

## Reading Group Guide

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT *The End of Healing* GO TO [ENDOFHEALING.COM](http://ENDOFHEALING.COM)

READING GROUPS USING this guide should assign one or two leaders to begin each discussion with an opening question. The most successful discussions occur when participants listen carefully and respectfully to one another and each person has an opportunity to share his or her perspectives, thoughts, and questions. If the discussion goes too far astray, the leader may gently refocus the group's attention on the opening question. Finally, all should take note of Dr. Sampson's sage advice to his students at the beginning of his class: "Read the assigned readings carefully before each seminar; they will guide us on our journey."

### SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

#### Chapter 1. *The Dark Ward*

At what point does Dr. Don Newman realize he is in a dark place where the straight way is lost?

#### Chapter 2. *The Choice*

What compels Don to choose to "go down the rabbit hole?" Is his choice wise or foolish?

#### Chapter 3. *The Gates of Hell*

Why does Don dream of the gates of hell at this point in his life? What meaning do these gates have for him? Why do many of our greatest heroes—including Jesus of the Bible, Theseus and Orpheus of Greek myth, and Odysseus, Aeneas, and Dante of classical literature—journey into the depths of hell?

#### Chapter 4. *Great Scientists Who Couldn't Cure*

Why do the greatest medical scientists of the past 2000 years have so little hope of curing?

### Chapter 5. *The Beauty Industry*

Who, if anyone, should bear the most blame for Susie's death? What is Frances Hunt's greatest need for healing? Do you think Frances has been lured into the pursuit of false beauty?

### Chapter 6. *Institutionalized Gluttony*

How do our communities "institutionalize" gluttony and overindulgence? What can communities do to deinstitutionalize gluttony and foster health?

### Chapter 7. *The Waste Land*

What is our responsibility for good stewardship of our healthcare resources? Is Dr. Sampson wise to suggest that his students "follow the money" to discover the true purposes of the healthcare industry?

### Chapter 8. *The Arrogant Physician*

At what point does Don realize he has become the kind of physician he despises? Why do arrogant physicians make poor healers? How does arrogance prevent one from finding the work one is called to do?

### Chapter 9. *The Marble Hospital*

Why does Don's nightmare involve a hospital? How does Don's mother's death injure him? What is Don's greatest need for healing? Is his mother correct that he must forgive himself in order to be able to help others?

### Chapter 10. *False Teachers*

What false teachers work to draw Don away from the true path of healing? How do false teachers work to draw their pupils astray?

### Chapter 11. *The Plan of Healthcare Hell*

Do you agree that Dr. Sampson's students will need to work like secret agents on the dark side of medicine in order to improve it? When dealing with evil, is it necessary to work on the dark side to do good?

### Chapter 12. *Medical Violence*

Who was most at fault in Jessica Santillan's death? Are deadly medical errors a necessary and inescapable byproduct of good healthcare or can they be avoided? How well do you think checklists, such as the ones used in the airline industry, would work in the hospital setting?

Chapter 13. *High-Tech Suicide*

Does Mrs. Pinckney commit medical suicide? If she could live her life over, what sort of end do you think she would choose? Do any of the providers in the story act in an unethical manner towards Mrs. Pinckney?

Chapter 14. *Health Care Assassins*

Was founding father-physician Benjamin Rush correct when he said, "To restrict the practice of medicine to only one class of men would constitute the Bastille of medicine?" Have American physicians created the very "Bastille of medicine" Dr. Rush feared? What would be the potential benefits and harms of removing monopolies created by restrictive licensing laws in the United States?"

Chapter 15. *The Ambulance Chasers*

Do you think Dr. Jim Kerner committed malpractice? Should he be punished for the adverse outcome the Mertens' child experiences? How should families be protected against long-term costs of care for serious injury or illness? Why do you think juries punish healers who care for babies in cases where adverse outcomes were beyond their control?

Chapter 16. *Unnatural Law Makers*

Consider the case of Solomon Salameh. How much freedom of choice should people have in choosing a care facility? At what point does the regulation of nursing homes become too intrusive? When establishing regulations for consumer protection, whose interests should healthcare corporations and government regulators put first?

Chapter 17. *Insurance Salesmen*

Why does this chapter begin with Dante Alighieri's description of the mythical Geryon, a chimeric creature with the "face of a just man...and all the rest a serpent's trunk?" What in Dr. Don Newman's experience makes him feel like this hideous creature? Do you think insurance salesmen ever have doubts about the true worth of their work? Can modern health insurance achieve anything akin to what early Christian communities achieved by sharing their resources with others in times of difficulty?

Chapter 18. *The Drug Pushers*

How are doctors and patients seduced into thinking that pills provide the best hope for healing? Are television commercials an effective way to educate the public about the benefits and harms of pharmaceuticals?

