

LYSA TERKEURST

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

I WANT
TO TRUST
YOU,
but I don't

*Moving Forward When You're Skeptical of Others,
Afraid of What God Will Allow,
and Doubtful of Your Own Discernment*

What Readers Are Saying About

I Want to Trust You, but I Don't

“Lysa’s words about trust came at a time when I desperately needed them. They gave me encouragement to open my heart up to the right people and to explore where my trust in the Lord was lacking and could grow.”

—COLLEEN C.

“Just when you think Lysa can’t be more vulnerable, she surprises you. This book caused me to think, to feel, and to be empowered with practical tools on how to trust when I feel my trust has been broken.”

—HEATHER S.

“This book is a must-read for anyone who has experienced conflict, hurt, or trauma. Readers will find a treasure, a trusted friend, and a life-changing resource within the words beautifully crafted by Lysa.”

—TESCIA J.

“Whether or not your trust has ever been broken, you need to read this book.”

—LIZZY H.

“This book is for the girl who finds herself tangled in the tension of broken trust and fractured relationships. Lysa’s honesty and vulnerability provide a safe space for me to heal from past hurts. This book has been the best resource to help me restore a responsible and wise level of trust in my relationships. I am confident it will be a blessing to anyone who reads it.”

—MICHELLE M.

“Lysa writes in a way that makes you feel understood, like someone is finally offering the language you needed to describe what you are going through. She found her way back to trust, connection, and true relationships, and this book is just the guide I needed to do the same.”

—GRACE F.

“In this book, Lysa discusses the topic of trust and gives practical ideas on how to deal with trust issues. She is honest, raw, real, and transparent in ways that will make you laugh, cry, and identify with how she has tackled trust issues in her own life. You will see God’s Word and wisdom woven through this book. She does an amazing job walking you through a topic in a down-to-earth way, always pointing the reader back to God.”

—LAUREN D.

“Broken trust in relationships has sadly become a culturally acceptable practice. You don’t have to look far to find a friendship, marriage, or even a coworker relationship struggling to survive a betrayal of some kind. As any loving friend would do, Lysa gently encourages us to look betrayal in the face with hope. With a heart for her friends intent on healing wounds and bringing glory to God, Lysa provides a shoulder to cry on, an arm to lean on, and a compass to point us toward a better way. Lysa’s guidance and practical tools provided in the pages of this book helped me to open my heart to rebuilding trust in God, in myself, and in my people. Thank you, Lysa.”

—REGINA B.

“I am not sure I have words that can do justice for how amazing this book is. I cried, laughed, and had quite a few epiphany moments!”

—SHALOMIE L.

“Sometimes there are times in our lives when we have faced such hard circumstances that we feel completely isolated with our feelings and can’t imagine that someone else understands the deep hurt we are navigating. Lysa not only understands it but does a remarkable job at putting words around those feelings that have left us speechless. I felt seen and understood and am thankful for her vulnerability and commitment to the truth at all costs.”

—JESSICA C.

“Lysa’s writing is a wonderful balance between anointed and practical. I found myself not only highlighting page after page but pausing and allowing myself to process. Lysa helped unravel the deep pain I was holding, not only against people but God. Thankfully, through the scriptures shared in this book and Lysa’s revelation, I was able to get up and dust myself off. My trust in God has been restored, and for that I am eternally grateful.”

—MADELYNN R.

Some Other Books and Video Bible Studies by Lysa

You're Going to Make It (devotional)

Good Boundaries and Goodbyes

Good Boundaries and Goodbyes Bible Study Guide and Video

Forgiving What You Can't Forget

Forgiving What You Can't Forget Bible Study Guide and Video

Seeing Beautiful Again (devotional)

It's Not Supposed to Be This Way

It's Not Supposed to Be This Way Bible Study Guide and Video

Embraced (devotional)

Uninvited

Uninvited Bible Study Guide and Video

30 Days with Jesus

40 Days Through the Bible

I'll Start Again Monday

Children's

It Will Be Okay

Win or Lose, I Love You!

I WANT
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*Moving Forward When You're Skeptical of Others,
Afraid of What God Will Allow,
and Doubtful of Your Own Discernment*

LYSA TERKEURST



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I Want to Trust You, but I Don't

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To Chaz: you helped me see that trust is possible. I love you.



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Broken trust complicates every bit of the
parts of love that should be comforting.



Introduction

Fear Has the Louder Voice Right Now

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I want to trust you, but I don't.

I want to believe you have my best interests in mind, just like I do for you. I want to believe you don't have a hidden agenda, motivations that are completely self-serving, or something going on behind the scenes I would be crushed by if I knew about it.

I want to believe the good feelings I have when you are being kind to me will still feel good a month from now. A year from now. I want to believe you've told me the whole story and that I won't make discoveries later that make me cry and feel the brutal weight of regret. I want to believe I won't lie in bed sobbing over the red flags I missed or chose not to pay attention to.

