



"Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive."

—C.S. Lewis

**25-Jun-04**

## **Do-Gooders in Charge**

As a child in the early 1970s, I remember sitting in the middle of the backseat of the family car, unbuckled and leaning forward over the front seat so I could see out the windshield. I never felt in any danger. Others have told me stories of traveling across country with their parents while lying across the backseat or sitting on the floor of the vehicle. Millions of kids across America did the same thing and—believe it or not—survived!

Yet, just this past week, the North Carolina legislature set the stage for the passage of a bill requiring parents to sit their children up to eight years old or eighty pounds in child safety seats or booster seats. This law increases the age by three years and the weight by thirty pounds over the law now on the books. Personally, this means that at least one of my children will be forced to sit in some sort of car seat for five more years!

But, advocates argue, child safety seats save lives! If you were in an accident, would you not want your child to survive it?

Of course! Though this argument is a red herring, it is one nearly everyone swallows to make themselves feel better. No one argues against making the

lives of children safer, which is why bills like the one in North Carolina pass just about every time—no legislator wants to appear callous about child safety. However, the argument should not be over whether parents want their children to be safe, but whether parents are ultimately responsible for their own children's safety. This is a matter of personal liberty, not safety.

Certainly, child safety seats save lives. They can reduce fatal injuries to infants by up to 70% and nearly 50% for children between one and four years of age. Such seats should be conveniently available for sale, and the industry should commit resources to improve them. Police departments or car dealerships should continue to offer free safety checks and installation advice to parents who want them. My wife and I have used them for all four of our children, and we will continue to use them to abide by state law. What sticks in my craw is that the state gives parents no choice in the matter, especially about when to discontinue their use.

Child-safety laws are just another expression of the do-gooder, nanny-state faction that has taken over the governments of this nation. Whether a politician or bureaucrat is a Democrat or Republican makes no difference: A vast majority of them want nothing more than to tell the rest of the citizens what to do in every area of life. In their elitist arrogance, they believe that they know better than the peasantry about everything. If the great unwashed would just bow to their sagacity, all would be well. Big Brother knows best.

Why has this happened across the land of the free? It has resulted from excessive growth in government along with a corresponding decline in Christian values. Over the history of the United States, government and its intrusion into the lives of its citizens has steadily increased, but its rate of growth during the latter half of the twentieth century is unprecedented. Government regulation of food, drugs, housing, education, land use, water, air, automobiles, business, manufacturing, insurance, financial transactions, etc., shows no signs of receding in the near future. In [this world](#), powerful government means fewer freedoms for citizens.

Over the same period, the culture has become far more secular, ditching biblical morality for humanistic relativism. Americans were once loosely united by common values, but this unity has been steadily eroded in favor of today's glorification of diversity and multiculturalism. Where once the Ten

Commandments and the Golden Rule were known as regulators of society, now thousands upon thousands of new laws attempt to cover every eventuality of human misbehavior. Societal standards are becoming relics of the past. Today, we have constraining rules and regulations formulated by eggheads in ivory towers and championed by vote-seeking mercenaries in Armani suits.

[Jesus](#) says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" ([John 8:32](#)), and His brother, James, calls God's law "the perfect law of liberty" ([James 1:25](#); see 2:8, 12). Living by God's instruction brings liberty because it sets up reasonable and well-defined standards that are a [joy](#) to live within. They free people to live their lives within boundaries that protect them and encourage growth and creativity. As David writes, "So shall I keep Your law continually, forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts" ([Psalm 119:44-45](#)).

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Self-Government and Responsibility \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

A major distinguishing characteristic of mankind is his free moral agency, presenting him with choices and the right to make decisions. We need free moral agency to be transformed into God's image. The volition to do right has to come from the core of our character or nature. Paradoxically, the way to maximum freedom is to yield to God's way of doing things. Unless one has the Spirit of God, he cannot exercise the necessary internal control to be subject to the government of God. Even though the church is not the government of God (John 18:36; I Corinthians 15:50), we need to respect the ministry as well as lay members, being subject to one another (I Corinthians 11:1). The operation of God's government absolutely depends upon each person governing himself, never going beyond the parameters of the authority God has given him.

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[It's All Relative](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

We frequently hear our culture labeled as postmodern. What is postmodernism? How is it related to relativism? Richard Ritenbaugh explains these terms and shows examples of them in politics, music and advertising — and gives God's opinion of it.

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