



Ruined, by Ruth Everhart

Discussion Questions (for General Readers)

1. The author begins her memoir this way: *It happened on a Sunday night, even though I'd been a good girl and gone to church that morning.* In your opinion, what behaviors constitute being a *good girl* and what do you think of that label? To what extent do you consider yourself to be a *good girl*? What phrase might be the male equivalent? Do you think God treats people according to how *good* they are?
2. The author references Psalm 23 throughout the book. (pp. 9, 16, 28, 52, 76, 96, 129, 139, 246) How have these references affected your understanding of *the valley of the shadow of death*? What valleys of the shadow have you walked through and how did you experience God's absence or presence during those times?
3. The author had a sheltered upbringing. During college she endured a traumatic experience which was followed by a long period of distress. She ultimately rebuilt her life and found new faith. Which elements of this story did you identify with and which did you not?
4. Following the author's experience of sexual violence, how did the Christian subculture respond or fail to respond? How did this response differ from how you imagine Jesus would have responded, or how Jesus might have expected his followers to respond? Think of someone you know who has experienced sexual violence. How has your reading of this book caused you to rethink how you might respond to that person?
5. The title of the book, *Ruined*, is an important word to the author. How might you elaborate on the meaning of that word to someone who has not read the book? To what extent did Ruth's feelings originate internally, from the reactions of others, from her faith tradition, or from somewhere else? Have you experienced similar feelings? Where do you perceive those feelings as originating?
6. One of the biggest faith issues that people wrestle with is the tension between human free will and God's sovereign will. Could you frame this tension as a mathematical formula, as a multiple choice question, or as a Venn diagram? Did this book change your understanding of this tension and if so, how?

7. One of the author's rapists went to trial and was convicted. Testifying in a court of law was validating for Ruth personally. If you have been (or were in the future) the victim of a crime, would it be important to you to pursue justice in court? If a criminal justice proceeding was not possible, can you think of other ways of being seen and heard that could validate your experience?
8. After the trial, the author had a sense of not knowing who she was anymore. In her pain and loneliness Ruth became involved with a married man, which ultimately led to greater feelings of self-loathing and despair. Have you acted out in your pain and experienced the fallout of addictions, bad relationships, or other poor choices? Where can you find help to break destructive patterns?
9. On p. 206, Ruth says of her relationship with the married man, *So I discovered that love has the power to heal, but only a partial power*. What do you think she means by that and do you agree or disagree? How has this played out in your own life?
10. After her trauma, the author felt cast adrift and ended up far from home, both geographically and in other ways. A defining moment for Ruth was when she thought, *This is not who Jesus wants me to be* (p. 234). She intentionally sought Christian community in a multiracial church. Are you in a community of believers that is helping you on the path to recovery and healing? Who does Jesus want you to be? How can other Christians help you get there?
11. The author experienced a great tragedy. Did anything good come out of Ruth's experience? If so, what was it, and how did God cause it to come about?
12. In the epilogue, the author writes, *The sad fact is that a woman's sexual purity has long been the measure of her worth. As a culture, we need to bury this worthless belief. A girl's or woman's value is not equal to her supposed sexual purity. That is a fallacy that must die*. Do you agree or disagree with the author's assessment? What helpful changes could the church make in the way it talks about a woman's purity and worth?
13. In the epilogue the author writes of gifts left in the wake of trauma. What were those gifts for Ruth? What gifts have you experienced in the wake of traumatic events? How have those gifts enabled you to relate to others who have been through traumatic events?