

The 5 Categories of Firsts in the Qur'an and Sunnah

1. As-sabiqoon. The forerunners.

Who are they?

- Allah describes them as the forerunners to good.
- They rush towards good when they hear about it or when they see it.
- They don't wait for anybody else to leave them that way.
- The Prophet (s) said, rush to do good deeds. So this is generally the category that the scholars referred to as people who:
 - have higher ambitions
 - are driven
 - do not wait for an environment to drive them nor do they wait for anyone else to outdo them
 - are self-motivated and driven because they know that this is pleasing to Allah, and they're amongst the first to please their Lord.

So why would Allah mention the sabiqoon twice? And what's the difference between them and As-hab al-Yameen, the people of the right hand?

- There are three different categories that Allah mentioned in regards to people on the day of judgement: The people on the left, the people on the right, and a small group of people — the forerunners. They are not to the right or to the left but they are directly under the throne of Allah and were selected from amongst as-habul yameen. So Allah mentions them twice—as sabiqoon, as sabiqoon. The forerunners, the forerunners.
- And the scholars talked about this usage of language— the forerunners, the forerunners. Some of them said they rushed to Allah in this life and so they will be rushed to Allah in the hereafter right away, and they find themselves immediately in the protection of Allah and they know it. And so in this world they rush to Allah, and in the hereafter they are rushed to Allah.

Some of the scholars divided the forerunners into two types:

1. As-sabiqoon illal khayr, those first to respond to good.

- Allah mentions in the Quran, that those of you that embraced the faith early on, before the fet-ha, before Mecca comes under the Prophet (s) in the most inconvenient times, under duress and fought alongside the Prophet (s), were driven out of their homes with the

Prophet (s), spent their money in the cause of Allah, lost everything for this. Those of you that joined first are not like those of you that joined afterwards. That the Muhajiroun, the early believers are unlike anyone else, and Allah has reserved a special rank for them.

- **For us that also means the response time when we hear of good how long it takes us to apply it.** whether that someone comes in the form of a human being or it is the angels that prompt you towards good or it is hearing the verses of Allah or hearing that internal pull, that fitrah inside of you that calls you towards good, that natural disposition towards good. *What is the wait time that it takes for you to answer? How long does it take for you to actually activate?. When you, when you hear it do you run or do you **hesitate**?* And one of the one of the beautiful things that we find from the from the pious predecessors that they mentioned when Allah talks about dunya, when he talks about the worldly life in the Quran,
- Allah mentions “*famshu fi manakibiha*” walk patiently, walk on the surfaces the way that Allah has decreed for you to do so. When Allah talks about the khayr though they are people who rush towards that good. So what's the hesitation time? Is there (taradud), is there hesitation?
- And so when whenever they are wondering, they're calling out and they're saying, wait a minute, weren't we all together? We were all sitting in the same places, we belonged to, I mean, we knew each other, right? What happened?
- **Fatantum anfusakum- You corrupted yourself, you spoiled yourselves.** The Prophet (s), he made the call initially in Mecca, some people thought about, I need to respond because this is the truth, some people thought about, wait a minute, what about my idols, my business, my prominence, my corruption, my authority. So it wasn't about a recognition or a failure to recognize the truth in the Prophet (s). It was about what are the consequences of actually accepting this truth. And so you had the Abu Bakrs, and you had the Abu Lahabs, who were like hold on—if I submit to this that means my money, my prominence, my corruption, my subjugation who people in the name of these idols, all of that is gone. And so “*tabasrastum wartubatum*” refers to the holding back, you hesitated. So fatartum anfusakum refers to the act of corruption of self. Tabarastum wartabatum means you were just about to accept it and then you held back. You got cold feet. So the hesitation is condemned as well and Allah in the beginning of surah Hadid Allah talks about people that corrupt themselves and Allah talks about the difference in rank in accordance with how quickly people responded to the call.
- **Allah talks about this conversation between the believers and hypocrites on the Day of Judgment:** Allah mentions two reasons that the believers give to the hypocrites that they corrupt themselves, which refers to doing evil, or hesitating to do good. They thought, you know what, I'm gonna do this tomorrow. So can you imagine there were people in Mecca, when they heard the Prophet (s), there were people who probably went to bed at night and said, you know what, tomorrow I'm gonna go to Muhammad (s) and accept faith and I'm gonna change this. I'm gonna leave this and then they woke up in the morning and changed their minds. And because of that, they never became Sahaba, they were forgotten. There are companions, there are people that existed like that in the ranks of

Abu Jahal. Right, there are people that were swaying between two and they would hesitate.