I want to believe you aren't writing a narrative about me and our relationship that doesn't line up with the facts. I want to believe you have the ability to know right from wrong. I want to believe you are wise. I want to believe I can count on you. I want to believe you won't hurt me. I want to believe you won't talk behind my back. I want to believe that you are honest, good, fair, godly, kind, and accountable to do the right things and think the right things.

I want to believe your love is real and your care is genuine.

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I want to believe my relationship with you will be calm and not chaotic.

I want to believe I'll feel wise and not stupid for trusting you.

I want to believe I'll forever love to tell the story of how we met and how long we've been this close.

I want to believe I'm safe with you and that you really are my person.

I want to believe I'll be okay if I trust you.

But I'm scared.

I've been burned before. So many times before.

I fear getting this wrong.

I'm unsure.

My anxiety tells me to run. But do I build my life around anxiety?

Are these trust issues really triggers from past pain? Or are these trust issues legitimate warning signs?

I want to be okay. I want us to be okay.

But I'm afraid the risks are just too high.

My heart says I love you, but my fear says it's not safe.

And fear has the louder voice right now.

So, I want to trust you, but I don't.

And this is where I put my head down on my desk. I don't know whether to cry or to hold this angst in and stare at the wall.

I want my closest relationships to have the assurance of safety, honesty, and stability. But we don't always get what we want. We get what we get.

Is this just my experience, or is this yours too? This is the confusion that first got me thinking I needed to do some work around my busted-up trust. If you've followed my journey, I don't need to catch you up on all the events that made me feel foolish for giving people access to the most vulnerable parts of my heart. But if you haven't, let me encapsulate it for you.

Friendship breakups. Loved ones not having my back. Several

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deeply hurtful and life-altering betrayals. Lies. Gaslighting. Me feeling crazy. Me making shocking discoveries over and over. The death of my marriage. Another couple of friendship fractures. Time spent grieving. Being thankful some lost relationships could be repaired and restored. More grieving over other relationships that won't ever be the same. Wrestling with who I can trust and who I can't. Swinging the pendulum from being too trusting to being skeptical of just about everyone.

It was exhausting. But I wanted to move forward. Get on with my life. The problem was, being alone in the quietness of my house had become so much more appealing than opening my door, walking on, and trying to figure out how to trust again when mostly everyone felt unsafe. An annoying warning kept going off in my mind, like a smoke detector when the battery is low. It wasn't a full-on alarm, but the shrill chirp was not something I could just ignore either. Even as I forced myself to appear okay in front of others, the dialogue inside my head kept sounding the alarm: *Things aren't normal. People aren't good. You're risking too much trusting those who you think love you. Just when you think you are safe enough to open up a bit, they'll hurt you. They all have secrets. They all will eventually let you down, betray you. None of them can be trusted.*

Those thoughts turned into skepticism and eventually turned into an off-kilter belief system. Filtering everyone through my hurt was turning me into someone I'd never been before I was so deeply affected by having my trust broken. I felt suspicious about the real intentions of others. I started mentally filling in blanks in relational uncertainties with increasing suspicion.

Have you ever found yourself imagining all the *real* reasons your friend seemed distant the last time you saw them? Or tried to figure out the hidden agenda of family members who say one thing but you are certain mean something different? Or started making assumptions about a coworker after getting a weird feeling from them, mentally

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accusing them of what they're doing that could potentially put your job in jeopardy? Or questioned how much freedom you, as the boss, have given to an employee who is just giving you the bare minimum and can't possibly be working all the hours you are paying them for?

Sometimes, what we are sensing is spot-on and helps us know what needs to be addressed. But other times we are unnecessarily projecting things onto others that just aren't there. We don't want to get it wrong, but we also don't know what to do from here. These kinds of mental gymnastics are exhausting and make us hold back the very best of who we are for fear of getting hurt. That's exactly what was happening with me.

But it wasn't just other people causing my issues with trust to be at an all-time high. I was also questioning myself.

I was usually the one who believed the best about everyone and thought they had my best intentions at heart. It used to be easy to trust people. And in the few situations when I felt scared or not as sure of that trust, I calmed myself down by noting my own keen discernment. I was confident I would be able to detect if something were going sideways.

But then, after years of correctly sizing up situations, when I started getting hit with my own shocking discoveries, I was stunned by how much I'd missed—how many times I had given people the benefit of the doubt when I shouldn't have. What happened to my ability to sense when something was wrong?

Now I wasn't sure I could trust my discernment, which I'd always viewed as such a sweet gift from God. And I even started doubting I could fully trust God. I stopped having the passion I'd once had to read my Bible, go to church, or listen to worship music. I secretly questioned how a good God could see what was going on behind my back and not do anything to either stop it or help me find out before it got as bad as it did.

I don't want to admit this, but I felt betrayed by God. He had allowed so many things I didn't understand. In my mind, so much

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hurt could have been avoided if only He had intervened in ways that I assumed a good God would. And most confusing of all, my suffering felt never-ending while the people who hurt me continued to make choices that didn't honor God, yet seemed to be carrying on just fine.

