The First Islamic Community

The Prophet's wives, his children and descendants including the Imams recognised by Shi'a Muslims, and his leading Companions: the Ten Blessed Companions, the scribes, the Emigrants and Helpers, and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs during his lifetime.

The Prophet's wives (the Mothers of the Believers)

Muslims call the Prophet's wives **Ummahat al-Mu'minin** ("Mothers of the Believers"). Most of his marriages were **after the age of 50**, many to **widows**, and often had **social or political reasons** (to protect widows, to link tribes, or to end enmity).

Wife	Notes
Khadijah bint Khuwaylid	His **first wife** (married about 595). A wealthy trader and the **first person to accept Islam**. Mother of all his children except Ibrahim. Died in 619 (**Year of Sorrow**)
Sawdah bint Zam'ah	A widow, married after Khadijah's death. She had been among those who migrated to Abyssinia
Aishah bint Abi Bakr	Daughter of **Abu Bakr**. She was young, intelligent and a great **scholar**, and **narrated over 2,000 Hadiths**. The Prophet (pbuh) died in her house
Hafsah bint Umar	Daughter of **Umar**. A widow. She kept the **first collection of the Qur'an** pages
Zaynab bint Khuzaymah	Known as "Mother of the Poor" for her charity. Died soon after
Umm Salamah	A widow of Abu Salamah. A wise adviser (for example at Hudaybiyyah)
Zaynab bint Jahsh	His cousin. Her marriage helped to end old customs about adopted sons
Juwayriyyah	Daughter of the chief of the **Banu Mustaliq**, whose marriage led to the freeing of many prisoners
Umm Habibah	Daughter of **Abu Sufyan**. A migrant to Abyssinia whose marriage helped end enmity
Safiyyah	A Jewish noblewoman taken at **Khaybar**, who accepted Islam
Maymunah	His last wife, whose marriage joined him to a number of tribes

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Maria al-Qibtiyyah, a gift from the ruler of Egypt, bore him a son, **Ibrahim**, who died in infancy. Sources differ on whether she was a wife or a concubine, so many lists give **eleven wives**.

Importance. Through them the details of the Prophet's **private life and teaching** were passed on, especially by **Aishah** and **Umm Salamah**, and the marriages show his **care for widows and the vulnerable**.

The wives in more detail

- **Khadijah** was twice widowed before she married the Prophet and was called *at-Tahirah* ("the pure"). She supported him with her wealth, believed him first, suffered the boycott, and died in 619. He said of her: "She believed in me when others disbelieved, and supported me with her wealth when others held back." He took no other wife during her lifetime.
- **Sawdah** was a widow who had migrated to Abyssinia. She married the Prophet a month after Khadijah's death and cared for his children. She later gave her day to Aishah and was known for generosity.
- **Aishah** was the daughter of Abu Bakr. She married in Makka and the marriage was completed in Madina in 2 AH. She memorised the Qur'an, narrated about **2,200** Hadiths and corrected mistaken ones; Companions asked her for rulings. The Qur'an cleared her name after a false rumour (24:11–20), and verses on *tayammum* (4:43) were revealed on an occasion involving her. She took part in the Battle of the Camel and afterwards left politics. She died about 57 AH.
- **Hafsah**, Umar's daughter, was widowed at Badr, memorised the Qur'an and kept the first written copy. The verse 66:1 was revealed after an incident about honey and the Prophet's promise.
- **Zaynab bint Khuzaymah** ("Mother of the Poor") was widowed at Uhud and died soon after her marriage.
- **Umm Salamah** (married 4 AH) went to Abyssinia and Madina and narrated about 378 Hadiths. At Hudaybiyyah, when the Companions hesitated to sacrifice and shave, she advised the Prophet to do it first, and they followed.
- **Zaynab bint Jahsh**, the Prophet's cousin, was first married to his adopted son **Zayd** to show that status depends on piety, not birth (33:36). After the marriage ended, the Prophet married her (33:37), ending the custom that an adopted son was treated as a real son.
- **Juwayriyyah** (5 AH): the daughter of the chief of the Banu Mustaliq, taken captive, asked to buy her freedom. The Prophet freed her and married her, so the Muslims freed the whole tribe's captives and many of them became Muslims.
- **Umm Habibah** (Ramlah) was Abu Sufyan's daughter. She had migrated to Abyssinia, where her husband died. The Negus performed the marriage. Later she would not let her father, still a polytheist, sit on the Prophet's bedding.
- **Safiyyah**, a Jewish noblewoman taken at Khaybar, accepted Islam and married the Prophet.

