

## Restoring Sanity

By Major Anne Pickup –

Over and over again John says in his first epistle that the sign of truly loving God is loving others. In chapter five he tags on another signal, one that builds off the other: obeying God's commands.

*“This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.”* 1 John 5:2

The marks of Christianity are loving God and loving people, carried out in the arena of the Ten Commandments. This reference to Old Testament Law should not surprise us because the first four commandments (Exodus 20) are about loving God and the final six are about healthy, loving relationships between people.

### **LOVING GOD** (Commands 1-4)

God established Himself as the great “I AM” to the children of Israel by their miraculous deliverance and escape from Egypt, a land of many gods. The Israelites were not only brought out of one country and into another, they were brought out of polytheism into monotheism.

Then, as well as now, God wants to be acknowledged as Almighty God. He is a jealous God and can't tolerate our seeing Him as one of many deities. We are to believe in Him only, hold His name in highest reverence and take time to worship Him. Our vertical relationship should then affect our horizontal relationships. Our love of God influences our daily relationships because what we believe should affect our behavior.

### **LOVING HUMANKIND** (Commands 5-10)

Commandments five through ten are about relationships characterized by a lack of jealousy, selfishness and greed. They are about relationships built on love, honor and respect for persons and property.



We can only feel loving and honorable toward people if we acknowledge God as Creator. It is God who made all people, and as Creator He values each person for who they are—His unique gift to the world, placed here at His will, for His purpose. As we believe this about ourselves, we will believe it about others and respond with love and honor.

We can only feel respectful toward property if we acknowledge God as the Provider. As Christians we live under the care and provision of the great “I AM.” He promised He would always take care of His children and their needs would be met. When we grab others’ belongings, their property, spouse, reputation, life—we are showing we don’t trust God to take care of and provide for us.

The Apostle John says, “*His commands are not burdensome.*” (vs. 3) In our world, where virtue is desperately lacking and society is crumbling at the hands of our own behavior, the Ten Commandments, which are often ridiculed as outdated and irrelevant, speak in clear tones. First, acknowledge and love God; this will then produce a society of healthy, respectable people. Following God’s commandments won’t be burdensome; it will restore sanity!