

will be in reckless and risky nature of just loving God.

*“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” 1 John 4:18*

We need a perfected love or a love that is being perfected. We have to develop a softer heart. We already have a hard heart and it shows itself to us and the world. The world needs to see a heart that loves God, it needs to encounter a mind that loves God, and it needs to experience a soul that loves God.

### Notes

## AGAPE: LEARNING TO LOVE GOD

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Matthew 22:34-40

*“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’*

One of the prominent words for love in the Greek language is “agape”. The Bible is clear that we are to love one another, that we are to love Jesus, and that God is love. But what does all that mean how are we to understand this word “love”?

Loving God sounds simple, but it is not.

### **The Questioning Love (34-36)**

A lawyer tries another attempt to “test” Jesus. The word for test here is to prove something or test it’s worth or value.

Do you only love those things or people who pass your test?

Do you only love God if He passes your test?  
The lawyer’s strength was the details of the law. The Rabbis debated about OT law till they had created 248 positive commands (shall do) and 365 negative

commands (shall not do). With 615 different commands being debated, it would be easy to get caught in the minutia.

Do you excel at the minutia and use it to justify loving God the way you want to?

Do you ignore the minutia and use it an excuse to defend not loving God?

*“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.  
Luke 6:32*

### **The Answering Love (37-40)**

Jesus does not answer from Rabbinic writings or the lawyers perspective, rather He quotes the Old Testament.

*“Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”  
Deuteronomy 6:4-5*

*“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him to serve the You’re your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”  
Deuteronomy 10:12*

*“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” Deuteronomy 30:6*

Jesus talks of love unifying us and not creating division. Questioning love divides. I love you only if you pass my test. Unconditional love just loves, even

when it does not make sense.

While Jesus gives a positive command to love, His answer exposes our negative actions. Who has loved God with all of their being except Jesus?

We are divided and not unified in loving God with our total being. We have not loved our neighbor like ourselves.

Jesus adds a second command to the first and love covers both commands.

### **The Risking Love**

The Pharisees argued that their love for God was demonstrated by their commitment to the minutia. Jesus is arguing that love is demonstrated by the actions of the heart, soul, and mind and how they treat their neighbor.

Vertical love defines your relationship with God. Horizontal love defines your relationship with others.

*“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD  
Leviticus 19:18*

We are scared to love because it makes us vulnerable. The world exploits our weaknesses so we guard them.

You can love God completely, with all that you have. You can learn what love is and learn to love others like He loves you.

You learn to love God by taking a leap of faith and choosing to love Him. It will not be in the minutia, it