



"[Man's task] has to be the fulfillment of a permanent, earnest duty so that one's life journey may become above all an experience of moral growth: to leave life a better human being than one started it."

—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

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## *Natural Law*

Even before [Isaac](#) Newton wrote down his observations about gravity, people had a pretty good working knowledge of the principle. It was widely understood that when an apple fell from a tree, it would hit the earth. Children learned at an early age not to throw rocks straight up - what goes up, must come down. The average peasant did not need Newton's proofs to verify these things; he had enough experience on his own to vouch for this natural law. The effect was easily observable.

The law of gravity exists entirely apart from human legislation. Isaac Newton did not create it, but merely wrote it down. It is a fact of everyday life, and cannot simply be ignored. It is always in operation. A man may choose to pretend it does not exist, but he does so at tremendous risk to himself and others.

Gravity is but one of the many natural laws - those phenomena, not of human origin or governance, that have been proven to always occur whenever certain conditions exist. These cause-and-effect principles govern much of our lives. We may not be aware of the specifics - or willfully choose to ignore them - but, like gravity, they operate continuously. These are not laws we can vote on. We either comply, or we suffer the consequences.

The rest of God's laws are no different. They are not of human origin, and thus are

beyond human regulation. They are always in force. They were not created by [Moses](#) (or any other man), but were merely recorded by him. These laws have been in existence longer than mankind has. And, like gravity, a man may choose to pretend they do not exist, but he will still reap the consequences for transgressing them.

One of these very broad natural laws is stated as follows: "For the wages of [sin](#) is death, but the gift of [God](#) is eternal life [through] Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 6:23](#)). We normally consider "death" just to mean "the cessation of life," and while that is not entirely incorrect, that definition is too narrow for this verse. Death is contrasted with - the opposite of - eternal life. Eternal life is more than just life without end. An endless life would be torment without relief unless it also had with it the proper *quality*. Eternal life is living - conducting ourselves - the way God lives. It is knowing or experiencing God ([John 17:3](#)), which will always produce the best and the most. It is not necessarily synonymous with material success, but instead consists of things that money cannot buy: security of mind, [peace](#) among relationships, [joy](#) without regard to physical circumstance, etc.

Death, then, while it would include the cessation of life, also means not living the way God lives. It means having a quality of life that is not eternal, whether in duration or in excellence. We can see that sin produces death by three means: 1) Sin brings on the penalty of eternal death, which can only be atoned for by Christ's sacrifice; 2) sin will always diminish the excellence and quality of life, whether it is immediately recognized or not; and, 3) some sins hasten physical death.

A few examples demonstrate this powerfully:

- The article, "The Empty Cradle Will Rock: How abortion is costing the Democrats voters - literally" (*Wall Street Journal*), details the "Roe Effect." This postulates that since children tend to absorb the values, political views, and lifestyle of their parents, abortionists are actually damaging their cause through its very practice. They are destroying the individuals in the next generation who would be most likely to support abortion. Abortion not only results in the death of an innocent, but also in a greatly diminished quality of life as the mother copes with guilt, depression, and even an increased risk of breast cancer.
- As Pam Stenzel discusses in her sobering presentation "Sex Has a Price Tag," some of the most common sexually transmitted diseases may not be fatal, but instead render the recipient unable to have children. Incidentally, a large number of these STDs can be contracted even when so-called "safe sex" is practiced. In this example also, the individuals in one generation who practice a sinful lifestyle have a decreased chance of producing another generation. Yet even if neither pregnancy nor infection occurs, there is still an emotional price to pay. Sex outside of the bonds of marriage will *always* result in a

diminished quality of life.

- Likewise, the homosexual lifestyle is aptly named the "culture of death." It is more concerned with self-gratification than with having a stable, secure family life as God intends. Homosexuals tend to produce another generation through abuse and indoctrination rather than natural means. In addition, this lifestyle is essentially synonymous with AIDS and other debilitating diseases. From 1981 through 1999, there were 751,965 cumulative reported cases of AIDS in the U.S. At least 56 percent of the AIDS diagnoses occurred in homosexual or bisexual men. In other words, two percent of the population had at least 56 percent of those reported AIDS diagnoses (see "A Pharmacist's View on Gay Marriage"). As well, the average life expectancy for homosexuals is 20-30 years less than for heterosexuals, not only because of the high rate of disease, but also because of the extremely high rates of suicide, substance abuse, and "domestic violence."

Natural laws, whether they govern falling apples or human relationships, can be seen as harsh or restrictive, especially if one is on the wrong side of them ([Romans 8:7](#)). Or they can be seen as benevolent guides to help us live the way God Himself lives - both with excellence and longevity. The apostle Paul considered God's laws to be holy, just, and good ([Romans 7:12](#)) because they instruct us in the best way to live - the way that will not just produce length of days, but also true fulfillment. We can either take God's Word for it, or we can observe the consequences of the choices of others. Or we can do what is natural for mankind, and personally reprove each of these laws the hard way.

[Jesus Christ](#) was once asked what should be done in order to have eternal life. His answer? "If you want to enter into life [eternal life - Godly life], keep the commandments" ([Matthew 19:16-17](#)).

- David C. Grabbe

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Self-Government and Responsibility \(Part 1\)](#)

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.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### **Whose Family Values?**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Family values has become an important topic in America today. Whose family values should we hold and follow? Is there any indication that we will return to good and right values?

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