

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

There are a few titles used in Scripture that, perhaps, could use some explanation:

ACTS 5:14 And **believers** were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

1 TIMOTHY 4:12 Let no one despise your *[Timothy's]* youth, but be an example to the **believers** in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

In the minds of the apostles, Believers are those who have been "added" as members of the Body of Christ and conduct themselves in the Law of God (the "word"), agape love, the Holy Spirit, faith, and purity (spiritual cleanness). In all sense of the word, Believers are begotten children of God and they are unique:

JOHN 15:18-19 If the world hates you *[speaking to Believers]*, you know that it hated Me *[Jesus Christ]* before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because **you are not of the world**, but I chose **you out of the world**, therefore the world hates you.

JOHN 17:14-15 "I *[Jesus Christ]* have given them *[speaking to Believers]* Your *[God's]* word; and the world has hated them because **they are not of the world**, just as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not pray that You should **take them out of the world**, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

[FV] 1 CORINTHIANS 5:10 And yet, you *[speaking to Believers]* can not altogether avoid contact with the sexually immoral of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since **you would then have to go out of [exit] the world**.

When Jesus compared Believers to others in the world, He described them as living IN the world but not OF the world, meaning they no longer follow the ways of the world although God does not literally take them OUT of the world. The distinction is they are physically present but their thinking and character is influenced by God, who is *not* in this world. One way Jesus highlighted the uniqueness of Believers is by contrasting light and darkness:

MATTHEW 5:14-16 "**You [speaking to Believers] are the light of the world**. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. 16 "Let **your light so shine before men [of the world]**, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Another distinguishing feature of Believers is that they are clean whereas sinners are unclean:

JOHN 13:10-11 Jesus said to him *[Peter]*, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely **clean; and you are clean**, but not all of you." 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are **not all clean**."

1 JOHN 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He *[God]* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin**.

But why are they called *Believers*?

JOHN 2:22 Therefore, when He [*Jesus Christ*] had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they [*the disciples*] **believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.**

JOHN 4:42 Then they [*Samaritan men*] said to the woman, “Now we **believe**, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know **that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.**”

JOHN 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you **believe in Him [Jesus Christ] whom He [God] sent.**”

JOHN 6:69 “Also we [*the disciples*] have come to **believe and know that You [Jesus Christ] are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

Those who are *not* Believers fall under two categories: a Nonbeliever and Unbeliever¹.

[FV] 1 CORINTHIANS 14:22-24 Consequently, *gifts of languages* are a sign—not for those who believe, but for those who do **not believe [Nonbelievers]**. But prophecy *is* not for the **unbelievers**, but for those who believe. 23 Therefore, if the whole *ekklesia* is assembled together in one place, and all are speaking in *unknown* languages, and **unlearned persons [Nonbelievers]** or **unbelievers** come in, will they not say that you have lost your minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an **unbeliever** or **unlearned person [Nonbelievers]** comes in, he is convicted by all, *and* he is discerned by all.

There are deeper spiritual aspects when it comes to a full reckoning of the titles of Believers, Nonbelievers, and Unbelievers but the primary biblical emphasis can be summarized as follows:

BELIEVER = Believes Jesus: 1) fulfilled prophecy, 2) is the Son of God, 3) is The Christ (anointed by God), 4) was sent by God, and 5) is The Savior of the world. Believers are of “**The Faith** which was once for all delivered.” (Jude 1: 3).

NONBELIEVER (or UNLEARNED) = Is ignorant of the tenets of a Believer because they are untrained or unschooled but responds positively to facts.

UNBELIEVER = Is biased and prejudiced against The Faith of a Believer and even rejects any evidence, no matter how well-substantiated.

The importance of understanding the difference between Nonbelievers and Unbelievers is reflected in this Scripture:

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-16 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.** For what fellowship has righteousness with **lawlessness**? And what communion has light with **darkness**? 15 And what accord has Christ with **Belial**? Or what part has a believer with an **unbeliever**? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with **idols**? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Scripture says Believers are not to be “unequally yoked together” with Unbelievers. Remember, a Believer has an unwavering belief and faith in the existence and roles of God the Father and

¹ Also Luke 12:46; Acts 14:2; 1 Cor. 6:6; et al.

Jesus Christ. An Unbeliever is actively angry, hateful, and spiteful toward God the Father and Jesus Christ. This makes a Believer and Unbeliever completely incompatible.

