Who Is a Believer, and How Does Knowing This Definition Change Our Lifestyle?

Contents

Who Is a Believer, and How Does the Answer Shape Our Lives? 2
Who Is a Believer? 3
Who Is Not a Believer? 4
The Definition of Faith in Surah Al-Asr 5
References 6

Who Is a Believer, and How Does the Answer Shape Our Lives?

The word “believer” is one we inevitably encounter when living in an Islamic society. Yet, like many religious concepts, its common social meaning differs from its precise definition in religion. As a result, many people misunderstand who a believer is, assuming that anyone who observes Islamic religious laws or displays an outwardly religious appearance must be a believer. However, in God's view, a believer holds a unique status. Among the diverse groups of people, only a true believer possesses the qualities of a genuine human being.

In fact, God recognizes only the believer as a true human being. Human beings have the capacity to progress through successive stages of perfection toward infinity, but attaining the status of the true human requires meeting certain minimum criteria, which are the defining qualities of a genuine believer. This makes understanding the true definition of a believer and recognizing the characteristics of genuine faith especially important. By understanding who a believer is, we discover the precise, rule-based definition of our own identity as human beings.

As discussed in previous sections, the entire structure of existence rests on mathematical principles.[1] Naturally, human beings—or more precisely, believing human beings, who occupy a central position in this structure—are no exception.

They, too, have a precise and systematic definition governed by specific principles. Clearly, to arrive at an accurate definition of a believer, we must first understand the meaning of faith. The word “faith” in Arabic (*Iman*) derives from the root ‘amn,’ which conveys peace, inner reassurance, and freedom from fear. Imam Khomeini (May God have mercy on him) defines faith as knowledge that is not only affirmed by reason but is a yearning of the heart.[2]

It is essential to understand that faith is neither imaginary nor an illusion. It is a reality within the believer that manifests itself through actions and produces tangible effects in various aspects of life.

Who Is a Believer?

As mentioned earlier, among the various types of people, only believers possess an authentic human essence. Unlike others, they are not continually losing their fundamental human capital and falling into loss. Through genuine faith, a believer adopts specific standards for life and chooses a clear path that leads to bliss in this world and the hereafter. A believer's life is carefully structured according to the purpose for which they were created and the different stages they must navigate throughout their lives. Believers know their Deity and Mentor. By understanding where they came from, where they currently reside, and where they will ultimately go, they move steadily toward fulfilling the purpose of their creation.

Although a believer who chooses a God-centered lifestyle accepts specific rules and restrictions, these limitations on their material nature serve as a bridge to Absolute and Infinite Perfection. Naturally, choosing a life of faith and following its path is incompatible with every possible lifestyle. In other words, we cannot make our decisions, and intellectual arrangements entirely freely and without constraints, then assume that we qualify as believers. Being a believer entails specific characteristics and can also be assessed through the outcomes and effects that genuine faith produces. Therefore, merely having a religious appearance or performing sacred acts may evoke the image of a believer in the public mind, but it does not necessarily indicate genuine faith. Our degree of similarity to Allah determines the strength of our faith. To lead a life grounded in belief, we must properly arrange our hierarchy of love and priorities. We can follow the path of

becoming more like Allah and fulfilling the purpose of our creation only when we place love for Allah, His representatives—the Ahl al-Bayt (the Household of the Prophet)—and Jihad (striving in the way of Allah) at the top of our priorities. We must also align every aspect of our lives, including our obligations and prohibitions, with God's will.

Since faith is an objective reality, following the path of faith inevitably produces discernible effects within us. These outcomes and their significance will be examined separately in the section on the effects of faith.

Who Is Not a Believer?

Understanding who is not a true believer and lacks genuine faith may be just as important as recognizing the qualities that define a believer as a true human being. This is especially significant when the issue takes on a social dimension and the behavior of people who merely appear religious becomes the basis for judging Islam and the truth of its teachings.

Because believers have a clear vision of their purpose in life and strive to become more like Allah, they not only exercise care in their moral conduct and behavior but also grow in beneficence, happiness, and inner peace. This happiness and tranquility stem from their connection with Allah and the genuine faith they possess.[3]

Although believers can make mistakes and engage in wrongful actions, genuine faith is incompatible with bad manners, resentment, ill will, and similar traits. A true believer enjoys peace in their personal life and also inspires a sense of peace and security in others. No one should have reason to fear that a believer will threaten their life, property, or reputation.

This provides us with a simple, practical measure for assessing the strength of faith—one that goes beyond outward appearances and personal claims; instead, it depends on the extent to which our lives reflect love, happiness, and peace.

The Definition of Faith in Surah Al-Asr

In Surah Al-Asr, God identifies the qualities of a true human being and believer, which can be divided into two categories: individual and social. On the individual level, one defining characteristic of a believer is performing righteous deeds. These are actions that help us attain the status of a perfect human being by developing our abilities, expanding our capacities, and increasing our similarity to Allah. Given the definition of a believer, the purpose of their existence, and the path they must follow to fulfill that purpose, righteous deeds are an inseparable and essential part of a genuine believer's life. In fact, we cannot become more like Allah without adopting a God-centered lifestyle grounded in righteous action.

However, possessing an authentic human essence and performing righteous deeds encompass a broad range of our lives; they are not limited to the personal growth and individual bliss. Believers also bear significant social responsibilities that safeguard the well-being of society and create the conditions for people to grow and attain human perfection. For this reason, some defining characteristics of a believer concern their positive, luminous impact on society. Alongside personal self-improvement, a believer remains committed to social reform, encouraging others to uphold the truth, and urging them to persevere in doing so. Neglecting these social responsibilities, just like neglecting individual duties, endangers a believer's eternal life and bliss.

Truth is the standard that safeguards society's well-being, and the acceptance of our deeds depends on how closely they align with it. Although upholding the truth can be difficult and sometimes

painful for the soul because it conflicts with our animal dimension, recognizing that the absence of truth allows falsehood to spread and flourish makes the need to encourage truth and persevere in upholding it clear.

Understanding who a believer is and the status believers hold in God's eyes plays a decisive role in our present and eternal bliss. Through genuine faith, believers reject an unrestricted lifestyle and align their lives with a purpose that ultimately leads to their fulfillment and bliss. Their responsibilities extend beyond personal and individual matters to include social concerns. For this reason, alongside faith and righteous deeds, God identifies enjoining one another to truth and patience[4] as defining characteristics of both a true believer and a genuine human being.

References

[1] . Max Tegmark, *Our Mathematical Universe: My Quest for the Ultimate Nature of Reality*. 1st ed., Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

[2] . *Sharh-e Hadith-e Junud-e 'Aql wa Jahl* (*Commentary on the Soldiers of Intellect and Ignorance*), under the discussions on faith and certainty (itmi'nan), p. 87.

[3] . Quran 13:28.

[4] . Quran 103:1–3