104781 - Beggars: to which should we give and which should we refrain from giving to??

the question

There are a lot of beggars, especially children, and some of them resort to tricks so that they will be given money. For example, one of them may say that he is blind and cannot see, even though his eyes are in good health, and so on. How should I deal with them? Should I give them money or not? Please note that I do not know whether they are telling the truth or not, and I cannot be certain whether they really need the money or they are using tricks to collect money. If I help them when they are tricksters – but I do not know that – will I be sinning?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is not permissible for anyone to ask people for money when he is not in need or he is able to earn a living. There are certain categories for whom it is permissible to ask of people. They are: the poor person who is destitute, the man who owes a debt, and the one who has been stricken by financial calamity and lost all his wealth. In these cases it is not permissible to ask for more than one needs, on condition that he does not have enough to meet his needs and is not able to earn enough for his livelihood.

The scholars of the Standing Committee said:

It is permissible to ask people for money, for the one who is in need and does not have enough to suffice him and he is not able to earn a living. He may ask people for as much as will meet his needs only. As for the one who is not in need, or the one who is in need but is able to earn a living, it is not permissible for him to ask and whatever he takes from people in this case is haram for

him, because of the hadith of Qabeesah ibn Mukhaariq al-Hilaali (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: It was narrated that Qabeesah ibn Mukhaariq al-Hilaali said: I incurred a debt (in order to reconcile between two parties) and I came to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to ask him (for help) with it. He said: “Stay with us until the zakah comes, and we will order that something be given to you.” Then he said: “O Qabeesah, asking for help is not permissible except in one of three cases: a man who has incurred a debt (in order to reconcile between two parties), for whom it is permissible to ask for help until he has paid it off, then he should refrain; a man who has been stricken by a calamity that has destroyed all his wealth, for whom it is permissible to ask for help until he gets enough to get by – or he gets enough to meet his basic needs; and a man who is stricken by poverty and three men of wisdom among his people acknowledge that So and so has been stricken by poverty, then it becomes permissible for him to ask for help until he gets enough to get by – or to meet his basic needs. Apart from these cases asking for help, O Qabeesah, is haram and the one who begs is consuming something haram.” Narrated by Ahmad, Muslim, an-Nasaa’i and Abu Dawood.

And (it is haram) because of the hadith, “Whoever asks of people to accumulate wealth is asking for a live coal” and the hadith “Charity is not permissible for a rich person, or for one who is strong and healthy.”

Narrated by the five apart from an-Nasaa’i

So what you should do is advise him, and the scholars should explain this to the people in their Friday khutbahs and otherwise, and in the media.

Repulsing or chiding the beggar is also not allowed because Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “and do not chide the one who asks for help” [Ad-Duha 93:10]. What is referred to here is rebuking him and raising one’s voice against him; this includes both the one who asks for money and the one who asks about shar‘i rulings. But this does not rule out offering guidance to the beggar who is asking wrongfully, and advising him with wisdom and beautiful preaching.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baz, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan, Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez Aal ash-Shaykh, Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd

Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah, 24/377

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

What is the Islamic ruling on begging?

He quoted the hadith of Qabeesah that we quoted above, then he said,

In this hadith the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) described the permissible kinds of asking; anything other than that is haram. If a person has enough to meet his needs whether it is from the salary of a job, or from trade, or income from some property set aside as a waqf for his benefit by a relative, or real estate, or earnings from a craft such as carpentry or blacksmithing, or from farming and the like, it is haram for him to beg. But if a person is compelled to do that, there is nothing wrong with him asking for as much as he needs. The same applies to one who incurs a debt in order to reconcile between people, or to spend on his family and children. There is nothing wrong with him asking for help to pay off this debt."(Majmoo‘ Fatawa Ibn Baz, 14/320)

Secondly:

As for what we often see in the streets or in the mosques of beggars who ask people for money, they are not all truly needy people. In fact it has been proven that some of them are independent of means, and it has been proven that there are gangs to exploit those children and make them ask people for money. This does not mean that there are no cases that are truly deserving. Hence we think that the one who wants to give money to one of these people should try to use his own intuition to work out whether he is genuine or not. Whatever the case, the best option is to refer these people to the zakah and charity committees so that they can do their job of finding out about their circumstances and follow up on them even after giving to them.

If you realise that someone is not in need or you think it most likely that this is the case, then do

not give him anything. If you realise that he is in need or you think it most likely that this is the case, then give him something if you want to. If you see someone and it is not clear to you what his situation really is, then you may give him or you may not.

If a person gives something to someone to whom it is permissible to give, thinking that he is in need, he will have the reward for that act of charity even if it turns out later that he was not in need, and even if the money he gave him was the zakah of his wealth. It will be accepted from him and he does not have to give it again.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “A man said: I shall certainly give charity. He went out with his charity and placed it in the hand of a thief. The next morning, they said: He gave charity to a thief. He said: O Allah, praise be to You; I shall certainly give charity (again). He went out with his charity and placed it in the hands of a prostitute. The next morning they said: Last night he gave charity to a prostitute. He said: O Allah, praise be to You for a prostitute. I shall certainly give charity (again).’ He went out with his charity and placed it in the hand of a rich man. The next morning, they said, Last night he gave charity to a rich man. He said: O Allah, to You be praise for a thief, a prostitute and a rich man. It was said to him: As for what you gave in charity to a thief, perhaps it will be the cause of his refraining from stealing; as for the prostitute, perhaps it will be the cause of her refraining from fornication; and as for the rich man, perhaps he will learn a lesson and spend from that which Allah has given him.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1355; Muslim, 1022

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If a person thinks it most likely that the one to whom he gave charity was entitled to zakah, that is acceptable, whether he was begging or he looked poor. It is acceptable even if it turns out later on that he was independent of means; it is still acceptable. Hence when the man gave charity to the rich man and the next morning the people were saying “Last night he gave charity to a rich man,” it was said to the one who had given charity and regretted giving it to the rich man, “as for what

you gave in charity to the rich man, it has been accepted.” Allah, may He be glorified and exalted does not burden any soul with more than it can bear and He does not oblige you to try to find out about a person so that you can be absolutely certain. This is something that is not possible, or is too difficult. If you think it most likely that this is a person who is entitled to zakah, then give to him, and if it turns out that he is not one of those who are entitled to it, your zakah is still acceptable, praise be to Allah. "(Al-Liqa’ ash-Shahri, 71/question no. 9)

See also the answer to questions no. 5154 and 46241.