

A Sermon on Thoughtful Giving

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for December 22nd, 2024 (and beyond)
[This sermon was originally delivered June 4th, 2023 and has been edited from the original version.]

This sermon is a guide on giving thoughtful gifts. It is a meditative sermon with questions and general answers with examples where non-binary responses are required.

MEDITATIVE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q: Is the gift for a family member?

Q: Is the gift for a friend?

Q: Is the gift professional or personal? If personal, answer one of the above.

Q: How well do you know the recipient and what gift would you prefer to receive from yourself if roles were reversed?

A: If I'm giving a gift professional to professional, I'm likely giving office supplies or a gift card for the same. We all need paper, pens, printer ink, stationary, and more in most professions. That's what I'd most appreciate where it was an office holiday party or something of that nature. If a tipped profession, a very generous tip. Mail carriers for example make \$12-\$30/hour and often receive annual tips or gifts from those on their routes. How many hours do they spend handling your mail per year? They reportedly deliver to 1320 addresses per day per mail carrier and work 40 hour weeks/8 hours a day. $260 \text{ days} \times 8 \text{ hours} \div 1320 = 1.5$, which you may wish to multiply by a minimum of 10 or your normal tipping percentage for a fair or good tip in such a case. If everyone tipped their mail carrier \$15 per year (the minimum suggested) at 1320 tips annually, it would be \$19,800 total in tips per year even if only tipped during Winter Holidays. The alternative is to give your generous tip percentage based on a \$45 tab (1.5 hours=\$45 max in example). So, if your generous tip is 10%, a \$5 gift card may be appropriate. If making \$30/hour, gross income at annual hours and workdays for a mail carrier is \$62,400 per year without tips. If making \$12/hour, that gross amount is \$24,960 before tips. Average rent in the US is \$1702/month or \$20,424/year. These are just some things to consider before giving.

Q: What is your favorite thing about the intended recipient?

Q: What is your least favorite or most disliked thing about the intended recipient?

A: In answering the above two you are assessing your own relationship with the recipient to some extent. One of my favorite things about my dog Gypsy while still living was her enjoyment of food I prepared for her. One of my least favorite things was her putrid flatulence after she ate eggs I made for her. So, a good gift for her would be

food I prepare which she loved no matter what and for my sake not to make her eggs even though she enjoyed them.

Q: What does the recipient need?

A: If the recipient needs help just making ends meet whether expressly or impliedly communicated, gift cards and money will be the most well-received. If you need help covering necessities (i.e. food, rent, attire, transportation, medical expenses, etc) help with that is a Godsend and way better than a balloon bouquet with greeting card.

Q: What does the recipient want?

A: Travel gift cards or certificates are great for people whose needs are met and may have time to take a vacation. But, that and offering to care for children, pets, home, mail, and/or plants when they go makes it that much more thoughtful.

Q: What do you want the gift to convey to the recipient about your feelings or relationship?

A: If you want to let them know what you appreciate and what you find unfavorable subtly in a #TaoFu way at the same time, find a gift that expresses both. This can take some time, but makes giving more fun I've found. Someone I found to be exhibiting narcissistic tendencies or unduly influenced by narcissists, I gave a Yo-Yo to because Yo-Yos were originally given as gifts/tributes to Greek gods as well as used as weapons. I mentioned the Greek god thing in the card/note without mentioning David and Goliath or other possible meanings/uses expressly. I did provide a link that explored the history of the Yo-Yo and covered both referenced above. The recipient embraced the Greek god inference and took it too literally in my opinion. But, that in part is what made it so funny and therefore I enjoyed full context even if the recipient prefers delusions of grandeur. In addition, the double entendre of yo-yo can refer to either a toy or "a person regarded as stupid, ineffectual, inept, etc" (source: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/yo-yo>) I believe in the joy of giving and giving joy. You can give very thoughtfully on a tight budget too. Average cost of a toy Yo-Yo is \$5-\$10, but some sell for over \$1000 for collectors. I'm not suggesting you give the Yo-Yo, this is just an example of putting thought into a gift so it has meaning for you and the recipient even if interpreted differently as long as all enjoy it.

And, if they have a wish-list that they maintain and make available, use it or give gift cards and money if you want to be sure they're satisfied by your offering. If they are particularly generous and support any specific charities, donate in their name to their favorite charity. That last one goes for professional (i.e. CEO of the company where you work) and personal. If a small company, a donation in the name of the company given to the owner will be very thoughtful as long as the donation is tax-deductible.

Once you've considered all of the above, you should be ready to give a very thoughtful gift to anyone on your list. Happy Giving!

[Special Note: Toys For Tots does good works all year round and you can support them here: <https://www.toysfortots.org/> Happy Holidays!]

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.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.