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- **Maymunah** (629) was his last wife and the last of the wives to die (about 681).
- **Maria** of Egypt was the mother of his son Ibrahim (died in infancy).

How can the marriage of the Prophet and Khadijah be an example? Respect and support in hardship, trust in business and belief in each other's character, and comfort in difficulty.

How can Aishah be a role model? She was a teacher of the Sunnah and the Qur'an, patient and generous, and took part in public life, showing the value of education for women.

"The best of you is the best to his wife." Men should be judged by their kindness at home, not by wealth or position. The Prophet treated all his wives with love and respect and helped with household work.

His children and descendants

Child	Details
Qasim, Abdullah	Sons of Khadijah who died in infancy or young
Zaynab	The eldest daughter, who married Abu al-As
Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum	Daughters who married **Uthman** (one after the other), who is therefore called **Dhun-Nurayn** ("Possessor of Two Lights")
Fatimah	The youngest daughter, **az-Zahra'**, who married **Ali ibn Abi Talib**. Of all the children, **only her line** continued
Ibrahim	Son of Maria. Died in infancy

Grandchildren. Hasan (born about 625) and **Husayn** (born about 626), sons of Fatimah and Ali. The Prophet (pbuh) loved them and called them "leaders of the youth of paradise". **Husayn** was killed with his family at **Karbala** in **680** (10 Muharram), resisting the ruler **Yazid**. His death is mourned especially by Shi'a Muslims and honoured by all.

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The Prophet's daughters and grandsons in more detail

- **Zaynab** (the eldest) married her cousin **Abu al-As**. When he was captured at Badr she sent her mother's necklace as ransom, and the Prophet wept, returned it and freed him on condition he let her come to Madina. She died in 8 AH after being hurt on her journey. A later revelation forbade a Muslim woman to remain married to a non-Muslim, and they were reunited when he accepted Islam.
- **Ruqayyah** was first married to Abu Lahab's son Utbah, who divorced her after Sura 111, then to **Uthman**. She migrated twice and died in 2 AH while Uthman stayed in Madina to nurse her and missed Badr.
- **Umm Kulthum** was also divorced by a son of Abu Lahab and later married Uthman after her sister's death. She died in 9 AH.

- **Fatimah** was born about five years before the call and was the closest to him. She cared for him in Makka, married Ali in Madina and had Hasan, Husayn and two daughters. He said "Fatimah is a part of me" and that she was the first to follow him; she died about six months after him. She is *az-Zahra'* and a model of a daughter's loyalty.
- **The Prophet's attitude to daughters.** He said that whoever brings up three daughters well will be near him in paradise, and that daughters must not be buried alive or treated as less than sons. Muslims learn not to prefer sons over daughters.

Hasan (born 3 AH) and **Husayn** (born 4 AH) were named by the Prophet, who loved them dearly: they climbed on his back during prayer, and he came down from the pulpit to pick one up. He said, "O God, I love him, so love him" and "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn."

- **Hasan** was chosen Caliph after Ali's death in 661 but, to avoid fighting between Muslims, **gave up the caliphate to Mu'awiyah** after less than a year. He died about 670; it is said that he was poisoned. Shi'a Muslims regard him as the second Imam.
- **Husayn** refused to accept Yazid as Caliph, because the succession had turned the caliphate into a kingdom. After letters from people in Kufa, he sent his cousin **Muslim ibn Aqil**, who found support but was captured and killed. Husayn left Makka on 8 Dhu'l-Hijjah 60 AH and reached **Karbala** on 2 Muharram 61. The Umayyad army cut off his water on 7 Muharram. On **10 Muharram (680)** he and his small band of followers were killed. Only the women, children and his sick son **Ali (Zayn al-Abidin)** survived.
- **Why did they die as they did?** Hasan was seen as a threat by the Umayyads and was poisoned; Husayn would not accept an unjust ruler.
- **Why is Husayn's death still important?** He did not submit to injustice even though he was outnumbered; Muslims should speak the truth against wrong and not give up their principles for safety. The tragedy is mourned by all Muslims and especially by Shi'a Muslims.

