



Ruined, by Ruth Everhart

Discussion Questions (for Ministry Leaders)

1. What did you think of the way the Christian community as a whole responded to the tragedy the author and her friends experienced? How do you think your church would have responded?
2. Can you identify anyone in your congregation who has been the victim of sexual violence? If so, how did you become aware of their painful past? If not, why do you think hurting people tend to remain hidden, especially in faith communities? What could you do to create a culture of vulnerability and openness in your church so people are comfortable sharing their struggles, especially around sexual violence?
3. From the very first page of her memoir, the author raises the issue of God's sovereignty. What is your view of the sovereignty of God and what events, if any, have made you struggle with this concept? When someone's view of God's character is shaken up by a terrible event, how can you provide a safe environment for questions to surface while still being true to Scripture?
4. The author relates that on the morning after the attack, her sister received difficult news about her son's disability. (page 56) In retrospect, Ruth says, she understands that *moments like these are precisely when a life takes shape. This is when we exercise our free will. Call it making sense of things, if you like.* How can you walk alongside those who are struggling to make sense of traumatic experiences in a way that validates their pain and suffering while helping them turn to the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3)? What does it mean to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:4)?
5. The author wishes someone had asked *the right questions.* (page 97) What are some questions that can help victims uncover the lies they might believe about themselves or about God? What biblical examples of redemption offer hope to those who have experienced trauma?

6. The author relates a meeting she and her friends had with two pastors. (p. 132). She writes, *Looking back, I wish they would have invited us into conversation rather than delivering a lecture. . . . It would have helped to know that struggle was normal and temporary.* How can you invite a person in pain into an ongoing conversation? What behaviors, both general and specific, tend to shut down these conversations?
7. The author comments that Scripture is full of lament, which is a rich resource, too often overlooked. (p 133) How have you used, or how might you use, Scriptures of lament when speaking with people suffering from trauma? What specific passages come to mind?
8. The author was able to testify against one of her assailants. Whether someone's case is tried in court or not, how can you help the person you are caring for feel seen and heard? What Scriptures about God's justice could help the victim of a crime gain an eternal perspective?
9. The author entered into a relationship with a married man who had experienced trauma in war. How familiar are you with the symptoms and treatment of PTSD, and how do you use those learnings in ministry? What resources might you access to learn more?
10. The author had a transformational experience in worship when she identified with the story in Mark 5 about Jesus healing the bleeding woman. She writes, *I saw my own wounded, scarred self and heard Jesus say, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'* (page 264-265). How might you bring this Scriptural message of hope and healing to those entrusted to your pastoral care?
11. When the author gave birth to her first child, she understood a new depth of love that made her vulnerable to suffering. She writes *In incarnation, love and suffering are bundled together in Christ's flesh* (page 295-296). What does the fact that a transcendent God became mortal for our sake mean for those who suffer? How might you help those who suffer gain a clearer picture of Christ as the Redeemer?
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? As a church leader, what helpful changes might you make in the way you talk about a woman's purity and worth?