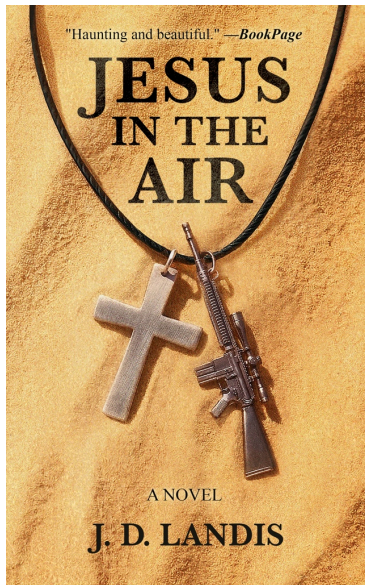


Jesus in the Air

Book Discussion Guide

This guide is for groups reading the full novel *Jesus in the Air*, either in one whole-book discussion or across its three titled parts. Groups discussing selected excerpts without reading the full novel should use the [Excerpt Pack](#).

Publication: March 28, 2027, in print and on Kindle. Details at jesusintheair.com.



Book Overview

Jesus in the Air follows Warren Pease, a young U.S. Army sniper newly home from Iraq, through a single summer day on the New Hampshire coast. Before dawn, on a dark beach, he meets a barefoot man in jeans and a T-shirt. He says to call him Ray. Warren knows him as Jesus.

He stays beside Warren as the day draws him back to those he left behind. As ordinary mercies unfold, memories of Iraq press in—the sniper’s work, the lives taken and lost, and the moral burden Warren carries home. The story blends realism with quiet wonder as Warren faces what he did, what he could not do, and what forgiveness might mean.



Content Note

This novel portrays wartime combat and aftermath (graphic in places), injury and death involving adults and children, handling of human remains, suicide references, briefly reported sexual violence, animal harm, and racist and religiously demeaning language.

Character Map

Warren “War” Pease	Narrator; an Army sniper home from Iraq.
Ray / Jesus	The stranger Warren knows as Jesus.
Bethie	Warren’s first love; Dodie’s mother.
Dodie	Warren and Bethie’s daughter.
Ryan	Warren’s best friend.
Warren’s father	A New Hampshire veterinarian.
Warren’s mother	Died during Warren’s boyhood.
Mr. Smith	Bethie’s father; Warren’s former English teacher.

Start the Conversation

Use your group's plan if you have one. Otherwise, here is a simple way to begin. You do not need to answer every question.

1

Choose how you'll meet

Meeting three times

Read one titled part before each meeting, then use its question set. In the last meeting, look back across the novel.

Meeting once

Read the complete novel before meeting. Use the Part 3 questions.

2

Find your question set

Part 1	The Isles of Shoals	page 3 →
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Part 2	Jesus in the Air	page 4 →
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Part 3	How I Got Here	page 5 →
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Spoilers *Each set reveals events in its part; Part 3 includes the ending.*

3

Guide the conversation

Open the conversation

Start with a scene or line someone wants to talk about. Choose a few questions from the guide, or follow a question the group raises.

Keep it moving

Ask what in the book supports a reading. Invite another view, allow silence, and leave space for people who have not spoken.

Get or share the Reading Group Kit: jesusintheair.com/reading-group-kit

Book Part 1 — “The Isles of Shoals”

1. *Warm-up option:* How did Warren’s way of telling the story affect your trust in him?
2. *Warm-up option:* Bethie is angry, funny, wounded, hospitable, and guarded in the kitchen scene. Which response from her felt most truthful to you?
3. The man Warren meets is narrated as Jesus and asks to be called Ray. How does that double naming shape your reading?
4. Warren says he sent money but did not call or write Bethie. What does the story show about the cost of silence?
5. At the door, Jesus tells Warren to “Ask her the right way,” and Warren changes “Can I come back?” to “May I come back?” What changes when he asks for permission instead of assuming he can return?
6. So far, Ryan is present mostly through memory, Bethie’s words, and Warren’s anxiety. How does that shape your view of him before he appears in person?
7. How does the memory of Warren’s mother’s death begin to explain Warren’s father without excusing him?
8. How do Warren’s memories of Iraq change the meaning of ordinary home scenes? Where did that collision hit hardest?
9. *Closing:* What do you most want Warren to face next?

Book Part 2 — “Jesus in the Air”

1. *Warm-up option:* When Warren reaches his father’s house, what first stood out to you about his father?
2. *Warm-up option:* Which object from Warren’s father’s house or the cemetery stayed with you, and why?
3. Before Warren sees his father, how does his conversation with Jesus change what he hopes for from their meeting?
4. Jesus’ first meeting with Warren’s father begins with a weapon and ends with Warren in his father’s arms. What makes that turn feel believable, strange, or both?
5. The doe and Dippity sit close together in the reading: one animal is killed for testing; another is bought, housed, and healed. What do those two scenes show together that neither scene would show alone?
6. At the table, Warren eats bacon with his father and Jesus. What does that meal restore for him, and what remains unsettled?
7. At the cemetery, Warren hears his mother through the earth while Ryan hears only Warren. What kind of neighbor-love does Ryan offer in a moment he cannot fully enter or verify?
8. Warren expects the cemetery to give him one kind of reunion, but it gives him several different encounters instead. What does he receive there that he did not know to ask for?
9. *Closing:* By the end of the cemetery scene, what has changed in Warren’s sense of home?

Book Part 3 — “How I Got Here”

For final meeting or whole-book discussions.

Spoiler warning: These questions discuss the novel's ending.

1. *Warm-up option:* After finishing the novel, what was your first response?
2. *Warm-up option:* What did you make of the ride from the cemetery, with Jesus driving Ryan's car?
3. When Bethie runs to Ryan first and then sends Warren to Dodie, how did you understand Warren's place in the house?
4. At the kitchen table, Dodie says “Hello,” calls Warren “Daddy,” shares yogurt with him, and clears the table. What does Warren receive from her before he can give anything back?
5. In the Iraq account, how are duty, conscience, and love of neighbor brought into conflict? What responsibilities remain when obedience and moral judgment do not line up cleanly?
6. The notice of Warren's death states that he was killed in Iraq and follows his body home to burial beside his mother. How did that public record change the way you heard Warren's voice?
7. Looking back on the whole book, what is the difference between Warren coming home, being brought home, and being returned?
8. The wedding scene lets Warren bless Bethie and Ryan; the wedding notice shows their life continuing without him. How did those two versions of the wedding affect your sense of the ending?
9. *Closing:* What image, scene, or relationship from the whole novel will stay with you longest?