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# Ruined



## Synopsis

It happened on a Sunday night, even though I'd been a good girl and gone to church that morning. One brisk November evening during her senior year at a small Midwestern Christian college, two armed intruders broke into the house Ruth Everhart shared with her roommates, held all five girls hostage, and took turns raping them at gunpoint. Reeling with fear, insecurity, and guilt, Ruth believed she was ruined, both physically and in the eyes of God. In the days and weeks that followed, Ruth struggled to come to grips with not only what happened that night but why. The same questions raced through her mind in an unrelenting loop: questions that would continue to haunt her for years to come: Why me? Where was God? Why did God allow this to happen? What am I being punished for? Told with candor and unflinching honesty, *Ruined* is an extraordinary emotional and spiritual journey that begins with an unspeakable act of violence but ends with tremendous healing and profound spiritual insights about faith, forgiveness, and the will of God.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Every summer it seems there is at least one book I'm still thinking about long after the windows

are closed and the kids are back in school, a book I ponder and advise others to read. I'm not a fan of novels, but I do range far and wide, so we are talking about nonfiction from *Destiny of the Republic* to *Wild Trees* to *The Soul of Shame* and all the meaty, thrilling, deeply moving words in between. This year that memorable book is *Ruined: a memoir* by Ruth Everhart. The author is a wife, a mother, a Presbyterian pastor, a blogger and a survivor of sexual violence. She and her roommates were held at gunpoint and raped during a long night of terror while seniors at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1978. As Reverend Everhart describes that night and its aftermath, you can feel her pain through the pages, a pain that goes far beyond the experience of her body to lacerations of the mind and spirit. Her journey includes an honest grappling with the sovereignty of God, a search for the true meaning of grace and a deep sense of compassion for all the lost and hurting souls in the world, especially those who feel they've been ruined. While the book deals with heavy subjects, it is immensely readable – "I finished its 300 pages in a day and a half. Everhart's style is direct but intimate, taking the reader to the edge of evil, then pulling back to reveal an interior world straining toward light and love. It is a mark of her long healing that she has compassion not only for her sister sufferers but also for herself. "You are more than your sexual history. You are more than what happens to you. You are immensely valuable | Nothing is more washable than human skin. It is the most washable substance on earth. Thank God." (p.

I grew up in the church. And it wasn't until I was 29 years old that I saw a woman preach for the first time. That woman was Ruth, author of the powerful new memoir, *Ruined*. The central event of the memoir is unimaginable trauma. Robbed at gunpoint, held hostage for 4 hours, and raped, Ruth, who grew up in a solidly conservative, loving faith tradition, finds herself "ruined" – or so she thinks. Her memoir takes us unflinchingly through the crime, the trial, and the trauma's aftermath. Her faith is torn apart and then rebuilt with more emotional and intellectual honesty than I have read in quite some time. The memoir itself is incredibly brave; the writing is intense and brilliant. But my favorite part of the book is the epilogue, "A Letter to My Daughters," in which Ruth pulls it all together, and the emotion lets loose. Because, well, DAUGHTERS. Here, she calls for the language and belief of "sexual purity" and if you're raised in the church, you know damn well what she's talking about "to be cast into the grave of extinct beliefs" (p. 306). Let's all take a moment and stand up and clap for that one. I pondered Ruth's memoir after finishing it, because that's the sort of book it is, while watching my two girls frolic and play on the beach. What could "ruin" these precious girls? Nothing. NOTHING. They are cherished, no matter what is done to them, or what they themselves do. They are cherished, cherished, cherished,

by their mother, their father, their creator, and othersâNo. Matter. What. How terrifying that they could ever think otherwise. How heartbreaking that their faith could drag them there. There are a thousand take-aways from Ruthâs book, and I strongly encourage everyone to read it and glean whatever wisdom speaks to them.

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