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FROM FIRE TO FREEDOM

A Book Club Discussion Guide

DR. BERTINA HOOKS, MD

“The fire that once broke me, became the wings that set me free.”

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you for reading From Fire to Freedom — and for being willing to sit with it a little longer through conversation. This book was born from the hardest season of my life, and writing it required me to look honestly at identity, loss, resilience, and what it means to rebuild.

This guide is meant to open conversation, not close it. Some questions are personal. Some may be uncomfortable. Take what serves you and your group, and leave the rest. Whether you are reading as a physician, a caregiver, a survivor, or simply someone who has had to rebuild — I hope this book, and these questions, meet you where you are.

With gratitude,

Dr. Bertina Hooks

SECTION 1

IDENTITY & LOSS

The book opens with everything Dr. Hooks built her identity around suddenly in question. This section explores what happens when the roles that define us are challenged or taken away.

1. The book opens with a moment when everything Dr. Hooks thought defined her was suddenly gone. What did this reveal to you about how identity is built — and how fragile it can be?

2. What do you envision happening if your identity in a particular role — parent, provider, partner, professional — were diminished or changed? How would that impact your life, and how would it influence how you think about yourself?

SECTION 2

DISABILITY, MEDICINE & MARGINALIZATION

Dr. Hooks writes as both physician and patient, both healer and disabled woman. This section asks readers to sit with the tension of that dual identity.

1. Do you think physicians — or people in general — who become disabled are marginalized within medicine and society? Why or why not?

2. What can we do, individually and systemically, to be more inclusive of people with different types of disabilities, especially within healthcare spaces?

SECTION 3

THE WEIGHT OF BURNOUT

Burnout is one of the book's central themes — not as a personal failing, but as a symptom of something larger.

1. How did this book reshape how you think about burnout — as an individual struggle, a systemic failure, or both?

2. Dr. Hooks writes about burnout as an identity crisis, not just exhaustion. Has there been a time in your life when exhaustion became something deeper — a questioning of who you are?

SECTION 4

TRAUMA & THE BODY

Necrotizing fasciitis, sepsis, amputation — the book does not look away from the physical reality of survival.

1. How did reading about Dr. Hooks' physical trauma change the way you think about the relationship between the body and identity?

2. What does it mean to keep living in, and with, a body that has been permanently changed by crisis?

SECTION 5

MOTHERHOOD AMID CRISIS

Dr. Hooks was building her career and rebuilding her body while also raising a child through psychiatric crisis.

1. How did the parallel stories of Dr. Hooks' recovery and her daughter's crisis speak to each other for you?

2. What did the book teach you about holding multiple roles — caretaker and person-in-crisis — at the same time?

SECTION 6

RESILIENCE & TRANSFORMATION

The book's title promises freedom on the other side of fire. This section asks what resilience actually requires.

1. How do you personally define resilience and transformation? Has this book changed or sharpened that definition?

2. What are some concrete steps you can take to transform your own life so it aligns more closely with your goals and values — and what steps help you become more resilient when facing life's stressors?

SECTION 7

LOVE, SELF-LOVE & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Rebuilding identity also means re-examining how we love — ourselves and others.

1. What does self-love mean to you, and how did the book challenge or affirm your own relationship with yourself?

2. What do you consider a healthy relationship — with yourself and with others — and did anything in this book shift how you think about that?

SECTION 8

THE SYMBOLISM OF FIRE

Fire runs through the book — as destruction, and as the source of the wings that carry Dr. Hooks toward freedom.

1. What do you think the imagery of fire represents throughout the book, and how does it pertain to Dr. Hooks' journey?

2. Is there a 'fire' in your own life right now — something painful you are being asked to walk through? What might be waiting for you on the other side of it?

A SPACE FOR YOUR OWN REFLECTION

Before you close this guide, take a moment for yourself. What is one 'fire' you are walking through right now? What might be waiting for you on the other side of it?

THANK YOU

Thank you for reading From Fire to Freedom, and for bringing it into conversation with your book club, your colleagues, or your own quiet reflection. Stories like this one are only as powerful as the conversations they spark.

Connect with Dr. Bertina Hooks

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