- Imagine if Umar ibn Khatab, may Allah be pleased with him, when he heard the message that next time. When he read Surah Taha in the house of his sister and recognized this as divine revelation. If Umar would've said, you know what, I'm gonna go home, take some time, think about this for a few days. He might have decided tomorrow to go kill the Prophet (s) again. But Umar (r) said that I'm going to the Prophet (s). I'm gonna respond.

So the lag time in responding to good is what's actually being spoken about in terms of soobak, in terms of as-sabiqoon as-sabiqoon. If you're in a race, you can, you know, pace yourself, run a little bit slower so that you can end it and, you know, in the right way. But if you decide to just sit it out for a little bit and say I'm gonna take a break for 10 minutes, I'm just gonna sit on the side, you're not winning that race, you know. And you might just quit. So be constantly in that pursuit of Allah.

2. As-sabiqoon min ash-shaar. Who run away from evil.

The second group are the first to run away from evil. To abandon an evil. And that's why some of the scholars say the forerunners are mentioned twice.

Allah says in the Quran,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ - 7:201

Indeed, those who fear Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight.

So their vision is sharpened deep inside and they remember Allah and so suddenly they can see properly. Right, so they're able to overcome that and they're able to remain focused. And so they are sabiqoon away from evil.

Other beautiful interpretations of as-sabiqoon, as-sabiqoon:

1. Ibn Sereen (r) said,

عن ابن سيرين : (والسابقون السابقون) الذين صلوا للقبليتين

“The forerunners, the forerunners, those who pray towards Jerusalem and Makkah,” because they're a special group of people and he expanded that concept of muhajireen because he said that the best of the muhajireen, or the best of the people of Makkah are those who accepted the Prophet (s) right away. The best of the Ansar, the best of the people of Madinah, are those who sacrificed the first sixteen, seventeen, months of Madinah, which is when the Muslims were still praying towards Jerusalem. So he said as-sabiqoon as-sabiqoon, both of these people if you think about them, the early converts of Makkah and the early converts of Madinah, they're both sabiqoon is what he's saying. They're both forerunners. Because both of them sacrificed everything, both groups

sacrificed everything. So if you're in Makkah and Islam has grown now, okay fine. After the conquest, after Fatah Makkah. If you're in Madinah and you're the Ansar, maybe if you're one of the later converts of Madinah you're waiting this out a little bit to see how it goes. Those who accepted within the first sixteen, seventeen months of Madinah, which is when the Muslims were still praying towards Jerusalem, as-sabiqoon, as-sabiqoon.

2. Some of the scholars said,

. والسابقون السابقون أولئك المقربون (ثم قال : أولهم رواحا إلى المسجد ، وأولهم خروجا في سبيل الله)

“The forerunners being the first who get to the masjid. The first ones to the masjid. And that'll be a category that we talk about, and they said that those that are the first ones to go out in the path of Allah. So, you know, as a practical way for us as well. So these are sabiqoon-the forerunners.

2. The trendsetters.

مَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً حَسَنَةً فَعَمِلَ بِهَا بَعْدَهُ كُتِبَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا وَلَا يَنْقُصُ مِنْ أَجْرِ هِمَّ شَيْءٌ
وَمَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً سَيِّئَةً فَعَمِلَ بِهَا بَعْدَهُ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ مِثْلُ وَزْرِ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا وَلَا يَنْقُصُ مِنْ أَوْزَارِهِمْ شَيْءٌ

Reference: Sahih Muslim 1017 e

He who introduced some good practice in Islam which was followed after him (by people) he would be assured of reward like one who followed it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who introduced some evil practice in Islam which had been followed subsequently (by others), he would be required to bear the burden like that of one who followed this (evil practice) without their's being diminished in any respect.

Abu Hurairah reported the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as saying: If anyone summons another to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to that of the people who follow him, without their rewards being diminished in any respect on that account; and if anyone summons others to follow error the sin of which sins being diminished in any respect on that account.

مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلَالَةٍ
كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آثَامِهِمْ شَيْئًا.

Grade: Sahih (Al-Albani) صحيح (الألباني) حكم : Reference: Sunan Abi Dawud 4609

And so both the initiator, the one who set the trend, as well as the one who did it after that have the same reward and it does not diminish the reward of the follower in any way whatsoever. So this means that if you are looking in the time of the companions of the Prophet (s) and did

something good and we do it as a result of that, we use that practice as a trend that was set within the faith, than that person gets the reward every time.

Examples:

- If someone cleans up the masjid with the memory of the woman that used to clean up the masjid.
- If someone removes something harmful from the road, and remember the unnamed person in the Hadith that removed something harmful from the road.
- If someone gives water to a thirsty animal, remembering the story of that unnamed person who did.

