



NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE

A Proposal For

The Tzedakah Scholarship

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The Tzedakah Scholarship

Case for Support

The term “tzedakah” comes from the Jewish tradition which defines various levels of charity (see more about “tzedakah” starting on page 3). A donor recently approached Northwestern College with a very generous and interesting proposition. The donor is offering a challenge grant to Northwestern College that would go to fund an endowed scholarship (criteria explained in the fund agreement on pages 7 and 8). The donor wishes to challenge as many as possible—at every giving level—to give financial support to this scholarship in order to create a fund that achieves the sentiments of the highest levels of tzedakah.

It is our hope that this fund will offer donors the opportunity to be a part of ongoing assistance to future students of Northwestern College while giving testimony to their desire to honor God with their stewardship. This scholarship is not about the inaugural donor or any others who wish to give financial support to it. This scholarship is meant to enrich the educational and spiritual level of the student and to make possible his/her continued instruction. The reward to the donor is in knowing that each has participated in the education and building up of a new mature Christian. Those who support this fund do so adding their approval of the tzedakah philosophy and leave recognition and honor to God rather than any individual, organization, or group.

Funding Source

The donor has made \$250,000 available that will be used to challenge others to match that amount. Provided that the momentum is there and the \$250,000 challenge is met, the donor may be willing to make another \$250,000 available for an additional challenge and to continue to spur others on to support this scholarship, bringing the potential funding for this scholarship to \$1,000,000 (\$500,000 from the donor and \$500,000 from myriad other donors).

Scholarship Criteria and Administration

Please refer to the Scholarship Fund Description and Agreement for The Tzedakah Scholarship on pages 7 and 8.

Audiences to Solicit

There are many opportunities and possibilities when we think about likely donors who would be receptive to a scholarship of this type. Potential donors might donate as little as five or ten dollars to the fund and thus become an active partner while others might donate much, MUCH MORE, subject to their ability to do so. Every economic level of donation is of importance to the success of building the Scholarship to a level sufficient to become a significant and essential source of assistance to deserving students at Northwestern College.

Timeframe/Timeline

The timeframe of this challenge grant is (unfortunately) limited. It would be ideal if this challenge could be available for up to one year or more, but the donor has a limited time available to distribute their funds and a multiplicity of potential recipients. Thus, the sooner donors respond to this challenge the greater the possibility for maximizing the final size of the Tzedakah Scholarship.

Closing Comments

We at Northwestern consider it a significant blessing that this opportunity is at our doorstep and we will make every effort to partner with the donor to see that the challenge is met and exceeded. We are also committed to growing the scholarship beyond the initial parameters of this challenge grant.

While tzedakah is a specific Jewish word, its meaning is certainly applicable to our modern Christian world. While most people translate its meaning as charity, the true meaning is righteousness. Most would tend to consider an action of tzedakah as a mitzvah or good deed. It is much more.

The lowest level of tzedakah we find in Luke 18:2-5; the unjust Judge and the widow. Verse 3 tells us about a widow, who would have no standing in those times, who petitioned the Judge for justice. The passage gives us reason to believe that this petition was presented more than once and the Judge grew very weary of her continual presence and petition. But after some numerous visits, the Judge in verse 4 says to himself: "Though I do not fear God nor regard men, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Here we find the Judge doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, not because she deserved it, not because he cared for her plight; but because she inconvenienced him he answered her request. The Judge committed tzedakah though without grace, honor, or benevolence.

An example of the highest level of tzedakah can be found in the ninth chapter of John as we consider the story of Jesus healing the blind man; verses 1-39. First, we find Jesus explaining to the disciples why the man's condition existed and then applying clay to the man's eyes and telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Two things took place that I find very important, first Jesus took action without making it about himself; he was totally concerned with needs of the blind man. Secondly, the blind man followed the instructions of Jesus without question and received the gift of sight.