Note also that Unbelievers are not simply aesthetic (disbelief in the existence of God) or even agnostic (denies the existence of God); they are antagonistic toward God the Father, Jesus Christ, *and* all who are Believers. Unbelievers do not simply disagree with Believers, they aggressively war against them.

However, these verses do *not* give the same warning against Nonbelievers. Why? Because Nonbelievers are very different from Unbelievers. A Nonbeliever is mainly ignorant of those things established in the mind of a Believer. They do not hold animosity toward those who are faithful toward God the Father and Jesus Christ. Over time, they might be convicted and called to become Believers, but even if they are not, they are tolerant or accepting of the tenets of a Believer. Nonbelievers are not as compatible with a Believer as other Believers, but they are not completely INCOMPATIBLE as is the case with Unbelievers. That is why several scriptures indicate Nonbelievers are those who have not yet had their ears opened to hear the gospel:

ROMANS 10:13-14 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” 14 How then shall they call on Him [*God*] in whom they have **not believed [Nonbelievers]**? And how shall **they believe [become Believers]** in Him [*Jesus Christ*] of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

[FV] ROMANS 11:30-31 For just as you once did **not believe [Nonbelievers]** God, but have now been shown mercy through their unbelief [*Unbelievers!*], 31 In the same way also, they have **not believed [Nonbelievers] at this time [but later become Believers]** in order that through the mercy shown to you, they also may have mercy shown *to them*.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:27 If any of those who do **not believe [Nonbelievers]** invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do **not believe [Nonbelievers]**, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

This last verse shows Nonbelievers are often blinded but that does not mean their minds will reject the Gospel. An Unbeliever, on the other hand, actually has a defiled mind:

TITUS 1:15-16 To the pure all things are pure, but **to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.** 16 **They [might even] profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.**

Unbelievers poison others against Believers, have defiled minds and consciences, deny God, and are abominable, disobedient, and disqualified.

NOTE: Some Scriptures mention those who are Nonbelievers (“unlearned”) but attached other condemnations such as “unstable” (2 Pet. 3: 16) or “foolish” (2 Tim. 2: 23). In those cases, the reference is to Unbelievers, not someone who is simply ignorant, i.e., a Nonbeliever.

At worst, the conscience of some Unbelievers, especially those who were once of The Faith (a Believer), can become seared:

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having **their own conscience seared with a hot iron [branded]**,

Although one can always hope that they will eventually repent, Unbelievers with defiled minds and consciences are condemned to the Lake of Fire and Brimstone:

REVELATION 21:8 “But the cowardly, **unbelieving**, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars **shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**”

Believers and Unbelievers are always “unequally yoked together” unless or until their hardened hearts change. This is why Paul wrote this about married couples:

[FV] 1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-15 Now to the rest, I, not the Lord, say *this*: If any brother has an **unbelieving wife**, and she consents to dwell with him [*a Believer*], let him not divorce her. 13 And *if* a woman has an **unbelieving husband**, and he consents to dwell with her [*a Believer*], let her not divorce him. 14 For the **unbelieving husband** is sanctified in the wife, and the **unbelieving wife** is sanctified in the husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 15 But **if the unbelieving husband or wife separates, let him or her separate. The believing brother or sister is not bound** in such *cases*; for God has called us to peace.

These well-known verses can be misunderstood when there is no distinction between Nonbelievers and Unbelievers. Paul says that divorce is necessary when a spouse who is an Unbeliever breaks the marriage covenant by “not consenting to dwell with [him or her].” Paul does not say this about a Nonbeliever because they are more equally “yoked” and do not actively war against the Believer’s faith, unlike the Unbeliever. (Note: The marital covenant can be betrayed and broken by many factors aside from spiritual matters of faith including abuse, etc. Paul is *not* addressing those here.²)

Finally, it has been taught that Believers should avoid having real relationships with people of the world. This is partly a result of not distinguishing between Nonbelievers and Unbelievers as well as improper exegeses of John 15:18-19; 17:14-15; 1 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 16:17, and others. Believers live IN the world but are not OF it. This is not suggesting complete isolation FROM the world. Yes, avoid the Unbelievers who actively cause divisions and offenses³. However, how can the Gospel be preached if Believers are hidden and secluded from Nonbelievers? “Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinner**” (1 Tim. 1:15) and that requires wise⁴ engagement with the world. Believers cannot avoid the darkness of this world. But, then, is not darkness why Jesus said to “Let your light so shine before men?”

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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² For more information, refer to the booklet “[Marriage & Divorce – Understanding the Marital Covenant.](#)”

³ Rom. 16:17.

⁴ Matt. 10:16.