

Discussion Guide for *Small Business, Big Heart*

5 sessions

Session 1
chapters 1-3

What does it mean to be given a second chance? Have you been given a second chance? What should someone do with a second chance?

Melinda said Sal and Cindy “looked at what you could be?” What did she mean by that? What are some ways we can judge people by their potential rather than their problems? Can that make a difference in someone’s life?

Describe Cindy’s life as a girl. How does it compare to Sal’s life as a teen?

When Sal and Cindy were growing up they had different experiences around the dinner table, but in both cases they were remembered as important family time. What is your family dinner experience? What is your most important family experience? What about your family influenced you the most?

Session 2 chapters 4-7

Did Sal do the right thing in walking away from Rubino's restaurant? Why?

What aspects of the restaurant industry can be conducive to self-destructive behaviors? Why do you think Cindy and Sal fell prey to them?

There is a point at which Sal asks Cindy for a divorce. What did you think of her reaction and response to his request? And what do you think motivated Sal to do this?

Have you ever felt rejected in a relationship? If so, how did it make you feel? How would you have responded to Sal's request?

Their church gives Cindy and Sal a sense of community. What provides your sense of community, and what is the value of community?

In the "Revelations" chapter Cindy quotes her father as reciting a verse from The Bible, "seek the truth and you shall be set free." The actual passage from John 8:31-32 reads, "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'" Did the way George used that passage change its meaning? If so, did the way he changed it change how useful it was to Cindy? Is there a passage from The Bible or a quote or philosophy that you apply to your daily life? What is it, and in what ways does it impact you?

Session 3 chapters 8-11

Sal and Cindy spend years on the brink of failure or success. How does this strain impact their relationship? What strains in your life have impacted your relationships – with family, friends, a spouse, your children, a significant other, or even co-workers?

Cindy went to her church Emmaus group for help with a business decision. What has been your experience asking others for help with major life decisions?

What is the turning point for this couple? What wakes them up?

Sal and Cindy had education. They had families with successful businesses. Why do you think their road to success was a long one?

Several people advised Sal against buying the new building for a restaurant, but in the end it turned out well. How do you know when to take a chance on something?

Sal and Cindy regularly went beyond the normal employer-employee relationship to help workers in their personal lives. That can be exhausting as well as rewarding. What are the pluses and minuses of helping people in their personal lives. How far is going too far?

Session 4 chapters 12-14

Jeff had several relapses. How many second chances should The Café have given him?

In what ways can our jobs compromise us? Have you ever had a job that in any way compromised you or your values? In what ways? What does the phrase, “It’s not personal, it’s just business,” mean to you?

What is the role of faith in Sal and Cindy’s lives? What, if any, is its role in your life?

Religion can be a polarizing term. How did Sal and Cindy live out their faith in a business that required everyone getting along?

Sal and Cindy employ people who need a chance. How does this play into their success?

Many of us have preconceived ideas of some of the kinds of people written about in this book: addicts, refugees, Christians, people with tattoos and piercings. Are these unfair? Are there other common preconceptions we have about people?

Have you ever been surprised by someone about who you had a preconceived notion? How?

Session 5 chapters 15-16

What in Cindy's background do you feel led to her becoming the woman she became? What in Sal's background do you believe most influenced him?

What is Sal's most valuable strength? What is his most pronounced weakness?

What are Cindy's most valuable strengths and most pronounced weaknesses?

How do the strengths and weaknesses of Sal and Cindy play off each other? How do they impact their relationship and their lives?

With The Café, Sal and Cindy changed their business model. Which changes did you think were most important to them on a personal and professional level, and why were they important?

How would you describe Sal and Cindy's business? How would you describe their business acumen?

As a couple, Sal and Cindy persevered and triumphed. What would you say is their biggest win? What is Sal and Cindy's most notable accomplishment? Why?