The Imams according to Shi'a Muslims

Shi'a Muslims (**Twelvers**) believe the Prophet (pbuh) appointed **Ali** as his successor (at **Ghadir Khumm**) and that leadership belongs to a **line of Imams** from the Prophet's family:

1. **Ali** (d. 661)
2. **Hasan** (d. about 670)
3. **Husayn** (d. 680)
4. **Ali Zayn al-Abidin**
5. **Muhammad al-Baqir**
6. **Ja'far as-Sadiq** (also revered by Sunnis as a scholar)
7. **Musa al-Kazim**
8. **Ali al-Rida**

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9. **Muhammad al-Jawad**
10. **Ali al-Hadi**
11. **Hasan al-Askari**
12. **Muhammad al-Mahdi**, believed to be in hiding and to return

> NOTE
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> **Sunni** Muslims respect the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) highly but do not believe the Imams are infallible or appointed by God; they accept the **four Rightly Guided Caliphs** in order. This difference is the main reason for the **Sunni–Shi'a** division. Other Shi'a groups (such as Ismailis and Zaydis) recognise a different line.

The leading Companions (sahabah)

A **Companion** is one who met the Prophet (pbuh), believed in him and died a Muslim.

The Ten Blessed Companions (*al-Asharah al-Mubashsharah*)

Ten Companions told in their lifetime that they would enter paradise:

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Companion	Notes
Abu Bakr as-Siddiq	First man to believe, friend at the Hijrah, first Caliph
Umar ibn al-Khattab	Strong and just, second Caliph; his conversion strengthened the Muslims
Uthman ibn Affan	Generous (bought a well in Madina and funded the Tabuk army), married two daughters of the Prophet, third Caliph
Ali ibn Abi Talib	Cousin and son-in-law, the first boy to accept Islam, brave in battle, fourth Caliph
Talha ibn Ubaydullah	A wealthy trader who defended the Prophet at Uhud
Zubayr ibn al-Awwam	A cousin of the Prophet, a brave soldier
Abdur Rahman ibn Awf	A rich trader who gave generously
Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas	A skilled archer and later the commander at **Qadisiyyah**
Sa'id ibn Zayd	An early convert
Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah	Called "the Trustworthy of this community", later commander in Syria

The Ten Blessed Companions in more detail

- **Abu Bakr** was named Abdullah (his earlier name was Abd al-Ka'bah). The Prophet said he accepted Islam **without hesitation**. He was **dragged by his beard** when he defended the Prophet, freed **Bilal** and other slaves, and believed the Night Journey at once, earning the title **as-Siddiq**. He did not fight at Badr but guarded the Prophet's shelter. At Uhud his own son was in the enemy's army, and he stood by the Prophet at Hudaybiyyah and Hunayn. At Tabuk he gave all his wealth. He led the first Hajj (9 AH) and the prayers during the Prophet's last illness.
- **Umar** was a strong, educated and wealthy man of the Quraysh. In the sixth year of the mission the Prophet asked God to strengthen Islam by either Umar or Abu Jahl. Umar set out to kill the Prophet; on the way he learned that his sister **Fatimah** and her husband **Sa'id ibn Zayd** had become Muslims, found them reciting **Ta Ha**, and was moved to accept Islam. Ibn Mas'ud said, "We have been strong since Umar became Muslim." The Prophet called him **al-Faruq** ("the one who tells right from wrong"), and Umar **migrated openly**. He fought in every battle, gave half his wealth at Tabuk, and his daughter **Hafsah** married the Prophet. The Prophet said that if there were a prophet after him it would be Umar.
- **Uthman** was from a rich, literate Umayyad family and was the first Umayyad to become a Muslim. His uncle tied him up and tried to make him leave Islam. He married **Ruqayyah** and then **Umm Kulthum**, becoming **Dhun-Nurayn**. He missed Badr to nurse his wife but was given a share. At Hudaybiyyah he

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was sent to Makka and the Muslims pledged under the tree when he was rumoured killed. He bought the **well of Rumah** for the Muslims, paid for a third of the Tabuk army and bought land to extend the Prophet's Mosque. He was called **al-Ghani** ("the generous") and was known for his modesty.

