Start by Reviewing the Relational Guidelines for Life Groups:

Confidentiality: What’s said in the group stays in the group.

Listen: Let’s value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond or what you are going to say next.

Pause: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to give the person sharing a chance to finish and give the group an opportunity to consider what was shared before responding.

Silence: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

No Cross Talk: Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

No Fixing: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that. Give encouragement, speak truth, and point to Jesus. Don’t try to fix each other.

No Rescuing: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

Sharing: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

Use “I” statements: It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use “I” statements rather than “they,” “the church,” “us,” “we,” etc.

Household Rules: We appreciate those who open their home up to Life Groups and out of respect for them, we need to…(take shoes off, clean up, replace furniture, leave by 8 pm, etc – personalize these for your group).

Then Remind Everyone of the Purpose of your Life Group:

The purpose of our group is:
1) To DO LIFE TOGETHER; to commit to be together in the joyful and difficult moments of life
2) For each of us TO MATURE in our relationship with God
3) TO GATHER with others who will disciple us, encourage us and help us to mature in Christ
4) to be here FOR OTHERS; to encourage them, to help disciple them
5) to INVITE OTHERS to share in our community, which means our group will branch at some point. When that time comes, if you would like to lead or host a group, let the leader know.
Warm-Up
Was your dad the type of father who told you verbally that he loved you?

Have someone tell the story in their own words first and then/or simply Read Luke 15:11-24

Head (Knowledge)

What stands out to you in the passage? Why?

How do you think the Father felt with His son’s request for his inheritance? What does it say about the Father that He gave it to him?

What made the son come to his senses?

Describe what you see in the passage that displays the Father’s love.

When did the Father forgive his son? [Leaders: it was long before He came home. See Rom 5:10. If you have time or disagreement, you may want to read this passage.] Why is this important? How does our understanding of the Father change if He only forgave His son once/because he came home? (Or in our case today, if we pray a prayer or only if we repent).

Heart (Transformation)

How does our understanding of the Father’s love impact the way we love?

Cary Matsuoka offered us a quiz in his message. If God the Father were to enter the coffee shop while you were sitting there would you, a) run to meet him, b) stay where you are to see if He’d actually come to you or c) run away. Have each group member answer and explain why they’d react that way.

Do you have difficulty picturing God the Father running to you, throwing his arms around you, and kissing you? Why?

If you are a parent, do you ever struggle to tell your kids you love them? Why?

Hands (Mission)

How can we help others to know the extravagant love of the Father?

How might we help our kids/grand kids/nieces/nephews know this love of the Father?

Do you have any thoughts about how we might we be able to help other kids in our community to know the Father’s love?