Note: Book clubs that choose to read Trauma Plan and would like me to “attend” your gathering, please e-mail me at Candace@candacecalvert.com. I’ll try to arrange a speakerphone conversation to join your discussion.

1. In the opening scene of Trauma Plan, Dr. Jack Travis rushes to help a man set afire in the clinic parking lot. He’s furious that the gathered crowd has done nothing to help the victim. How do his attitude and actions here set the stage for his behavior as the story continues? What was your initial reaction to Jack? If you were in that crowd, what would you have done? Have you ever felt compelled to provide aid in a similar situation?

2. Former nurse Riley Hale struggles to accept her physical limitations after a vicious assault. It’s a miracle she survived, yet she can’t help wanting more—to be “whole again.” Have you ever been grateful for blessings while sensing a nagging need for more? How did that make you feel? How did you handle it?

3. Fear plays a prominent part in the theme of Trauma Plan: Jack attempts to “spit in the face of fear”; Riley fears she’ll never be whole; Vesta’s panic attacks leave her housebound. When Jack, Bandy, and Riley entertain children at the Sunshine Center, the teacher asks each child to name a fear. If you had to do that, what would your answer be? What helps you most when you’re afraid?

4. Birds are a recurring symbol in Trauma Plan: the grackles that Riley so despises, the birds Vesta loves to watch from her window, the Eagle Skydiving logo on Jack’s shirt, the caged finches Riley’s mother keeps, and the white dove in the stained-glass window of the hospital chapel. What do you think each represents?

5. Bandy Biggs tells Riley, “Sometimes it’s sorta like I’m spreadin’ hope, not peanut butter.” Do you think that is true? How does Bandy touch (and change) the lives of the people around him? How important is his character to the story? Discuss.

6. After Jack’s explosive confrontation with clinic neighbors at the library, Bandy tells him, “We can’t pick and choose who deserves good treatment. Those neighbors need it too.” He is, in effect, reminding us of God’s commandment to “love your neighbor” (see Matthew 22:34-40). Have you ever been involved in community conflict? How difficult is it to “love your neighbor as yourself”?

7. When chaplain Riley Hale comforts the parents of a dying girl, nurse Kate Callison tells her, “I don’t know how you do that.” Have you ever had a nurse, physician, chaplain, or other hospital staff member offer support or prayer for you or a loved one? If so, did it help? How?
8. Riley must accept the fact that she will never return to full nursing duties, that God has another plan for her. Have you ever struggled to accept an unexpected plan that God had for your life? Did you find it to be a blessing after all? Share.

9. How important was setting to your enjoyment of this story? Did you feel that you were in San Antonio and the Texas hill country? What was your favorite “taste of Texas” scene?

10. Was there a moment in Trauma Plan that caught you by surprise? One that made you laugh? Cry? Share your favorite story moments.