

- My wife told me that I twist everything she says to my advantage. I take that as a compliment.

To wit, Thomas Sowell notes that life and politics is at best full of “trade offs.” The reality of trade-offs is based in the nature of man (the Fall) and his status before God and our fellow man. And that often there is no simple solution to things --- but that we must tolerate and make concessions/trade-offs with each other.

You, Dominic and Samantha, were born into dysfunctional families and will have children born into a dysfunctional family. This reality should drive you both to Calvary, which should be counted as a blessing. The Apostle James notes that we should,

- **“Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”** (James 1:2–4, HCSB)
- Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way (*The Message Bible*)

Marriage is God’s main vehicle to show us ourselves -- your wife Dominic is a mirror reflecting your image back at you. God says that He will refine us as silver is refined and test us as gold is tested (Job 23:10 | Zechariah 13:9 | 1 Peter 1:7 | James 1:12). Which causes us to call on His name in the fire of testing, and He will answer us (Zachariah 13 | Psalm 118:5 | Jonah 2:2)

Christians are Born again and are – in Christ’s work on the Cross -- lifted up from deterministic tendencies of our Old Man (Naturalism) and given a view of our total depravity that otherwise we would not know (the New Man founded in God’s work of redemption (<https://tinyurl.com/4j67jumc> | 1 Peter 1:3 | 2 Corinthians 5:17 | Titus 3:5 | John 3:3-7)

You are a Galatians chapter 3 child, being born into a family founded in the *Evangelical Truths* of the *Reformation* that closed the Medieval gap of the secular and the Holy in the *Priesthood of the believer*. (1 Timothy 2:5 | Hebrews 9:15 | John 14:6)

-- that we can petition God directly for our rebellious nature against Him and His Body. And you will need to petition God in marriage. **(Skip to after Grudem Quote)**

As well as Christianity’s impact on Western culture:

1. Augustine’s impact implicitly on George Washington, the “father” of our nation. (see: Michael Novak and Jana Novak, *Washington’s God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of Our Country* [New York: Basic Books, 2006], 202-203;
2. Luther’s theology on work ethic leading to the Protestant belief that the common man and woman could glorify God in their vocations, in their everyday calling, whether it be

baker, chimney sweep, blacksmith, or maid. (see: Paul Marshall, *God and the Constitution: Christianity and American Politics*;

3. The Reformation's impact on nationalism and economic freedom which found an economic home in people like Adam Smith, Frederick Bastiat, Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, Thomas Sowell, Walter Williams, Larry Elder, and others. (see: Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, 199-213 | Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* | and Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*.);
4. And Calvinism's influence on the Founders understanding of mankind's place in the universe (see: John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers*,17-26.)

Christianity and Christian influence on government was primarily responsible for outlawing infanticide, child abandonment, and abortion in the Roman Empire (in AD 374); outlawing the brutal battles-to-the-death in which thousands of gladiators had died (in 404); outlawing the cruel punishment of branding the faces of criminals (in 315); instituting prison reforms such as the segregating of male and female prisoners (by 361); stopping the practice of human sacrifice among the Irish, the Prussians, and the Lithuanians as well as among other nations; outlawing pedophilia; granting of property rights and other protections to women; banning polygamy (which is still practiced in some Muslim nations today); prohibiting the burning alive of widows in India (in 1829); outlawing the painful and crippling practice of binding young women's feet in China (in 1912); persuading government officials to begin a system of public schools in Germany (in the sixteenth century); and advancing the idea of compulsory education of all children in a number of European countries.

During the history of the church, Christians have had a decisive influence in opposing and often abolishing slavery in the Roman Empire, in Ireland, and in most of Europe (though Schmidt frankly notes that a minority of "erring" Christian teachers have supported slavery in various centuries). In England, William Wilberforce, a devout Christian, led the successful effort to abolish the slave trade and then slavery itself throughout the British Empire by 1840.

In the United States, though there were vocal defenders of slavery among Christians in the South, they were vastly outnumbered by the many Christians who were ardent abolitionists, speaking, writing, and agitating constantly for the abolition of slavery in the United States. Schmidt notes that two-thirds of the American abolitionists in the mid-1830s were Christian clergymen, and he gives numerous examples of the strong Christian commitment of several of the most influential of the antislavery crusaders, including Elijah Lovejoy (the first abolitionist martyr), Lyman Beecher, Edward Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), Charles Finney, Charles T. Torrey, Theodore Weld, William Lloyd

Garrison, "and others too numerous to mention." The American civil rights movement that resulted in the outlawing of racial segregation and discrimination was led by Martin Luther King Jr., a Christian pastor, and supported by many Christian churches and groups.