So those people, those trendsetters, until now, tens of thousands of years later are sitting in their graves and receiving rewards. Because someone did it and remembered, and thought about that person. See how amazing, and that's why the Prophet (s) said it does not diminish that person's reward in any way whatsoever. So it's this idea of continuing that reward.

Other trendsetters:

1. Those who inspire small or subtle acts: The Prophet (s) mentioned in another Hadith from Ibn Mas'oud (r): Ibn Mas'ud (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "He who guides (others) to an act of goodness, will have a reward similar to that of its doer." Related by Muslim.

وَعَنْ أَبِي مَسْعُودٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - { مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَى خَيْرٍ، فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ فَاعِلِهِ أَخْرَجَهُ مُسْلِمٌ. (1925) .

Whoever guides others to an act of goodness will have a reward similar to that of its doer. Scholars here mentioned that this is a person who is setting an example in a very subtle way. But someone sees that and someone tries to act upon that good.

2. Those who call people to good: The Prophet (s) said, whoever calls people to do something good that he would have the reward equivalent of those people who follow that guidance. So the best of you are those who learn the Quran and teach it, so you learn something good and you speak that good. You actually say it and people take that advice, the naseeha, from you, you set the trend, you get the reward. Of course, you have to try to practice it yourself but you started, initiated from the guidance that came from your mouth, from calling people, means da'a-you actually call and the point is you set the trend and so the people follow you in that trend and you have the reward of that as well.

3. Al-ghuraba. The strangers.

Narrated Kathir bin 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin 'Awf bin Zaid bin Milhah narrated from his father, from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Indeed the religion began as something strange and it will return to being strange. So Tuba is for the strangers who correct what the people have corrupted from my Sunnah after me."

إِنَّ الدِّينَ بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا وَيَرْجِعُ غَرِيبًا فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ الَّذِينَ يُصْلِحُونَ مَا أَفْسَدَ النَّاسُ مِنْ بَعْدِي مِنْ سُنَّتِي قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

Grade: Da'if (Darussalam) | Reference: Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2630

The strangers are described in different ways within the Hadith of the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) said that Islam started off as something strange. And so it will return back to being something strange. So there's a valley in paradise (Tuba) that gives glad tidings to the strangers.

Who are they:

- People who follow unpopular truths.
- People who adopt unpopular truths.
- The stranger, most of the explanations of this those who rectify themselves when everyone around them, or people around them are becoming corrupt. So they don't actually follow the trend of corruption. So think about this in a systematic way. Think about the forerunners. Forerunners to good, forerunners away from evil. And you think about the trendsetters, they set good trends and people follow them, and you think about the strangers, they stay away from negative trends that have become dominant. And they too are rewarded by virtue of that.
- Those that rectify corruption. The Prophet (s) said, indeed the religion began as something strange, and it will return to being something strange and there's a valley in paradise for the strangers who correct what the people have corrupted from my ummah after me.
 - And Allah mentions this idea that the majority is not always good. That this idea of the majority is not always good. There are two ways to look at the majority. The Prophet (s) mentioned the majority in regards to the majority that the ummah is upon. And the Prophet (s) talked about this idea of clinging to the jamah. Clinging to the group. The majority as in popular trends. (arabic) Allah mentions that if you follow the majority of what the people are upon, the people on this earth, and they will lead you astray.

Abdullah Ibn Umar (r) narrates: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took me by the shoulder and said, "Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a wayfarer." And Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "In the evening do not

expect [to live until] the morning, and in the morning do not expect [to live until] the evening. Take [advantage of] your health before times of sickness, and [take advantage of] your life before your death.” [Al-Bukhari]

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: أَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِمَنْكِبِي، وَقَالَ: “كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ”. وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا يَقُولُ: إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرُ الصَّبَاحَ، وَإِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرُ الْمَسَاءَ، وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ لِمَرَضِكَ، وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ لِمَوْتِكَ [رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ].

Reference: 40 Hadith Nawawi 40

This Hadith refers to the idea of urgency as well that typically people follow popular corruption out of pressure. And because they do that in a way to fit in and to go with the flow in regards to with what will give them, with what will rectify their worldly affairs. Or will give them a smooth sailing in regards to their dunya. But if you're thinking about your hereafter and you're putting that in front of you then you will not be afraid or intimidated or pressured to sacrifice something that will elevate you in the hereafter because of something that is dominant in this life.

4. Al Mujaddidin. The revivers.

The people who correct and rectify what is lost from the sunnah of the Prophet (s) and take it away from corruption.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ لِهَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ عَلَى رَأْسِ كُلِّ مِائَةٍ سَنَةٍ مَنْ يُجَدِّدُ لَهَا دِينَهَا

The Prophet (s) says that Allah sends at the top of every one hundred years, at the top of every century a reviver that revives of the religion what is lost of it.