Upon returning to his normal location the neighbors began to talk among themselves and then to question him about what had taken place. The young man answered, telling them that a man called Jesus had given him the gift of sight. I would point out that the text does not state that the man understood who this particular "Jesus" was, as the name Jesus was not an uncommon one. Then the Pharisees got involved asking the newly sighted man what had occurred. The religious discussion centered over whether it was in keeping with the law to heal on the Sabbath and they claimed that the healer could not be from God because he did not keep the holy day restrictions. They asked the young man who he thought the healer was. The newly sighted man replied that "He is a prophet." A very reasonable assumption considering that the young man could now see people that before he could only hear.

The Pharisees then got the young man's parents involved suggesting that perhaps this was not truly their blind son but some sighted person impersonating him. The parents said that; "Yes, he is our son, and he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know." The Pharisees then told the young man to "Give God the glory. We know that this man, (the healer), is a sinner." The Pharisees knew full well who had healed the young blind man and sought to discredit the action of Jesus.

The young man was becoming very frustrated with the Pharisees continued efforts to demean the person who given him sight and began to argue with them as to who was from God and who was not and was finally cast out from the area. We can assume he was near the area of the temple because of the nature of the story and the presence of the religious Pharisees.

Later the young man was sought out by Jesus. Again, the text does not indicate that the young man recognized Jesus as his benefactor but he responded quickly to Jesus' question as to whether he believed in the Son of God. In reply, the young man affirmed that he would like to believe and wanted to know more. At this point, Jesus reveals himself to the young man and the newly sighted man believes Jesus' word and worshiped Him as God.

In this healing Jesus made it possible for the young man to become a self supporting member of the community, no longer needing to beg for his daily bread near the entrance of the temple area where before he was forbidden to enter because of his blindness. The young man was in his restored condition a full member of society with all of the rights and privileges of a Jewish male citizen.

My point is that with this action of tzedakah, Jesus had fulfilled the highest form of mercy and justice and given the young man the greatest gift of all, eternal life as a child of God through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. For God the Father preformed the greatest gift of tzedakah to humanity through the gift of His only begotten Son that through Him we all might become children of God.

Tzedakah without this higher purpose is of little value to either the giver or recipient. This highest purpose is explained in John 3:16; eternal life thorough the acceptance of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins against God—available to all who will believe and accept God's tzedakah.

Source: Anonymous

The Meaning of the Word "Tzedakah"

"Tzedakah" is the Hebrew word for the acts that we call "charity" in English: giving aid, assistance and money to the poor and needy or to other worthy causes. However, the nature of tzedakah is very different from the idea of charity. The word "charity" suggests benevolence and generosity, a magnanimous act by the wealthy and powerful for the benefit of the poor and needy. The word "tzedakah" is derived from the Hebrew root Tzadei-Dalet-Qof, meaning righteousness, justice or fairness. In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous, magnanimous act; it is simply an act of justice and righteousness, the performance of a duty, giving the poor their due.

The Obligation of Tzedakah

Giving to the poor is an obligation in Judaism, a duty that cannot be forsaken even by those who are themselves in need. Some sages have said that tzedakah is the highest of all commandments, equal to all of them combined, and that a person who does not perform tzedakah is equivalent to an idol worshipper. This is probably hyperbole, but it illustrates the importance of tzedakah in Jewish thought. Tzedakah is one of the three acts that gain us forgiveness from our sins. The High Holiday liturgy repeatedly states that God has inscribed a judgment against all who have sinned, but teshuvah (repentance), tefilah (prayer) and tzedakah can alleviate the decree.

According to Jewish law, we are required to give one-tenth of our income to the poor. This is generally interpreted as one-tenth of our net income after payment of taxes. Taxes themselves do not fulfill our obligation to give tzedakah, even though a significant portion of tax revenues in America and many other countries are used to provide for the poor and needy. Those who are dependent on public assistance or living on the edge of subsistence may give less, but must still give to the extent they are able; however, no person should give so much that he would become a public burden.

The obligation to perform tzedakah can be fulfilled by giving money to the poor, to health care institutions, to synagogues or to educational institutions. It can also be fulfilled by supporting your children beyond the age when you are legally required to, or supporting your parents in their old age. The obligation includes giving to both Jews and gentiles; contrary to popular belief, Jews do not just "take care of our own." Quite the contrary, a study reported in the Jewish Journal indicated that Jewish "mega-donors" (who give more than \$10 million a year to charity) found that only 6% of their mega-dollars went to specifically Jewish causes.

