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**THE BIG IDEA:** This chapter explores reasons why it might be hard to trust God, defines what we mean by “trust training,” and looks at the difference between passive and active trust.

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## CHAPTER 1

# Trust Training

*He trains my hands for battle...  
Psalm 18:34*

I can remember rattling off Proverbs 3:5, 6 to Mrs. Hill, my third grade Sunday school teacher, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*”

It’s easy to remember. People often throw in those verses when they give advice.

*You’ve got a problem, a worry, a fear, a dilemma, a decision to make? What should you do?*

*Simple.*

*Trust God.*

Maybe not so simple.

Given half a chance, most children find it easy to trust. I know I did. I couldn’t have asked for a better beginning. From the day my folks brought me home from the hospital and proudly showed me off to the other seminary students at Bible College, I thrived under their loving protection. My brother learned to walk on an ocean liner that carried us overseas to the mission field. We had a great heritage, the branches on both sides of our family tree generously sprinkled with missionaries, church planters, and passionate lay leaders.

Surrounded by love in a stable home, attending healthy, Bible-believing churches, with Christians on all sides, you might think it would have been easy to trust God.

Within two years after graduating from Mrs. Hill’s class the bottom fell out of my world. A close family member began to molest me, a nightmare that went on for six excruciating years. I felt so ashamed. I thought it disqualified me beyond any hope of cleansing or redemption. I was utterly alone and afraid, so I kept the secret. When I finally worked up the courage to tell someone, it did not go well. My family members closed ranks, blamed everything on me, and pretended that nothing had happened. I gutted it out alone for two more years, eluded my tormenter as best I could, and fled away to college. I left home, pretty much forever.

Something breaks inside your spirit when the worst thing you can imagine actually happens to you. It kicks open a door in your mind leaving you vulnerable to every fear and insecurity. You have no defense against your fears, and no way of reassuring yourself, “Oh,

don't be silly. That could never happen." You stop taking anything for granted. You stop trusting.

Even if the respectable Christian family I thought I could trust had rallied around me, it would have been difficult to learn how to trust again. When they turned against me, it became that much harder to fight my way back to a simple childlike trust.

Either way, I found it impossible to trust God. Why had He allowed it to happen to me? I thought He was angry and distant, like my dad. I assumed that He condemned me, too. God seemed too powerful to trust. How could I be sure He wouldn't betray me?

By high school, my heart grew hard and callous. After hearing hundreds of evangelistic sermons over the course of my young lifetime, I stopped going forward when I heard an altar invitation. Instead, I sat in the back row and evaluated the speaker's technique.

Every once in a while when I worried about my stony heart, I prayed what turned out to be a powerful prayer, "God, my heart is dead. I can't change it. If You really exist somewhere out there, please break through to me and give me a heart of flesh to follow You."

Even though I kept going to church, married a wonderful preacher, and remained active in church ministry, I locked away my deeply wounded heart. I worshiped God, but held Him at a distance.

I write about trust because God answered my high school prayer. For thirty years He patiently helped me mend bits and pieces of my shattered heart and gently coaxed me back to Himself. I am a trophy of His grace.

He worked through godly counselors and significant experiences along the way. He worked through my wonderful husband who showed me unconditional love and gave me a better model of what God might be like – patient, kind, and understanding.

When my heart was whole, God introduced Himself to me all over again, and like a newfound soul mate invited me to get to know Him as friend. As I became more comfortable in His presence He taught me how to trust Him. Praise God, He helped me to feel safe in His presence.



Well, that's my story. Now let's stop a minute and think about your story. Some of you have identified with my trauma because you've also had some pretty hard hits in your life. The details may be different, but you know all about that yearning for safety and protection. Some of you can't relate at all. You had a great childhood that seamlessly ushered you into an adult trust in God.

The rest of you are somewhere in the middle. Even if you've been a Christian for awhile, you've tripped over some bumps in the road. Maybe you prayed for something and God didn't answer the way you expected. Your disappointment has raised a barrier between you and God. Maybe you grew up in a church that emphasized God's wrath and obeying lots of rules. Maybe your church didn't talk much about having a personal relationship with God. Maybe people betrayed your trust and you have protected your heart to avoid more pain. You didn't notice that, in your zeal not to get hurt, you were also shutting out God.