

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR AFTER THE FIRE

- Father John is able to exert control over the members of The Lord's Legion through both psychological and physical methods. Pick out some of the methods he uses and discuss why or how you think they were effective.
- The novel jumps between Before and After the fire. How did this non-chronological narrative affect your reading? Do you think the story could have been told chronologically, or in a different way? Why do you think the author decided to do this?
- Is it possible to feel empathy towards Luke, or understand his actions? Why, or why not?
- Consider the portrayals of Doctor Hernandez and Agent Carlyle. Through Moonbeam's eyes, we meet them in their professional roles, though over the course of the story, elements of their outside lives seem to drip into the sessions. What did you think of both men? Discuss the differences and similarities in their approaches to Moonbeam.

- As Will states in his author note, this novel is not meant as an attack on Christianity, but instead an exploration of power, and how power can corrupt. Would you consider the doctrine that Father John uses as a type of “religion”? Do you think Father John ever believes his own creed?
- Discuss your thoughts on Moonbeam’s mom; can you understand why she left her daughter? Did she have any other options? What did you think of her decision to support Father John’s choice of Moonbeam as a future wife?
- Moonbeam’s life has been spent inside the Base, “protected” by the Fence. But when she’s taken to the George W. Bush Memorial Center, the nurses lock her in her room except for when she attends her sessions. Consider the idea of “imprisonment”. Is Moonbeam a prisoner at the centre? Was she a prisoner at the Base? Is there a difference?
- Did you know anything about the Waco siege before you read the book? What do you think of novels which take a real-life event as their starting point? Do you believe that fiction can be a helpful tool in addressing or redressing horrific real-life events such as the Waco siege?
- The idea of cults seems to hold an allure for readers and writers alike; what do you think it is about the mentality of a cult – both looking at the leaders and the followers – that is so fascinating to us? Are there any other books you’ve read which address similar issues? How did they do this?

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