Go back to your families and stay with them. Teach them (religion) and command them (to adhere to it), perform so-and-so prayer at so-and-so time, and when prayer becomes due, let one of you call the Adhān and let the oldest among you lead you in prayer

Abu Sulaymān, Mālik ibn al-Huwayrith, (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: We came to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) when we were young and of about the same age. We stayed with him for twenty nights. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was merciful and compassionate; so, he realized our longing for our families. He asked us about our families whom we had left behind and we told him about them. Thereupon, he said: "Go back to your families and stay with them. Teach them (religion) and command them (to adhere to it), perform so-and-so prayer at so-and-so time, and when prayer becomes due, let one of you call the Adhān and let the oldest among you lead you in prayer." Another version by Al-Bukhāri has this addition: "Pray as you saw me pray."

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Bukhari & Muslim]

Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "We came to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) when we were young and of about the same age." That was in the Year of Delegations, 9 A.H. They were young men and they stayed with the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) for twenty nights. They came to him to learn the religion of Allah. Mālik said: "The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was merciful and compassionate. He realized our longing for our families. He asked us about our families whom we had left behind and we told him about them. Thereupon, he said: "Go back to your people and stay with them. Teach them (religion) and command them (to adhere to it), pray so-and-so prayer at so-and-so time, and when prayer becomes due, let one of you pronounce the Adhān and let the eldest among you lead you in prayer." Another version by Al-Bukhāri adds: "Pray as you saw me pray." This indicates that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was famous for his mercy and compassion. He was the most merciful and the most compassionate among people towards people. When he perceived their longing for their families and asked them about their people whom they had left behind and they informed him about them, he ordered them to return home. "And let the eldest among you lead you in prayer" points out that older one should take precedence when it comes to leading prayer. And by the way, this does not

contradict the Prophet’s statement: "Let the best reciter of the Book of Allah among the people lead them in prayer.” This is because these young men came to the Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) at the same time and apparently there was no significant difference between them in terms of the Qur’an’s recitation. Hence, he said: "And let the eldest among you lead you in prayer", because they were equal, or almost equal, in reciting the Qur’an. If they were the same in terms of reciting the Qur’an, knowledge of the Sunnah, and making the Hijrah, then the eldest among them should take precedence and lead the prayer. His statement "Pray as you saw me pray" confirms the fact that the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) used to teach people their religion by words and deeds. For example, he taught the man who offered prayer hastily, saying: "When you get up to pray, perform ablution perfectly, stand facing the Qiblah, make Takbīr, recite some of what you memorize of the Qur’an, and then bow down." In the case of those young men, he chose to teach by deeds.

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