

A Sermon on "The Wrong Crowd"

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for March 28th, 2021 (and beyond)

Today's sermon is provided in dialogue format with varying vignettes (short reality/morality plays) with hopes it helps everyone who has suggested anyone else is hanging out with "the wrong crowd" and/or been told they were hanging out with "the wrong crowd" with addressing their own ignorance or prejudice.

VIGNETTE #1

Reasonably Concerned Party: I'm concerned because the people you are introducing to your life and therefore my life appear to present more risks than benefits through association or proximity. I've evaluated from my perspective and at this time feel threatened by your new associates and believe they pose a threat to you too. I'm aware of unlawful activities that you may enjoy or even survive that I believe very well may result in loss of your liberty if the law catches up with you. I know that I rent and if you go to prison I will not be able to provide you shelter while you get your life back on track because the lease agreement expressly says no ex-felons allowed. I don't want you to be homeless and if you keep on the current track, there may be nothing I can do to help when you hit your worst-case scenario.

Malignant Narcissistic Party: What I do is none of your business and if you report my illegal activities or expose them, then your feeling threatened will be reinforced. You should really be more concerned about yourself. If I'm ever caught, I understand you won't be able to help even if you want to at that time.

VIGNETTE #2

Reasonably Concerned Party: I'm concerned because the people you are introducing to your life and therefore my life appear to present more risks than benefits through association or proximity. I've evaluated from my perspective and at this time feel threatened by your new associates and believe they pose a threat to you too. I'm aware of unlawful activities that you may enjoy or even survive that I believe very well may result in loss of your liberty if the law catches up with you. I know that I rent and if you go to prison I will not be able to provide you shelter while you get your life back on track because the lease agreement expressly says no ex-felons allowed. I don't want you to be homeless and if you keep on the current track, there may be nothing I can do to help when you hit your worst-case scenario.

Traumatic Stress Party: I don't want you to worry. I'm not involved in anything illegal. I do know people who take risks and hang out with them sometimes. It's because they make me feel safer in some ways. They seem so fearless and I just like being around that because I feel so vulnerable after what happened. They also share marijuana with me and that helps with traumatic stress. So, I'm comfortable, but, don't want you to be uncomfortable. What can I do to help you be more comfortable?

Reasonably Concerned Party: Please keep all illegal activities (including possession of controlled substances) completely away from me. I do not accept nor assume the risk of that even if you find it therapeutic. If you know someone in your circle is a criminal, please do not bring them as your plus-one or plus-more to my property, home, or any location for which I'm responsible at law. Do you really find that lifestyle comforting and rewarding? That's too judgmental and I trust you have considered the risks and assumed them.

VIGNETTE #3

Unreasonable Controlling Party (AKA Bizarrely Self-Aware Malignant Narcissist): You can't leave the house for any reason. I'm afraid you'll report me for what I do to you and I'm not done with that, nor willing to take responsibility at law for my crimes against you. You can't have any friends and I don't like the two that have been asking about you. They need to mind their own damn business. If they come around again, they may go missing like the cat.

Malignant Narcissist (sincere)/Victim (sarcastic): I'm sorry. I depend on you for everything and would never do anything to purposely upset you. I should shut up now. You never do anything wrong or questionable. The government has no right to interfere in our affairs and the laws don't apply to us because we're a community, just us. I don't even like those two and will never interact with them again. The cat had it coming. [The sincere or sarcastic tone may be internalized with a rationalization or reinterpretation of how it was meant rather than how it was given or taken. This could involve a micro-expression as to underlying sentiment.]

VIGNETTE #4

Curious Party: Why do you hang out with that crowd? Why are you friends with those people?

Answering Party: I'm a bit of a social butterfly and hang out with a lot of different people including you. I enjoy you because you are usually fairly objective so a nice break from people who tend to be more subjective. What friends specifically are you asking about because surprisingly your questions seem to be over-generalizing?

Curious Party: I'm specifically asking about ANTIFA/BLM members. I watch the news. You and/or they may be killed or jailed. I don't want to lose you but respect your right to make your own choices.

Answering Party: Activists assume the risk and so do I. I'm fully aware of the risks involved with the approach though not the message of some in the ANTIFA/BLM community. I actually try to help provide a less risky way of spreading the word while supporting the sentiment of liberty and justice for all with no bullshit. Do you think by having this conversation or sharing your concern that I will change course and that you will have saved my life in such a case? Or, do you think I should totally be in a

segregated environment with all types of people that are like ANTIFA/BLM or worse in terms of risk to life and liberty?

Curious Party: I really haven't thought about it. I do care about you and was curious because I wouldn't take the risks you are taking so wanted to know why. You explained it well enough to satisfy my curiosity and respect your choices. I do not believe you should be in an isolated nor segregated environment of any sort and certainly not surrounded by risk. But, if you assume the risk of association or proximity to those bound by their lawlessness to such a fate, I think it is misguided on your part though sweet of you to try to redirect other well-meaning people away from unnecessary risk or potential harm such as prison or death.

Answering Party: That's cool. See you later. No worries.

END

MEDITATIVE QUESTION:

What would Jesus do?

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.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>