This is interesting because is it singular or is it plural? There's some people that have tried to constrict it to the singular and so there's been books written. So you try to identify who's the reviver of each century. And in the Arabic language here this Hadith is not restricted only to the singular. And it could be that there are the mujaddidin, there are revivers that exist in one century and the scholars mention it in two ways:

1. They revive different elements of the religion that are lost, different elements of the religion that are lost. Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (r) who is the only agreed mujaddid in history in the sense that no one assigns a mujaddid other than Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz, those that consider it a singular person. No one revives a mujaddid other than him in his century. Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz revived notions of justice that were lost in this religion. He revived al-addad. He revived a sense of justice. Right, he revived that practices of his grandfather,

Umar Ibn Khatab (r) in establishing justice in the ummah and bringing it back to a very special place after it had lost its way.

2. There could be different revivers in different lands, and there could be different people that revive different elements of the religion. The point is that you find things that are long amongst the people, that are good practices from the sunnah of the Prophet (S) and a person can actually revive something of it. So Salahuddin (r) for example no one would argue he's not a mujaddid but is he the only mujaddid of his time? right, and there's some and this is where you get madhabism at its strongest. If you call a Shafi a mujaddid but not Ahmad, or Abu Hanifa but not Malik, what are you suggesting? Right? And so this idea of tajdeed, this idea of revival are people that notice things that are missing from this nation of the Prophet (s) and they bring it back to life. As a result of that they bring the religion back to life in that region amongst their people in guiding something good, guiding towards something good.

We should all look towards this idea of revival in the macro sense and in the micro sense. If you find a sunnah missing in context and you decide to revive that good practice, right, then that is a form of tajdeed. Find something missing. That could be conceptual or it could be something very basic. Right, but the point is that you take that initiate to say let me revive one sunnah of the Prophet (s) in my context. Something or something macro, something conceptual or something that's very practical. But let me take it upon myself to be amongst those mujaddidin, to be amongst those revivers.

5. Al Muhsineen. The distinguished.

Al Muhsineen are those that do something so well that they are distinguished in that good deed. They're distinguished in that good. And as a result they are chosen because of how well they do something.

- They set themselves apart
- They aspire in ways that other people do not.
- So they always go that extra mile with that good.
- Ibn Qayum (r) has a very beautiful way of tying the ghurabah to the muhsineen in this regard. The stranger to the distinguished. Ibn Qayum (r) said that when a person would have embraced Islam, the Muslims, the Muslims become ghurabah in the sense of broader, in broader humanity. Right, so they, especially if you're talking about in the context of the Prophet (s) but the point is that aslamu, they submitted themselves, they end up, they embrace what alienates them, they embrace the religion and as a result they are persecuted. So the Muslims become ghurabah in that sense. And then he said that the mutaqiin, the people of piety, become ghurabah amongst the Muslims. The mutaqin become ghurabah amongst the Muslims when they stay away from, because taqwa refers to leading off sin. When they stay away from sins that have become popularized amongst the Muslims. Isn't that interesting. So they become ghurabah.

- And then Ibn Al-Qayyim (r) said, Muhsineen, those who excel, the distinguished, are ghurabah even amongst the mutaqqin. They become strangers amongst the mutaqin. Because they go above and beyond in doing good that people will not. And so they set themselves apart. You can't become a muhsin without being a mutaqi. Right, and by the way, it sounds very basic. But some people really miss this in practice. How? Because they excel in some ways and then the sins of the tongue- so if you think about that woman that the Prophet (s) mentioned who was, the companions came to her and they said about her that this woman prays her night prayers, she fasts extra days, all these things, but she has an abusive tongue to her neighbors. She had ihsaan in one way but she didn't even taqwa with her tongue. And some people think that having ihsaan in something absolves them in having taqwa in everything. You can't. To become a true muhsin you have to become a muttaqi first. So reach a level of taqwa and then out of that taqwa, the same drive that caused you to stay away from what has been popularized causes you to long for what has been neglected of good. It's the same thing. Because it's Allah that makes me, when other people say go ahead, and it's Allah that makes me long for what other people are not even longing. And so the muhsineen set themselves apart with good deeds, distinguished themselves with good deeds, even amongst the mutaqi.

ليبلوكم أيكم أحسن عملا

Allah may test you to see who amongst you are the best with their deeds, not the most with their deeds. Ahsanu is different from Aktharu. Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz only prayed two rakahs every single night of qiyam al-layl, not prayed more than two. He never exceed two. But as his wife said, his two are nothing like all of your qiyam put together. The two rakahs of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz were just out of this world. So it's not the quantity but the quality, that longing. That longing. And so muhsineen then become distinguished even amongst mutaqin. May Allah make us amongst them Allahuma Ameen.

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