



It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good

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Among politicians of national stature today, there is perhaps none more respected as a principled conservative than Rick Santorum. In *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good*, Santorum articulates the humane vision that he believes must inform public policy if it is to be effective and just. An appreciation for the civic bonds that unite a community lies at the heart of genuine conservatism. Moreover, Santorum demonstrates how such an approach to political, social, and economic problems offers the most promise for those on the margin of life: the poor, the vulnerable, and minorities who have often been excluded from opportunity in America.

Santorum argues that conservative statesmanship is animated by a sense of stewardship for an inheritance. But what do we inherit as Americans? And how can we be good stewards of that inheritance? Building on Robert Putnam's discussion of "social capital," the habits of association and trust that are the preconditions of any decent society, Santorum assesses how well, in the past generation, Americans have cared for the "fabric" of society. He explores in detail various dimensions of social and cultural connection that are the foundation of the common good. And he presents innovative policy proposals for the renewal of American society at all levels.

Throughout his book, Santorum emphasizes the central role of the family—in contradistinction to the metaphorical "village" of the federal government, as promoted by Hillary Clinton—in achieving the common good. With a sustained argument touching on first principles throughout, this ambitious and original book is a major contribution to contemporary political debate. *It Takes a Family* further establishes Santorum as the leader of reform-minded civic conservatives in America.

It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good Details

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Malin Friess says

June 5th....not until June 5th do New Mexicans finally get to approach the polling booth and lend their voice to the future Republican Nominee for President. Only Utah votes after we do. Santorum will not be on the ballot...so why did I read this book?

I finished (skimmed some) of this book the night before Santorum realized he would likely lose his home state of Pennsylvania and did the right thing (to assure a possible future in the Republican Party and a possible part in Romney's Cabinet) by bowing out of the race (even after winning 11 states).

Santorum's book...It takes a family: Conservatism and the common good (a not to subtle shot at Hillary Clinton's, It takes a Village) is a long...diatribe about cultural conservatism. I only give it two stars because too much of this book was about what Santorum is against (gay marriage, pornography, crime, divorce, etc) as opposed to what he is for..which are great things (smaller/efficient government, a supreme court that looks to the constitution, strong families, religious freedom).

I think Santorum (only 52 years old) still has a big place in the GOP..but had some missteps (Obama is a Snob) etc. When he sticks to his hard working mid-west coal mining populous roots..he is a strong candidate, articulate speaker, and genuine person. Would have liked to see more autobiographical information in this book.

Brian says

Previously, I read Herman Cain's "They Think You're Stupid" and I had read Rick Perry's "Fed-Up". I liked their ideas and principles laid out by both of those authors and Presidential candidates. If they had remained in the race, I would have voted for either one of them. Unfortunately, they are no longer options. Every time I heard Rick Santorum on TV, I tended to agree with what he said, but I wondered why he wasn't catching on as a valid candidate. I thought I should know more about what his thoughts on policy were, so I read this book by in order to make an educated choice when the time comes.

Having now read his book, I can confidently cast a vote for Santorum, now having a better of idea of what he believes, and what his approach to policy would be. Although he is self-admittedly not a libertarian, he believes in the concept of subsidiarity which Wikipedia defines as:

"Subsidiarity is an organizing principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority. Political decisions should be taken at a local level if possible, rather than by a central authority. [1] The Oxford English Dictionary defines subsidiarity as the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level."

This is fully in line with one of my own principles for measuring organizational principles and policies against, which is:

"Respect local control. Decision making responsibility and authority must be in the hands of those closest to the action, meaning those who will either reap the rewards or suffer the consequences as a result of those decisions."

In Rick Santorum's view, the family is the appropriate level for most responsibility for choices and actions, and policies should support, reinforce, and enable the family unit in fulfilling its role. His book details examples of publicly funded, but primarily non-governmental led, private sector approaches to strengthening the lowest organized unit of civil society, the family. While I agree in concept with most of the policies he outlines, I disagree with some policies and in particular, public funding of programs, but that is the libertarian in me. I agree in concept with the principle that forms the foundation of his belief, and that leaves room for compromise in the implementation details. He would make a good transition President.

Robert Federline says

Even though this book was obviously written in response, at least in part, to Hillary Clinton's book, "It Takes a Village," this work easily stands on its own, and not merely as a counterpoint to her positions.

This book, now a decade old, still contains useful and well-considered insights into the importance and centrality of the family in society in history, and the consequences of its displacement today. Because of the author's perspective as a former United States senator, he brings to the table a better understanding than most of the processes in the legal system which have dismantled the family and removed it from its place of honor and respect in society and transformed it to just another life-style choice.

The family, of course, was once considered the basic building block of society. Now it is considered to be the individual, with society viewing the family, with its influence in the areas of religion and social mores and even civil and civic interaction. Santorum ably sets forth the chain of legal decisions issued by the courts to impair the importance of the family and thwart its natural influence in the lives of our children and the shaping of society.

He recites these principles as the rules of subsidiarity and of central control. Increasingly society has taken power away from families. This is not all done by governmental action, of course, but also through the socialization outlets of media. In music, movies, television, and even down to commercials, we devalue the family and marginalize its influence by criticizing and degrading the influence of parents. While it is still not for everyone, Santorum makes a good argument for home-schooling children. It is one way to try to preserve the family as the initial arbiter of religious thought and values.

Without constant vigilance and political awareness and involvement in the political process the family will become impotent and be overwhelmed by liberal influences which seek to redefine the family and enforce their own value systems across the board, without tolerance for a dissenting view.

