

***Firetender* Book Club Discussion Questions**

Part Two

NOTE: May contain spoilers! Do not look through the following questions until reading the first half of the book.

Questions for the second half: *End* through *Release*

1. Was the chapter *End* a surprise or not? Discuss how you felt about what happened. What was your opinion of Dallas immediately after you read this chapter?
2. Do you think the charges brought against Dallas were just? Why or why not?
3. Discuss Dallas's early reactions in the first few chapters of this half to his abrupt change in circumstances. How does his personality change, and how does it stay the same? Think again of the words from the question in the first half: responsibility, loyalty, power/control, acceptance/contentment, searching/longing, etc.
4. What was your reaction to Dallas's suicide attempt, his response to John, and how the event reset his thinking?
5. Dallas sees the recovery of Channing's prayer card as a miracle. What do you think? What did this event do for Dallas?
6. Discuss antagonist Bruce Hudson. Does Dallas deserve what he gets from Hudson? Why or why not?
7. Discuss Dallas's impulsivity and fierce defensiveness of Channing's prayer card. What does this show you about Dallas? What is his growth like as a character at this point in the book?
8. Can you relate to Dallas's self-loathing? Do you think it is justified?
9. Dallas's opinion of himself is largely tied up in his own abilities: physical strength, self-reliance, independence, toughness. What is the result of his reliance on these things and how does he change by the end of the book?
10. How do you see Dallas beginning to respond to how God is working in his heart? What is the process of change like for him?
11. Discuss Dallas's challenges with forgiveness of both himself and others.
12. Discuss the viewpoints brought up in the book regarding the morality of the death penalty as it relates to God-given human dignity.

13. We knew what Dallas would reveal to Father Benedict, but what were your thoughts on what Father Benedict revealed to Dallas about Channing?
14. Discuss Father Benedict's role as mentor and your opinion of him.
15. In the chapter *Down in a Hole*, why do you think Dallas slides back into despair? Was it unexpected or realistic? What does this say about his journey?
16. In the chapter *Down in a Hole*, describe how you reacted to the way Dallas blew up at Father Benedict. Why did he do it, was he justified, and how do you think the priest handled it? What did you think of Dallas's thought (*Like a father, a real father, looking at his screwed-up failure of a son*) as their visitation session ends?
17. What was your initial impression of Dallas's priest dream? How did you react to his eventual discovery about the identity of the priest in the dream? Why doesn't he want to tell Father B about it at first? What are your predictions after they discuss it?
18. What do you think about Father Benedict's advice of apologizing even when you don't feel sorry?
19. What can you tell so far about Dallas's feelings about his father, a man he's never met?
20. Discuss your opinion on the bullying inmates in the book: Smith, Pulaski, Maddox, Miller. Discuss how Dallas responds to them early in his sentence and after he meets Father B and what results he gets.
21. Why is Dallas upset when he finds out he cannot receive the sacrament of reconciliation until sins committed after his baptism?
22. Explain what Father Benedict means when he says, "Love and faith are choices, not feelings" and that choices matter above feelings. Do you agree, and can you see examples of this in real life?
23. Compare and contrast Pedro and Smith. Why do you think they have become friends with Dallas?
24. What do you think of the hierarchy of the inmates, the corruption within some of the prison staff, and self-centered attitudes and abusive relationships found inside the prison? Had you ever thought much about this environment before?
25. Discuss Dallas's process of learning about physical strength versus inner strength and how he accepts that surrendering doesn't have to be a weakness. How did he

- learn this from both his conversations with Father B and his encounters with Hudson?
26. Compare and contrast Maddox and Hudson. Both have it out for Dallas but in slightly different ways. What do you think about the depravity of both characters?
 27. Compare and contrast the ways Hudson and Murphy do their jobs. Are both effective? Is one more so than the other?
 28. By the end of the book, how has Dallas's attitude changed towards Smith? Miller? Even Hudson?
 29. What was your initial reaction to Channing's death, and how do you feel about it by the end of the book? What did Channing's death do to and for Dallas?
 30. Do you think Dallas has fully forgiven himself and others by the end? What room for growth do you still anticipate in the next book in the series?
 31. How do you anticipate Dallas's time in prison, Hudson's abuse of him, and his newfound faith will impact him as he begins his life outside prison in the second book? What challenges do you predict he will encounter because of his past?
 32. Dallas goes into prison resigned to the belief that he is friendless, alone. How has that changed by the end of the book?
 33. The book was set in the 1990s, ending in the year 2000. Describe your thoughts on this choice for the setting. What might have been different had the story occurred today instead of over 20 years in the past?
 34. Now that you've finished the book, what do you think *Firetender* means as a title?