- **Ali** went to live with the Prophet when he was a small boy and accepted Islam when about ten. He slept in the Prophet's bed at the Hijrah, was his "brother" in the brotherhood, married **Fatimah** in 2 AH, and was a famous fighter: banner-bearer at Badr, Uhud and the conquest of Makka, victor in the duel at the Trench, and the hero of Khaybar. He wrote the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, was sent to read out the opening of Sura 9 at the pilgrimage of 9 AH, and was left in charge of Madina at Tabuk. At **Ghadir Khumm** the Prophet said "Whoever has me as his *mawla*, has Ali as his *mawla*"; Shi'a Muslims understand this as appointing Ali, and Sunni Muslims as a sign of love and respect. He was called **Asad Allah** ("the lion of God").
- **Talha ibn Ubaydullah** accepted Islam through Abu Bakr. He was tied up and beaten with Abu Bakr. At **Uhud** he shielded the Prophet and his hand was crippled; the Prophet called him a "living martyr". He was generous (**Fayyad** at Tabuk). He died at the Battle of the Camel in 656.
- **Zubayr ibn al-Awwam** was the Prophet's cousin (and Khadijah's nephew) and one of the first to accept Islam. He went to Abyssinia, fought at Badr, Uhud and Khaybar and was called the Prophet's **hawari** (devoted helper). He also died after the Camel.
- **Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas** shed the first blood in Islam when a group of Muslims praying in a valley were attacked. The Prophet called him an excellent archer at Uhud, saying "shoot, my father and mother be your ransom". He led the Muslim army at **Qadisiyyah** and was governor of Kufa. He died about 50 AH.
- **Abdur Rahman ibn Awf** went to Abyssinia and Madina, began again by selling cheese and butter, and became one of the richest traders and a great giver. He was lame after Uhud. At Tabuk the Prophet prayed behind him once. He was among the six who chose Uthman and died in 31 AH.
- **Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah** was called "the trustworthy one of this community". He was at Abyssinia and Uhud, led one column into Makka, went with the Najran Christians as a judge, and commanded the armies that took Syria and Palestine under Umar. He died of the plague in 18 AH.
- **Sa'id ibn Zayd** was the son of Zayd, a monotheist before Islam, and married Umar's sister. He missed Badr because he was scouting but received a share, fought in all other battles and was governor of Damascus, which he gave up in order to keep fighting. He died about 55 AH.

The scribes of revelation

Companions who **wrote down** the revelations: **Zayd ibn Thabit** (the main scribe, who later compiled the Qur'an), **Ali, Uthman, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan** and others. They also wrote the Prophet's **letters and treaties**.

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The scribes in more detail

- **Zayd ibn Thabit** became a Muslim as a boy, wrote for the Prophet in Madina, learned Hebrew to answer letters from the Jews, memorised the Qur'an, and led the collections under Abu Bakr and Uthman. Umar made him judge of Madina, and he was an expert on inheritance.
- **Ubayy ibn Ka'b** was one of the Madinans at Aqabah, a scribe of letters and a fine reciter whom the Prophet told others to learn from.
- **Abdullah ibn Mas'ud** was an early convert who recited the Qur'an openly at the Ka'bah and was beaten. He killed Abu Jahl at Badr. The Prophet told people to learn the Qur'an from him, and Umar sent him to Kufa as teacher and treasurer.
- **Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As** asked the Prophet whether he could write down everything he heard, even in anger, and was told "Write, for only truth comes out of me."
- The Qur'an describes the **honourable, righteous scribes** (80:15–16). Some Companions kept their own copies and **read them back to the Prophet** to check them.

The Emigrants and the Helpers

- **Muhajirun (Emigrants):** the Makkan Muslims who left property behind for Madina, such as Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali.
- **Ansar (Helpers):** the Muslims of Madina who welcomed them (such as **Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari**). Their generosity (*ithar*) is praised in the Qur'an (Sura 59:9).

