

Difference Among Fardh, Sunnat & Nafil prayers?

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It is important to note that there are only two categories of Salah:

1. **Fardh** - means obligatory. If one fails to offer *fardh*, it will be regarded as a sin.
2. **Nafil** - means it is optional. If done, one will be rewarded for it. However, if one fails to do it, then there is no harm. It will not be regarded as a sin unlike for *fardh Salah*.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) did not define *Salah* or any duty into *wajib*, *Sunnat e muakkeda*, *Sunnat e ghairmuakkeda*, *mandoob*, *mustahab* etc. In fact, these terminologies were not used at the time of the Prophet. These terminologies were developed by jurists of later era to make an act easily understood for the common masses.

Guidance from the Quran and from the life of the Prophet categorize an act only into two categories: Obligatory [*fardh*] or Optional [*nafil*].

Jurists later divided *nafil* into sub categories:

1. *Wajib*: If it was done by the Prophet most of the times.
2. *Sunnat-e-muakkeda* : If an act was done by the Prophet frequently.
3. *Sunnat-e-ghairmuakkeda / mustahab / mandoob*: If an act was done by the Prophet occasionally.

These terminologies were not brought into place by the Prophet, hence, we see difference of opinion and disagreement among scholars. For example:

1. Each of the four schools of thought differ:

- In number of optional *Salah [nafil]* in 5 times prayer.
- Exact timing of a *Salah*.
- Some other aspects of *Salah*. For example: Imam Malik was of the opinion to leave the hands to dangle at one's sides during *fardh* prayer. Other 3 school of thoughts differed from this opinion.

2. Imam Abu Hanifah held that *witr* prayer is *wajib*. Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali scholars ruled that *Salat al-Witr* is *sunnat*.

There were different parameters based on which jurists divided *nafil* act into different categories.

Conclusion:

1. Five time Salah [Fajir: 2 rakah, Zuhar: 4 rakah, Asar : 4 rakah, Maghrib : 3 rakah, Isha : 4 rakah] are mandatory / *fardh* and you will be questioned if you don't offer them.
2. Rest all prayers are optional. Make sure to not miss *fardh* prayer in any case.