

## A Sermon on Independent Study

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for July 10th, 2022 (and beyond)

This sermon is in dialogue format and prefers enlightenment to ignorance.

### DIALOGUE

Inquirer: What are you reading?

Reader: A book.

Inquirer: What's the title?

Reader: The Holy Bible.

Inquirer: Who wrote it?

Reader: People of faith who believe they know God and can loosely translate or communicate God's word, which is God.

Inquirer: Who wrote it? Any names for any of the translators/authors?

Reader: It depends on which version. The King James Version doesn't specify other than servants of the King in humble service to crown and God. The Wycliffe Bible, which is the first complete text of the old and new testaments in one volume was written and translated by John Wycliffe, a priest and professor at Oxford. It includes an apocrypha. Of course, apocryphal means highly doubtful but widely believed to be true.

Inquirer: What's the point of reading it?

Reader: The Abrahamic religions (those that condemn idolatry, not the cults claiming to be Abrahamic religions while practicing idolatry) are practiced by 55.5% of the global population right now. In order to communicate effectively with over half the human population, understanding the foundations of their/our cultures and belief systems is quite helpful. It's similar in some ways to familiarizing yourself with other forms of popular culture like the film franchise "Jurassic Park". If enough people are known to have seen it and/or understand a reference to it in some commentary or discourse, it can help facilitate open and effective communication, which is necessary for many things including setting boundaries.

Inquirer: Is that all you do? Do you only read the Bible?

Reader: No, that's just what I'm reading right now or was before you began your inquiry.

Inquirer: I'm not much of a reader. What books do you recommend?

Reader: I feel I'd need to know more about your reading level before making any recommendations. I recently read Soren Kierkegaard and would have been a bit lost had I not already studied Hegel, Kant, and Nietzsche. The bible was important for that one too, but I've read it before. I revisit it from time to time. What's the last book you read?

Inquirer: Probably some assigned textbook. I don't remember.

Reader: Have you ever been to a library and/or do you have a library card? You can visit [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) and check out their selection of online books you can checkout for free. You can also visit your local library and find a book that interests you. What topics interest you or would you find useful to know whether particularly interested or not?

Inquirer: No, libraries are boring. If it isn't entertaining, I don't pay attention. I'm most interested in not making any effort. I want an effortless lifestyle surrounded by comfort. Any books you suggest to help with that?

Reader: I'd recommend baby books and books on toddler care. But, babies are totally dependent and must focus most effort on motor skill development. So, even their lives aren't effortless even if relatively comfortable unless or until a caregiver postpones changing a diaper or feeding. Fetal development or books on pregnancy might help as well. Fetuses are in-utero so always have everything done for them though are also at risk of being aborted or miscarried because they are so vulnerable or not yet viable depending on one's position on that. But, a fetus is the closest thing to the lifestyle you claim you want so books on that might help.

Inquirer: I'm not planning to have children and don't see the point of reading your recommended books. But, you seem really stupid because having a kid is the last thing on earth anyone would do who wished to have an effortless lifestyle surrounded by comfort. What else do you recommend?

Reader: I recommend living in moderation with respect for equality. Anyone who has an effortless lifestyle surrounded by comfort is dependent on everyone else who makes that possible. Maybe read "Tragedy on The Mountain: A Quadriplegic's Journey From Paralysis To Paralympics" by Brent Poppen. Dependents are, in a sense, beggars and beggars can't be choosers. Are you not even independent enough to choose your own reading material?

Inquirer: I'm not in to independent study and don't trust anyone so don't pay much attention. Almost everyone claiming authority in my life in any way has told me not to trust others claiming authority in my life in some way. I just don't see the point and want an effortless lifestyle surrounded by comfort. I don't think reading about the challenges of a quadriplegic provide what I seek.

Reader: What if no one else existed? What if I didn't exist? What if you were all alone in the world and no one existed that could even respond to your inquiries? What would you do? What if solipsism was real? I recommend a book on solipsism.

Inquirer: What is solipsism?

Reader: Oxford Languages via Google defines "solipsism" as "the view or theory that the self is all that can be known to exist." Again, I believe that's a philosophy most reasonably adopted by those in fetal stages of development or who would commit to an effortless lifestyle surrounded by comfort.

Inquirer: So, you don't exist then?

Reader: Some say if you believe it, it is true for you. But, I believe objective truth exists and subjective truths are often circumstantial at best. I think therefore I exist. Descartes. The funny thing is I'm not sure if you do. But, I know myself to be reasonable and don't believe I'd imagine this conversation so barring any evidence that I'm suffering toxicity or brain inflammation of some sort, I'm willing to say you exist as an individual separate but equal to me.

Inquirer: Why would you recommend a book on something you don't believe to be true?

Reader: Asked and answered. I'd recommend such a book for the sake of understanding, effective communication, and willingness to entertain a variety of ideas or beliefs in hopes of practicing or reinforcing the virtues of tolerance, patience, and love.

Inquirer: How much spare time do you have and why do you use it to read things you don't believe?

Reader: I'd like to get back to reading as I would prefer that to this conversation. I planned to read, I didn't schedule this conversation. For me, this conversation isn't effortless and I'm sure it isn't for you either. I feel the best way I can assist you in your pursuit of an effortless lifestyle surrounded by comfort is to leave you alone and end this conversation.

Inquirer: You really shouldn't read in public places if you aren't looking to strike up a conversation. Have a nice day!

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

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