There was also strong influence from Christian ideas and influential Christians in the formulation of the Magna Carta in England (1215) and of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution (1787) in the United States. These are three of the most significant documents in the history of governments on the earth, and all three show the marks of significant Christian influence in the foundational ideas of how governments should function.

Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010], 49-50.

(Start back here) In fact, when Martin Luther first sought to explain his *Reformation* discovery in detail to the world, it was the story of a wedding that framed what he said. Drawing on the romance of *the lover and his beloved* in Song of Solomon (especially 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his"), he told the gospel as the story of the "rich and divine bridegroom Christ" who "marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness." At the wedding a wonderful exchange takes place whereby the king takes all the shame and debt of his bride, and the harlot receives all the wealth and royal status of her bridegroom.

This is what your marriage represents in an imperfect, finite way. The Bride of Christ metaphor illustrates the relationship between:

1. Jesus and His followers,
2. the Church, and Jesus' authority over the Church.
3. Jesus, who serves as the Church's bridegroom, loves His bride by offering Himself as a sacrifice for her (Ephesians 5:25–27).

In response,

- the Church submits to Jesus and remains faithful to Him as His bride (Ephesians 5:22–24, 31–32).

The New Testament teaching that the Church is the bride of Christ draws deeply from the Old Testament image of Israel as the bride of Yahweh. *Isaiah 62:5* declares, "**and as a groom rejoices[a] over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you.** (HCSB). Faithfulness and loyalty in the marriage relationship between God and His covenant people is a primary theme in the Old Testament. And this is what you two should always strive to achieve and understand. **(END)**

The ESV Study Bible says the following about this wonderful verse in Isaiah:

- Boldly drawing on a familiar human image of inexpressible joy and delight, God says his

delight in his people will be like that of a bridegroom's delight in his bride. Isaiah explains that in God's great plan of salvation, he not only forgives his people, protects them, heals them, provides for them, restores them to their home, reconciles them to each other, transforms them so they are righteous, honors them, exalts them above all nations, and makes them a blessing to all nations, as he called them to be—but more than all these things, he actually delights in his people.

For this reason young men should be on their guard when they read pagan books and hear the common complaints about marriage, lest they inhale poison. For the estate of marriage does not set well with the devil, because it is God's good will and work. This is why the devil has contrived to have so much shouted and written in the world against the institution of marriage, to frighten men away from this godly life and entangle them in a web of fornication and secret sins. Indeed, it seems to me that even Solomon, although he amply censures evil women, was speaking against just such blasphemers when he said in Proverbs 18 [:22], "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord." What is this good thing and this favour? Let us see.

The world says of marriage, "Brief is the joy, lasting the bitterness." Let them say what they please; what God wills and creates is bound to be a laughingstock to them. The kind of joy and pleasure they have outside of wedlock they will be most acutely aware of, I suspect, in their consciences. To recognise the estate of marriage is something quite different from merely being married. He who is married but does not recognise the estate of marriage cannot continue in wedlock without bitterness, drudgery, and anguish; he will inevitably complain and blaspheme like the pagans and blind, irrational men. But he who recognises the estate of marriage will find therein delight, love, and joy without end; as Solomon says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing,"

~ Martin Luther (PDF: <https://tinyurl.com/y6stjwkp>)

- "[The laws of any state rest on] the basis that the idea of the family, as consisting in and springing from the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony; the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization, the best guaranty of that reverent morality which is the source of all beneficent progress in social and political improvement." —(Murphy v. Ramsey [1885], Supreme Court)

(Last Quote)

The reformers' early preoccupation with marriage was driven, in part, by their jurisprudence. The starting assumption of the budding Lutheran theories of law, society, and politics was that the earthly kingdom was governed by the three natural estates of household, Church, and state. *Hausvater*, *Gottesvater*, and *Landesvater*; *paterfamilias*, *patertheologicus*, and *patapofiticus*— these were the three natural offices through which

