Coastal has defined the Core Value of Love in this way:

“Doing the most loving thing because people matter to God, because God is love.”

1. Describe a loving thing that someone has done for you. What made the action loving?

Read 1 John 4:7-8

2. What is the origin of love? How does this impact your idea of what love is and how it’s applied?

God is love (v8). Love is from God (v7). Love is an attribute of God. It is a part of who he is, his character. Love is not a subjective description of a human feeling or emotional sentiment. It is not subjective, personal, or open to interpretation by culture or media. Love is an eternal attribute of God, authored by our creator and bestowed on His creation. (John reinforces this in v19, “We love because he first loved us.”)

If love is not created or determined by man, then we are not free to determine its definition, application or purpose.

3. According to this passage, what are the implications of being unloving?

Plainly, this answer is found in 1Jn 4:8 “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” John restates this point in verse 20, “whoever loves God must also love his brother”. If we do not love our brothers, we are not able to love God. While we might feel comfortable compartmentalizing love for God and others, the reality is that they are inseparable. An authentic Christian has a tender consideration and
concern for others.

4. Read Romans 8:31-38. What portions of this passage are most impactful to you? How does God’s love enable us to love others?

We are empowered to love others. We can have confidence in God’s love because he did not spare his own Son. In his book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer defines God’s love this way: “God’s love is an exercise of his goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified himself with their welfare, he has given his Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy him in a covenant relationship.” “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (v37)” He is gracious so we can be gracious; He is giving so we can be giving; He intercedes for us so we can intercede for others; we can love because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ; we are sustained by his love so we can endure to love others.

5. Read Matthew 22:37-40. How do cultural ideas about love influence the way you love others and your expectations regarding love from others?

We’re bombarded with incomplete and self-centered ideas of love in media. Love is often portrayed as passion, emotional connection, mutual benefit, attachment, comfort, long-term commitment, desirability, positive feelings, reliability, and so on. Often, it’s the expectation of reciprocation that drives us to love or tell us that we’re experiencing love. However, in the verse above, Jesus reminds us that love, when God-centered, is complete. He commands us to love God with all our heart, soul and our mind, and in addition, love our neighbor as ourselves. Amazingly, it is God who initiated the love relationship and gives us the ability to love others. As Christians, it should not be the reciprocation of love from others that drives our motives, but the reflection of love to God, the author of the love relationship, that drives us to love Him as well as to love others.
6. What are some practical ways that you and your Small Group can love God and others?

First, a focused determination to keep God’s commandments. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” John 14:15 (also v23-14). In John 21:15-17 Jesus famously asks Peter, “Do you love me?” three times in response to Peter’s denial of Christ. In addition to restoring Peter, Jesus outlines a proper response to a love for him, the nurture and concern for others, “Feed my sheep.”

Pastor Shaun mentioned that 1 Corinthians 13 is the “love chapter” and that the context for this chapter is community life in the church, the body of Christ. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and pray that your small group will faithfully show the love of Christ to one another in these ways. Pray for harmony in the body of Christ. Finally, pray that our church would love God above all and show genuine love to others.

Take some time as a group to discuss the needs that you are aware of at Coastal and how you can meet those needs as a small group. (ESOL, Food ministry, Parking team, etc.)