Judaism acknowledges that many people who ask for charity have no genuine need. In fact, the Talmud suggests that this is a good thing: if all people who asked for charity were in genuine need, we would be subject to punishment (from God) for refusing anyone who asked. The existence of frauds diminishes our liability for failing to give to all who ask, because we have some legitimate basis for doubting the beggar's sincerity. It is permissible to investigate the legitimacy of a charity before donating to it.

We have an obligation to avoid becoming in need of tzedakah. A person should take any work that is available, even if he thinks it is beneath his dignity, to avoid becoming a public charge.

However, if a person is truly in need and has no way to obtain money on his own he should not feel embarrassed to accept tzedakah. No person should feel too proud to take money from others. In fact, it is considered a transgression to refuse tzedakah. One source says that to make yourself suffer by refusing to accept tzedakah is equivalent to shedding your own blood.

Levels of Tzedakah

Certain kinds of tzedakah are considered more meritorious than others. The Talmud describes these different levels of tzedakah, and Rambam organized them into a list. The levels of charity, from the least meritorious to the most meritorious, are:

1. Giving begrudgingly
2. Giving less than you should, but giving it cheerfully
3. Giving after being asked
4. Giving before being asked
5. Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity
6. Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity
7. Giving when neither party knows the other's identity
8. Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant

SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.JEWFAQ.ORG/TZEDAKAH.HTM](http://www.jewfaq.org/tzedakah.htm); CREDIT GIVEN TO TRACEY R. RICH

The Tzedakah Scholarship

Scholarship Fund Description and Agreement

The Tzedakah Scholarship (hereafter referred to as “the Scholarship”) is administered by the Northwestern College Advancement Office and is made possible by generous contributions from alumni and friends of Northwestern College. The governing board of trustees of Northwestern College, Saint Paul, Minnesota, will oversee the Scholarship.

The purpose of the fund is to educate donors and student in the tenets of tzedakah (charity) and to provide for the promise of a Christian education to uplift a person and build a base for them to participate in improving the community.

The highest levels of tzedakah require that:

- The person being assisted does not know who provided the funds and thus does not feel beholden to or embarrassed in the presence of others.
- The identity of the person being helped is not known in advance to those who provide the charity and there is no way for the contributor to take advantage of or personally direct the generosity being provided.
- The gift being provided is to enable the recipient to become self-supporting so that they will be independent and never again have to depend upon others for assistance, but that they may be able to offer assistance to others in need and make a better community for all residents.

The Scholarship is defined and administered as follows and represents some of the aspects of those who might qualify for a scholarship:

- The title of the Scholarship shall be The Tzedakah Scholarship.
- The Scholarship will be invested for one year to accumulate enough earnings necessary for making awards. The Scholarship is endowed.
- Students interested in applying for the Scholarship shall do so through the Office of Advancement of Northwestern College.
- At the time of the award, the eligible student recipient of the Scholarship shall be a resident of the state of Minnesota, shall have completed one year of education at Northwestern College and shall be currently enrolled as a full-time student in either Northwestern College’s traditional day school or FOCUS programs. The student shall also represent and demonstrate the high ideals of the Mission, Vision and Values of Northwestern College.
- The applicant may offer letters of recommendation from community leaders, church leaders, family and friends that show both the need for the assistance and the ability of the potential recipient to impact their community through the education received.

- Awards shall be made in the following manner:
 - The minimum annual scholarship award shall be a minimum of \$1,000, but no more than \$8,000.
 - No more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total amount awarded shall go to the benefit of students enrolled in the FOCUS educational program of Northwestern College.
- The scholarship being made shall be deemed in the opinion of the Financial Aid office as being the essential element to the ability of the recipient being able to continue their education.
- Any changes to the criteria and administration of the Scholarship must be made in writing by the scholarship contact and must be accepted by the Advancement Office of Northwestern College.

Date

Dr. Alan S. Cureton
President, Northwestern College and Northwestern Media