God revealed Himself and reflected His authority in the world. These three offices and orders stood equal before God and before each other. Each was called to discharge essential tasks in the earthly kingdom without impediment or interference from the other. The reform of marriage, therefore, was as important as the reform of the Church and the state. Indeed, marital reform was even more urgent, for the marital household was, in the reformers' view, the "oldest," "most primal," and "most essential" of the three estates, yet the most deprecated and subordinated of the three. Marriage is the "mother of all earthly laws," Luther wrote, and the source from which the Church, the state, and other earthly institutions flowed. "God has most richly blessed this estate above all others, and in addition, has bestowed on it and wrapped up in it everything in the world, to the end that this estate might be well and richly provided for. Married life therefore is no jest or presumption; it is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness."

The reformers' early preoccupation with marriage was driven, in part, by their politics. A number of early leaders of the Reformation faced aggressive prosecution by the Catholic Church and its political allies for violation of the canon law of marriage and celibacy. Among the earliest Protestant leaders were ex-priests and ex-monastics who had forsaken their orders and vows, and often married shortly thereafter. Indeed, one of the acts of solidarity with the new Protestant cause was to marry or divorce in open violation of the canon law and in defiance of a bishop's instructions. This was not just an instance of crime and disobedience. It was an outright scandal, particularly when an ex-monk such as Brother Martin Luther married an ex-nun such as Sister Katherine von Bora — a *prima facie* case of spiritual incest. As Catholic Church courts began to prosecute these canon law offenses, Protestant theologians and jurists rose to the defense of their co-religionists, producing a welter of briefs, letters, sermons, and pamphlets that denounced traditional norms and pronounced a new theology of marriage.

Evangelical theologians treated marriage not as a sacramental institution of the heavenly kingdom, but as a social estate of the earthly kingdom. Marriage was a natural institution that served the goods and goals of mutual love and support of husband and wife, procreation and nurture of children, and mutual protection of spouses from sexual sin. All adults, preachers and others alike, should pursue the calling of marriage, for all were in need of the comforts of marital love and of protection from sexual sin. When properly structured and governed, the marital household served as a model of authority, charity, and pedagogy in the earthly kingdom and as a vital instrument for the reform of Church, state, and society. Parents served as "bishops" to their children. Siblings served as priests to each other. The household altogether — particularly the Christian household of the married minister — was a source of "evangelical impulses" in society.

Though divinely created and spiritually edifying, however, marriage and the family remained a social estate of the earthly kingdom. All parties could partake of this institution, regardless of their faith. Though subject to divine law and clerical counseling, marriage and

family life came within the jurisdiction of the magistrate, not the cleric; of the civil law, not the canon law. The magistrate, as God's vice-regent of the earthly kingdom, was to set the laws for marriage formation, maintenance, and dissolution; child custody, care, and control; family property, inheritance, and commerce.

Political leaders rapidly translated this new Protestant gospel into civil law. Just as the civil act of marriage often came to signal a person's conversion to Protestantism, so the Civil Marriage Act came to symbolize a political community's acceptance of the new Evangelical theology. Political leaders were quick to establish comprehensive new marriage laws for their polities, sometimes building on late medieval civil laws that had already controlled some aspects of this institution. The first reformation ordinances on marriage and family life were promulgated in 1522. More than sixty such laws were on the books by the time of Luther's death in 1546. The number of new marriage laws more than doubled again in the second half of the sixteenth century in Evangelical portions of Germany. Collectively, these new Evangelical marriage laws: **(1)** shifted primary marital jurisdiction from the Church to the state; **(2)** strongly encouraged the marriage of clergy; **(3)** denied that celibacy, virginity, and monasticism were superior callings to marriage; **(4)** denied the sacramentality of marriage and the religious tests and impediments traditionally imposed on its participants; **(5)** modified the doctrine of consent to betrothal and marriage, and required the participation of parents, peers, priests, and political officials in the process of marriage formation; **(6)** sharply curtailed the number of impediments to betrothal and putative marriages; and **(7)** introduced divorce, in the modern sense, on proof of adultery, malicious desertion, and other faults, with a subsequent right to remarriage at least for the innocent party. These changes eventually brought profound and permanent change to the life, lore, and law of marriage in Evangelical Germany.

John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 200-202.