### Chapter 19. *Procedures for Profit*

Why did Dr. Walter Freeman continue to perform lobotomies on people after better treatments became available? What happens to healers when they start doing procedures for reasons other than health? How can we discern whether a recommended procedure like a test, X-ray, or surgery is likely to provide true benefit? How can we tell when proceduralists truly have our best interest at heart?

### Chapter 20. *Snake Oil Salesmen*

Why are people so desirous of healing through pills and surgeries? Considering all the ways people seek healing, such as alternative therapies, special diets, exercise, placebos, acupuncture, massage, chiropractic, and faith healing, how does one discern between beneficial treatments and snake oil?

### Chapter 21. *Swindler Bureaucrats*

Is the bureaucrat Fred Yeoman a good steward of America's resources? How does one tell if a person is a good public or corporate administrator or not? What goals do the best administrators serve?

### Chapter 22. *National Institutes of Sickness*

What should be the top priority for the National Institutes of Health—health research focused on prevention and healthcare quality, or sickness research focused on high-tech biomedical cures? Is the search for high-tech biomedical cures most likely to help our families, friends, and neighbors find true healing? Or are they more likely to find true healing when they participate in the cure and make real effort? What would a truly patient-centered and health-focused research agenda for America look like?

### Chapter 23. *White Coat Hypocrites*

Why does Dr. Don Newman see himself as a hypocrite? Do you agree with him? Why does Don struggle with his racial identity? Why does he decide to pass as white for most of his life? What does he mean when he says that “my heart is as black as my father's?” Is Dr. Newman black or white?

### Chapter 24. *The Image Makers*

How does medical imaging technology make us healthier or unhealthier? How does the desire to see or to know distract us from the path toward better health? Does true healing need to begin with diagnosis or recognition of the true cause of one's illness? Where should we place our greatest hope for diagnosis—in man or machine?

Chapter 25. *The Sick Care Business*

Why do Americans place their greatest hope for healing (and most of their resources devoted to healing) in hospitals? Is this faith in hospitals justified?

Chapter 26. *False Healthcare Counselors*

How do the various characters' personal choices of heroes in *The End of Healing* define them? Who does Don admire most? How do the people he admires influence his journey? In what ways does Senator Josten appear to emulate or imitate Aaron Burr? Why do you think the Senator chooses Burr as his hero?

Chapter 27. *The Lobbyists*

Which lobbyists at the healthcare industry gala represent the true needs of patients? Who should lobby for patients and where and how should they lobby? Should our elected representatives attend fancy parties hosted by those seeking to influence legislation?

Chapter 28. *Politicians Spreading Disease and Discord*

Who is in control of the healthcare system? Do you agree with the answer Dr. Sampson gives in the Crypt under the nation's capitol? Why or why not? Who, if anyone, should decide our nation's values and priorities for health and healing?

Chapter 29. *The Alchemist*

How does President Lender attempt to work as an alchemist in Don's life? Does he succeed in turning iron into gold in Don's eyes?

Chapter 30. *Counterfeit Care*

Why does Dr. Mallock, the Florence New American Hospital Emergency Room Director, become a counterfeiter? Why are healers sometimes tempted to provide counterfeit care? Was Don justified in overstepping his authority and taking over when he saw that Bobby Webster was being mistreated? Do you agree with how the hospital handled the incident afterward?

Chapter 31. *Industrial Giants Whose Time is Past*

Do you find Dr. Sampson's allegory of the Room of the Giants an apt image of the American healthcare system? Why does Dr. Sampson choose to use an allegory or parable to tell the truth about healthcare?

Chapter 32. *Traitors to Family*

What does it mean to be a traitor? Which characters in *The End of Healing* do things that could be considered traitorous? What is Dr. Bruce Markum's greatest need for healing?

### Chapter 33. *Traitors to Country*

What does Dr. Don Newman do to betray his beloved teacher and why does he betray him?

### Chapter 34. *The Betrayer Revealed*

Is Dr. Sampson correct when he tells his students, “But I was wrong to call you to war, even a war against medical errors and waste of healthcare resources?” What is the best way to confront and overcome the evils of modern healthcare?

#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What meaning does the character Sibyl Bellamy have for Dr. Don Newman’s life? Why does she haunt him? Why and where does her haunting stop?
2. Is deception in healthcare any worse than other types of deception for personal gain? Why or why not?
3. What are the temptations faced by each of the three students? How do their responses to these temptations change the courses of their lives?
4. What is the true end of healing? How can our representatives, health professionals, and the U.S. healthcare system better serve that end?
5. How does Don Newman’s vision at the omphalos transform him? Why does he find the vision so powerful? What about his realization gives him new hope and power? Do you think the effects on him will be lasting? Do such transformations ever happen in the real world?
6. Is Dr. Dante Newman the kind of healer we need most in today’s world? What can we do to find the right kind of healers for ourselves and our families?