

A Sermon on Equality

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for June 7th, 2020 (and beyond)

Tuesday, June 2nd, 2020 was Wat Tyler and Priest John Ball Day which we honor annually on June 2nd by questioning authority whether secular or faith-based. It is a religious holiday celebrated annually and perpetually by COPE and our congregation. Priest John Ball was committed to the principle that all human beings are equal in the eyes of God and opposed church hierarchies in the Catholic Church of the 14th century. So, to further honor Priest John Ball this week, today's sermon is on equality.

The goal of this sermon is to provide some food for thought and/or recommended practices to improve respect for equality in the eyes of each other as in the eyes of God and US law to avoid hypocrisy and be truly Christian.

Regarding dating, domestic partnerships, and/or marriages the way to ensure resentments don't build over time regarding inequality in virtues, such as diligence and generosity, is to recognize each other's virtues justly and objectively. Money remains the primary reason couples get divorced or break up. So, the way to address that effectively is by being objectively fair and just with mutual reciprocated respect. It may help to never expect nor demand more than you yourself contribute whether financially or in-kind to domestic maintenance. Now, if one party to the relationship doesn't contribute financially at all and the entire financial burden is on another party, you can see where that could cause resentment or strain over time and likely have witnessed it. Even where both parties contribute financially, but, the contributions are disproportional it can result in discord. Below is a table to give you an idea how to figure out whether you are truly upholding the values of equality in your personal relationship(s):

TOTAL FINANCIAL BURDEN PARTY	IN-KIND CONTRIBUTOR-ONLY PARTY	MAJORITY FINANCIAL BURDEN PARTY	IN-KIND/PARTIAL FINANCIAL BURDEN PARTY
Pays all household and discretionary personal expenses for both parties. (US Average household expenses is \$5,102/month) Source: https://www.fool.com/the-ascent/research/average-monthly-expenses/	Does 20 hours of housework, 2 hours of bookkeeping, and 2 hours of party planning/social network scheduling per week. So, 96 hours a month with potentially an added 30 hours for any meal preparations at say a generously applied hourly rate	Pays 69% of all expenses because the pay gap is at 81% on average and when splitting expenses evenly with consideration of said gap as an example being generous in paying the additional 19% that may exist or	Pays 31% of all monthly expenses at a total of \$1,581.62 based on first column and third column totals/math. So, to make up for the difference in financial contributions, would need to contribute in-kind about 60 hours per month valued at

	<p>of \$32/hour would equate to \$4,032 if those were the total hours worked (not directing others to do work for which that is an additional expense to the total financial burden bearer). There is still a \$1,070 imbalance which means the total financial burden bearing party is being very generous. But, if you add in childcare, in MA it is \$2,452 monthly or take the \$32/hour rate and apply it to childcare hours as well and adjust total. Be honest when calculating. And see rest of sermon before reacting.</p>	<p>arguably does exist. So, paying \$3,520.38 if still using the average monthly expenses of a US household of two as \$5,102 per first column.</p>	<p>\$32/hour to show full respect for the equality of everyone's contributions while splitting all other in-kind responsibilities 50/50 and recognizing the virtues of diligence and generosity where objectively clear and present.</p>
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The above should assist with many things including some terms to include in any prenuptial, domestic partnership, or even family planning agreement. See <http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.church/weddings.pdf> for more information you may find helpful or useful. With dating, I recommend splitting checks by getting separate checks and if one party insists on being generous then the 69%/31% split as shown above to recognize the alleged pay gap which I believe is over-generalized and fails to take into account other variables. Another option would be to do the math on the income of both parties and split the check in a more individualized way if not asking for separate checks. For example, say party one takes home \$3500/mo and party two takes home \$1800/mo as salary. Combine both monthly salaries through addition and get \$5300. That works out to 33.96% for the \$1800/mo. earner and 66.04% for the \$3500/mo earner proportionally.

Regarding columns one and two of the table, you may feel the party represented by column two or the second column should only be required to do the equivalent of \$2,551

given the examples since that would be half of the financial contribution from the other side or equivalent. If agreed upon as fair by both parties, I'd have no problem with that given the example. However, say the take home salary for the total financial burden bearer is \$6,000/mo and anything over \$5,102 is set in a savings account or separate savings accounts for educational expenses for children and/or a rainy day fund for the household. We're looking at the entirety of that burden bearer's earnings going into shared expenses and they likely work at least 160 hours per month. Given the example without children/childcare included, requesting at least 126 hours which is one full-time work week (32-40 hours is full time) you aren't working at all which doesn't balance out the cost to the total financial burden bearer from some perspectives. And, if you add in childcare, then, balancing out if the financial burden bearer earns \$6,000/mo and anything over goes into household or funds set up for children given estimated values provided in table example(s). So, to me matching the contributions of both parties financially, in-kind, or some combo as with the third and fourth columns of the table examples, is the best way to treat each other with mutual respect regarding shared responsibilities and how to best value contributions whether financial or in-kind. And, an agreement as to the valuation or how to make sure respect remains mutual for each other's commitments and contributions to domestic affairs will help reduce likelihood of divorce where finances remain the number one reason couples break up. In addition, any record keeping of in-kind and/or financial contributions will assist with equitable distribution of marital properties in the event a divorce becomes warranted. I personally support such prenuptial arrangements over family court disputes and believe all sane people would or likely do agree.