Other important Companions

- **Bilal ibn Rabah**, the freed slave from Abyssinia who was the first caller to prayer.
- **Khalid ibn al-Walid**, the great general called "the Sword of God".
- **Hamzah**, the Prophet's uncle, "the Lion of God", who died at **Uhud**.
- **Salman al-Farisi**, from Persia, who suggested the **Trench**.
- **Abu Hurayrah**, a leading narrator of Hadiths.
- **Zayd ibn Harithah**, the freed slave and adopted son of the Prophet.
- **Ja'far ibn Abi Talib**, leader of the migrants to Abyssinia.
- **Mus'ab ibn Umayr**, the first envoy to Madina.

Other major characters in more detail

- **Bilal ibn Rabah** was a slave tortured by Umayyah ibn Khalaf and kept saying "One, One" until Abu Bakr bought him. He was the first muezzin, killed Umayyah at Badr, and called the adhan from the roof

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of the Ka'bah at the conquest of Makka. **Racial equality**: his past as an Abyssinian slave did not stop him being close to the Prophet.

- **Abu Sufyan** (born about 560) led the Quraysh at Uhud and the Trench. He told Heraclius that the Prophet was truthful and kept his promises. He accepted Islam at the conquest of Makka and fought at Hunayn and Yarmuk. The lesson is that even a bitter enemy can become a friend of Islam.
- **Hamzah** was a hunter and wrestler who accepted Islam in the sixth year after striking Abu Jahl for insulting the Prophet. He led the first Muslim expedition (in 2 AH) and was killed at Uhud by Wahshi. The Prophet called him the **"Chief of the Martyrs"**.
- **Khalid ibn al-Walid** turned the battle at Uhud against the Muslims, accepted Islam after Hudaybiyyah and saved the army at Mu'tah (breaking nine swords). He is called **Saif Allah** ("the Sword of God"). He led armies in Iraq and Syria and died in 642.
- **Zayd ibn Harithah** was kidnapped as a child and sold, and given by Khadijah to the Prophet, who freed and adopted him. When his father came for him, Zayd chose to stay with the Prophet. He was one of the first to accept Islam, was hurt protecting the Prophet at Ta'if, and was killed at Mu'tah as the first commander.
- **Ja'far ibn Abi Talib** was the speaker of the migrants in Abyssinia and recited Sura Maryam to the Negus. At Mu'tah he lost both hands holding the banner, and the Prophet said God gave him two wings in paradise: **Ja'far at-Tayyar**.
- **Salman al-Farisi** came from a Persian Zoroastrian family, became a Christian and travelled in search of the promised prophet, was enslaved, met the Prophet in Madina and was freed. He suggested the Trench.
- **Mu'adh ibn Jabal** became Muslim as a youth after Mus'ab's teaching and attended the Second Pledge. The Prophet said he knew most about what is lawful and unlawful and sent him as a judge to Yemen, where his "I will use my own judgement" answer became the basis of qiyas. He died of plague in 18 AH.
- **Abu Talib** protected his nephew for years, supporting him when the Quraysh asked him to withdraw ("I will never abandon you") and sheltering the Muslims in his valley during the boycott. He did not become a Muslim.

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The four Rightly Guided Caliphs during the Prophet's lifetime

Caliph	In the Prophet's lifetime
Abu Bakr	Accepted Islam early, freed slaves, accompanied the Prophet on the **Hijrah**, led prayers when the Prophet was ill and led the Hajj in 9 AH
Umar	Became a Muslim about 616 and strengthened the Muslims, advised the Prophet, fought at Badr and Uhud
Uthman	Migrated to Abyssinia and Madina, married two of the Prophet's daughters, was generous in funding Tabuk, and was a scribe
Ali	Slept in the Prophet's bed at the Hijrah, carried the banner at **Khaybar**, married Fatimah, and was a scribe

Importance of the Companions: they were the first community who lived by the Prophet's example, passed on the Qur'an and Hadiths, spread Islam, and later led the Muslim state. Muslims honour them and use their lives as models of faith, sacrifice and service.

TRY IT

Describe the lives of two of the Ten Blessed Companions and explain why they are important in Muslim history.

Outline. Choose two, for example **Abu Bakr** (first man to believe, Hijrah companion, first Caliph, compiled the Qur'an) and **Uthman** (generous, Dhun-Nurayn, Tabuk, third Caliph, standard Qur'an). Explain how their **service, generosity and leadership** serve as examples and helped preserve Islam.

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