

SMALL
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RUTHLESS TRUST

The Ragamuffin's Path to God

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CHAPTER 1

1. Why do we tend to block ourselves from God when bad things happen?
2. Did you come to this book hoping to get new insights into your life? Has reading page 1 changed your mind?
3. On page 8, the author speaks of “unhealthy guilt, shame, remorse . . .” Is there such a thing as healthy guilt, shame, and remorse?

CHAPTER 2

1. The author says we should be able to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now and see in it the guiding hand of a loving God. What events in your life have taught you to trust in God?
2. Why is it so easy to take blessings for granted, and how can we remember to be grateful?
3. In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 5:11–32), the older son becomes jealous because the younger son is welcomed home by the father. How can “older sons” learn to be joyous not jealous when “younger sons” repent and return?

CHAPTER 3

1. Have you experienced loneliness and alienation from God? What brought you back to him?
2. Is there no purpose in saying “I love you” to anyone unless you feel some strong emotion to go along with it? Is perfunctory routine really all that bad?

CHAPTER 4

1. Is our society becoming more agnostic?
2. Share an event in your life that was so troublesome that you felt an actual break in your relationship with God.
3. Do people shy away from joy to keep away sorrow also?

CHAPTER 5

1. In what ways do the spiritual visionaries (artists, mystics, and clowns) inspire trust in God?
2. In general in our society, are people too busy? Are our lives filled with noise? Does your life feel too noisy and busy?
3. Discuss ways and times in your life in which you have witnessed God’s grandeur and greatness.

CHAPTER 6

1. Review the definitions of transcendence and immanence as found on page 82. Does the altar (or focus point) of the place in which you worship reflect God's transcendence or his immanence?

CHAPTER 7

1. Try to imagine loving your worst enemy, recalling the evil deeds done. Imagine they are your son or daughter. How would you get to that unconditional love that Jesus teaches?
2. Explain how having Jesus as a friend affects your relationships with other people and how you can carry that forward in these relationships.

CHAPTER 8

1. Recall a time in your life when you were desperate to control a situation, but could not. How did you handle it?
2. On page 113 Manning writes, "What we have failed to learn is that clarity, reassurance, and proof cannot create trust, sustain it, or guarantee any certainty of its presence." Why not? And can this pertain to proof-based fields such as the hard sciences? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 9

1. How does humble confidence yield to trust in God?
2. The author defines humility as having no opinion of the self (p. 120). Why is humility so often associated with low self-esteem, a low opinion of the self?
3. Is despair a sin? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 10

1. Spend some time each day this week reflecting on who you compare yourself to and what characteristics of yourself you think about. Make a real attempt this week to stop and think instead of what you are thankful for.
2. How can you turn a negative about yourself into a positive?

CHAPTER 11

1. Do you live your life in a compulsive escape from Nowhere? How can you free yourself and live in the present moment?
2. Have you ever experienced the “eternal Now” of page 154? Describe for yourself or for your group this experience or experiences.

3. Why do people, who can only be in one place at a time and can only live one moment at a time, spend so much of their mental energy in the past or future?

CHAPTER 12

1. Do you pretend you are forgiven, or have you really forgiven yourself?