Regarding equality in the marketplace, everything that is available to purchase is made available through the labor and hard work of others (and hopefully our own hard work as well) and all deserve to be fairly compensated for the work done. So, when someone is seeking something for free they are asking for charity or for others to be particularly generous or even exploited if the demand for something for free is intimidating or coercive. Everything you can get for free is what those who are charitable and act in good faith work very hard to make available to those who need assistance. So, where you lack purchasing power and wish to acquire it, you must look at your own options for employment or entrepreneurship and manage your resources as responsibly as possible which may include seeking any available government assistance just like the corporations do. So, if you don't earn enough money to cover rent, apply for Section 8 and see if you qualify. And, acquire in demand skills so you can upgrade. By "in demand skills", I mean where there are actually openings right now at the pay you hope to get and getting those skills so you can get one of those jobs. In USA right now, the top ten most in demand jobs are Home Health Aides, Physical Therapist, Registered Nurse, Software Engineer, Information Security Analyst, Occupational Therapist, Web Developer, Data Scientist, Operations Manager, and Diagnostic Medical Sonographer. Home Health Aide is the lowest paid one at \$22K annually of that top 10 and the highest median salary of the in demand jobs shown is \$111K annually for Data Scientist. Most of the others fell between \$65K-\$100K for median salary. Source: <https://www.whatcareerisrightforme.com/blog/top-10-most-in-demand-usa-jobs/> Some say "No risk, no reward" and it is better to take the risk of gaining skills, studying,

learning, and being responsible than attempt to avoid all those risks by taking the biggest risk of all which is treating everyone else like your slave or "bitch" while you contribute nothing and claim you are entitled to the fruits of the labor of others. No one is your slave nor "bitch" and while you may not need to be told that, maybe you are glad anyway that someone said it especially in a church sermon. Make sure your refusal to work on the basis you don't wish to be a slave doesn't expose your hypocrisy when you demand others serve you without any compensation at all as if that's more ethical or exhibits your moral superiority in some way.

One way to look at any situation, including where you've brought a sack lunch to an event and someone next to you has as well where you find one of their items more appealing, is to think about how you'd feel depending on offer of the other party should roles be the same or reversed before speaking to avoid hypocrisy and exercise honest reason (aka discernment) for that very reason. How would you feel if the other party in the lunch example provided said any of the following:

1. Are you going to eat that? Could I have it? [Assertive, not too bad, but, better to offer a trade particularly where you've brought something to trade and that's clear.]
2. I'm not really in the mood for what I brought, are you interested in trading? [Honest and subjective followed by objective offer to trade. Reasonable. And, fine as long as you don't expect anything and won't be obviously disappointed by a polite decline.]
3. [Waits to see if you'll leave your lunch unattended...then...] Do you need to go to the restroom? I can watch your food if you need to go. [If you go, they then steal your lunch and take off. This is vicious and way worse than 1 or 2. It is deceptive and vicious while taking advantage of someone else's trust.]
4. [Without saying anything they grab your lunch and leave theirs leaving you to wonder if they did it by mistake or on purpose and when asked they say "I thought it was my lunch," but don't correct the error and continue as if it was their lunch. This is an example of what I call #Mindfuckery and extremely annoying. Don't get psyched out if a situation like that happens to you and either forgive it with a generous heart or file complaints with the proper authorities including HR if at work.]
5. Same scenario as #4 except they do not leave their lunch for you.

Now, if you can take the time to consider how you might feel if someone was requesting of you what you are requesting of others with the same terms for giving and receiving, then you should be able to avoid hypocrisy and have a happier life all around. Treat others as you would be treated and if you treat others like a slave enough you could be convicted of human trafficking in the USA and end up legally enslaved in the criminal justice system since that's the only legal exception regarding forced labor in the USA at this time. If you treat others viciously, as a majority Christian nation it would be reasonable to believe that viciously is how you wish to be treated and any time in incarceration is actually something you wanted which the recidivism rate reinforces.

Equality is a great idea but can only completely materialize and/or manifest when everyone commits to it in word and deed. Hopefully today's sermon helps.

"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 <http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.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:

<http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.church> and <http://www.heal-online.org>