The far-reaching impact of these ideas is important and may only be ignored at the risk of a greater loss of liberty and independence.

M.M. Strawberry Reviews says

It is one thing to be fiscally conservative, but religion and conservatism do not go together well. Santorum is one of the many examples of that. There is a reason why church and state are supposed to be separate, and people like Santorum don't care about that. Santorum believes that the ideal family consists of one mom and dad. And of course, that family has to fit in HIS narrowly-defined idea of what constitutes a family.

It is true that a family with two parents is often more stable emotionally and financially, but some families with a mom and dad are pretty screwed up, and some single-parent or same-sex couple families are AWESOME. Santorum says a lot of weird things, and it's sad that many agree with him on his closed-minded ways. I would take conservatives like Mr. Frothy seriously if they left religion out of politics.

Sonia says

I loved this book! It resonates with good common sense about the importance of family-friendly legislation for our entire country. Senator Santorum speaks not just from his own ideology, but also from the experience of someone who has been instrumental in passing family-friendly legislation. He introduces the concept of liberal "no-fault" freedom and the horrific consequences that has brought to our society. Currently, Senator Santorum is a presidential candidate. This book is a good way to get to know him and his views and what sort of president he would be.

Pedro Rocha says

Great book by a great Senator. However, it is a bit too long. Nothing else to complain though! It does take a family.

Jen says

Every time I thought I was at the point where Rick Santorum and I could find some common ground, he had to come out and say something wildly offensive. Like when he pointed out that a big problem in our economy rests on the idea that women think they can have a full-time career outside of the home. Ah well. I suppose our similarities will have to rest at the intersection of Sweater and Vest.

Jeff Stockett says

I liked the general message of this book. There were a few points where I felt it got bogged down. Perhaps he was just trying to cover too wide of a range of topics. But still, I liked the overall theme of what he had to say.

He wrote this book in response to Hillary Clinton's book, *It Takes a Village*. I haven't read her book, but the tenet that he disagreed with and responded to was that our children are raised by a set of wise village elders

(I.E. the government) and that these elders know more about what you need than you do.

His thesis is that the family should be the core unit of society. All problems should be addressed by the smallest unit possible (family, community (including local churches and charities), city, state, and finally federal). He presents the case that government should exist to strengthen and support families and not the other way around. This book outlines his vision for a bottom up approach to solving many of America's ills.

Here are a few of the quotes that I picked out that I enjoyed.

"Properly defined, liberty is freedom coupled with responsibility to something bigger or higher than the self." p. 14

"Healthy families are our first strike for what is right and our first defense against what is wrong in America today." p. 15

"Marriage matters because children matter. Without marriage, children suffer." p. 23

"We may look up to Armies for our Defence, but Virtue is our best Security. It is not possible that any State should remain free, where Virtue is not supremely honored." Samuel Adams, p. 43

"The lessons of history, confirmed by the evidence immediately before me, show conclusively that continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit." - Franklin Delano Roosevelt (seems to me an ironic source for that quote) p. 150

"Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their appetites... It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters." - Edmund Burke p. 216

"Abortion is a toxin methodically polluting our fragile moral ecosystem." p. 219

"As a result of abortion, for more than thirty years over a quarter of all children conceived in America never took their first breath." p. 219

"Do we consider a child that may not live long, or may have an abnormality, to be less of a child? Is this less of a human because it is not perfect? Have we reached the point in our society where because perfection is so required of us, that those who are not perfect don't even deserve the opportunity to live?" p. 259

"Government for its part must never forget that its role in education is to serve parents, to aid and support them in fulfilling a role that is uniquely theirs." p. 356

"In America's experience, strong families are the seedbed of virtue, and that includes public virtue. American citizenship is strongest where the American family is strongest." p. 427

In short, I thought this book showcased well what Rick Santorum's views on the role of government are. He is not a perfect presidential candidate, but he definitely understands the role of government as well as the role of the family.

April says

I do not agree with Rick Santorum's politics whatsoever, but this book did not make me hate the world or want to puke the way that reading O'Reilly or Limbaugh does. It is thought-provoking in a good way, not in a 'I CAN YELL LOUDER THAN YOU' way. He sometimes slips into the same type of "other" bashing that many conservatives do, but there are also some decent arguments. He and I come to very different conclusions on pretty much everything, but I feel that he lays out his world view in an intellectual and interesting way. You know interesting the way a spider building a web is interesting. It pretty, ordered, but you still get the heebie-jeebies imagining the poor little victims that are going to get their insides sucked out. I think his political and social theories flawed and incorrect, I do not think he's a moron, just wrong, and being wrong doesn't mean that this is not an interesting read.

Matthew says

The quality of Santorum's case for conservatism was surprising and thoughtful. Reading this book has helped me understand him better as a GOP candidate. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in his political and philosophical views.

James Smith says

Reading as my first ever e-book!

Dawn Prickett says

While I agreed with much of what he said, and found parts of the book very inspiring, the COMPLETE lack of footnotes or citations was just terrible. How am I supposed to verify your statistics?!

Mark Armstrong says

I hate to say it because I love Rick Santorum, but this was a snoozer. But, I was glad to know exactly who the guy was that I was going to vote for. His views are awesome and I support them 100 percent. He's a good leader of our times. But his book stank.

Stacey R says

Started but didn't get to finish it yet. Looking forward to picking it up again later.

Kathy says

This book is full of common sense. If only the country would do something about the problems explained in it,
