



Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: Virion

Author: MJ Groves

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Author Website: <http://drmjisin.com/?cat=6>

Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. This book focused on an infectious disease, bird flu. What did this book teach you about viral infections? What questions does it raise? Read the quote below as you discuss these issues.
3. A romance wove itself through the story. How did you find the relationship between Lou and Connor? What did you enjoy about their relationship? How would you have written this part if you were writing it?
4. MJ Groves wrote a story connected to her work as a physician. Could you tell this book was written from a doctor's point of view? Why or why not? If you wrote a novel related to your work, what would you write?
5. Which characters did you most like or identify with in this novel? Are there some you didn't like? Explain.
6. What happens to the scientist, Ken, in this book? What message does his life and his ultimate decision make in the context of the issues of viral infections?
7. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
8. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

"7 million birds dead or killed in the United States since March 2015 due to bird flu. That's fact, not fiction.

More facts: before Ebola there was bird flu. After Ebola there will be bird flu. The question is not whether, but when.

If you think a deadly disease passed by body fluids is scary, wait until you encounter one that infects by the simple and necessary act of breathing. The last time avian flu unleashed a plague on humankind, it killed over 50 million people. It did not then, and will not now, spare America. The hurdles we face in protecting ourselves, as our recent glimpse of Ebola tells us, will be enormous." — MJ Grove o



NANCY: A well-written novel, telling the story of a plausible future with an epidemic caused by a viral infection. The author kept my attention, as she wove her tale, in California, Oregon, Vietnam, China, Washington, DC, and beyond with romance wrapped around the story, keeping some fun in the midst of the dangers. I especially appreciated the reflections of government worker Farrington as he struggles with the limits of our science (66-67). *Will our science save us? Are we at the mercy of God? Becoming more contemplative would be good.* I answer, "Perhaps, Yes, Yes." I find myself with similar reflections on climate change. Kudos to MJ Groves for tackling an ethical dilemma of our time, creatively and in a good read.



SALLIE: She's killing me with the stories of the children in this book who become the innocent and tragic victims. At first, I thought Moira was changing Ken's life for the better, but then in the end? And the other children in the book. The boys playing with a dead duck? Boys being boys, becomes another tragedy. I guess that is the horror of plagues like this. Painful to read, though.



ABIGAIL: Well, I thought it was so true how she talked about how we now have the science to solve these problems, but that doesn't mean the political system will appropriate the funds needed. It is definitely our modern dilemma. Before, people just died. Like when it comes to climate change, we are smart enough to figure out the problem, but can we generate the political will to address the problem? The jury is still out on this. This is why I'm involved in Citizens' Climate Lobby.



MOLLY: Well, This book underscores once again how the rich don't really care about the poor. Really? Solve the world population problem by letting the poor countries die off? And there are hard decisions to make and sometimes people just take the easy way out. They fight wars about decisions like these and allocations of resources. No easy answers, either.



PRISCILLA: Where does God come into this book? Where is God when there is disease? I wish it would have at least mentioned prayer. I think Ken would have made better choices if he was praying. Certainly Farrington is right, we are at the mercy of God. I just wake up every day and pray and pray and pray some more.



KATHARINE: With my academic background, I found myself most impressed with the research base of the book and the author's substantial knowledge on the subject. I imagine because she's a doctor, she has some of this background, but she also had to do some serious research. It also made me wonder how close we could be to this sort of disaster. Should we be doing more to be prepared?



JANE: Loved the romance! That kept me reading. Back to our origins, right MAMs? Loved the way Connor got on a plane and flew to be near Lou as soon as she gave him some positive feedback. Still smiling over their relationship! Reminds me a little of myself in Nancy's first novel! Maybe I shouldn't have let him get away.