

Yeah.

WAFFA

It's like an intimate, like a personal relationship with God, like you're talking to God. So that was... That was the turning point for me.

LINDA

The turning point.



WAFFA

Yeah. You know, it's... But it's not like it's been like, smooth sailing, like it sometimes... Like sometimes, you know, I try to make my prayers... I try to, you know, be very calm and slow in it, and kind of just take my time with it, but sometimes when I, you know, when I was in school or when busy, like I...I rushed through them because you're trying... You're trying to do the next thing, right? But... But prayer isn't...isn't meant for that. It's not just a...you know, just to pray and like, just to get it out of the way. Prayer is actually meant...it's meant to center you and to like, you know, just focus on your breathing, focus on the words that you're saying, and like, and reestablishing that...that faith with God and that relationship with God.

LINDA

Yeah.

WAFFA

Yeah.

LINDA

Just stop for a moment, and just...

WAFFA

Just breathe. Like, because we live in such a fast-paced world, especially today, like you...you need something to like, kind of ground you.

Music

LINDA

You've just heard snippets from my conversation with Waffa and Wasi. I thought it was really cool that their faith reminds them of their shared values, and works as a framework for their relationship. As I'm flipping through my dating apps, I realize my bio says nothing about my values, or what I'm looking for. I only have a few pictures. So I'm wondering, what values are important to you? And are there values you feel that people close to you need to share?

Music

NARRATOR

You've just finished Preach Shorts with Linda Ulfhielm. Preach is a production from The Swedish Educational Broadcasting company, by Daniel Persson Mora, Nanna Olasdotter Hallberg, Ludvig Widman, Tove Jonstoj, Karin Winther and Martina Magorin Borg, with host Linda Ulfhielm.

Music

NARRATOR

This was a program from the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company. You'll find more at UR Play.