All my skepticism and doubt about the people in my life, about my own discernment, and about God was turning me into someone I didn't even recognize. Someone I didn't want to be. I didn't want to give up on all relationships, but I also didn't know how to keep trying, knowing I may get hurt again. Trust just felt like a fool's game with way too much risk.

But life kind of requires us to be trusting.

When my daughter had her son, a wise nurse told us, "Trust is the oxygen of all human relationships." A relationship without trust is a relationship without vulnerability and depth. A relationship without trust is void of the kind of love we were meant to give and receive. A relationship without trust is one with very little vibrancy and eventually no life at all.

I'm not just talking about romantic love. I'm talking about all relationships where we want a deep connection that is both safe and lasting. When I feel that kind of warmth with a close friend or loved one, that's home to me. It's a haven that makes me think of what heaven will one day be like.

Remember in Genesis 2:25, "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." The lack of shame referred to in this verse means they were sinless and unbroken. They saw each other in their naked form and fully accepted the gift of each other with no fear. But on this side of eternity, sin has caused that kind of innocence and purity to be tainted. So what do we do?

What happens to a girl who feels forced to trust when she just simply can't? And what happens to a Bible teacher others expect to be unwavering but who feels overwhelmed with confusion about God, others, and herself?

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The process of wading through all of this can feel like trying to run through quicksand. When I was in the middle of it, I couldn't just stop; otherwise I would sink and drown in all that hurt. But every step I tried to take to keep going forward took unusual effort, with a heaviness I couldn't get off me. I wanted to get through all of this quickly, but the pain made me hyperaware of every move. I felt forced to be in slow motion while everyone else was zipping past me at normal speed.

The shock of broken trust makes life feel painfully slow and uncomfortably fast at the same time. The disbelief that this is your reality makes everything grind to a halt. But the reality of jobs and bills and kids who need a ride to school all feels unrealistically normal, and normal feels too fast for a brain that can't process what's happening.

I want to fully acknowledge how difficult all of this has been on your heart and mine. I want to leave space for raw emotion that can so easily come to the surface when talking about events you may be still processing. But, mostly, I want to gently pass along something I've learned that I want you to hang on to as we keep turning these pages.

The trauma of having your trust broken by people you thought would never betray you is life altering. But it doesn't have to be life ruining.

That's why I wrote this book. I have walked the road of hurting and healing for years. There has been lots of counseling. Lots of internal work. Lots of praying and seeking. Lots of perspective shifts and healing. New hope. New discoveries. And finding a life that's so different from what I thought my future would look like. But finally realizing different can be wildly beautiful.

Now I'm walking forward in ways I never thought possible. And you can too. I want to hold your hand as we explore what's happened to us and how it affected not only our emotions but also our brains and central nervous systems.

The trauma of having your
trust broken by people you
thought would never betray

you is *life altering*.

But it doesn't have

to be *life ruining*.

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Yes, the damage of emotional hurt really does go much further than we think. And if you have people in your life who have minimized your pain or who don't understand how serious betrayals and broken trust really are, I want you to know, it's not that you're being too dramatic or overly emotional as you process all of this. The damage is real. I'm not just talking in theory here. I've seen what relationship dysfunction and trauma can do.

As crazy as this might sound, I had my brain scanned.

I went through a battery of tests and then several scans, because I wanted to know the facts. More than just feeling the impact of what I've walked through, I wanted to see it. I wanted to stare at the results with a doctor who studies this. And I wanted him to tell me what he saw and what story my brain scan was telling him. I wanted the truth.

Once I had my scans done, I sat down with Dr. Daniel Amen, a physician and psychiatrist specializing in brain health. Together, we compared my brain scans with the scans of a perfectly healthy brain. It was really telling to both of us that, as a result of experiences I've had, I now show clear evidence of what's called "the trauma diamond."

Dr. Amen has done studies of trauma survivors and found their SPECT (single-photon emission computed tomography) brain "scans show significantly increased activity in the limbic, or emotional, areas in a pattern that looks like a diamond."¹ As I sat there with him, looking at evidence of how all I've experienced in my life has impacted me, I felt, for the first time, I could use the words *emotional abuse* without flinching.

Here's the reality of how the affected areas of my brain have changed the way I process life and relationships:

- "Anterior cingulate gyrus: This region is the brain's gear shifter and helps you go from one thought to another. Too much activity here is associated with a fixation on negative thoughts or behaviors.

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- Basal ganglia and amygdala: These are the brain’s anxiety and fear centers, and overactivity is linked to heightened anxiousness and predicting the worst.
- Thalamus: The thalamus acts as a sort of relay station for the brain, and increased activity in this region heightens sensory awareness.
- In some people, the right lateral temporal lobe is also overactive. This area of the brain is involved in reading the intentions of other people. When activity here is excessive, people can misread cues from others.”²

So the shift in how we process life situations and relationships after trauma is more than just our emotional reactions; it’s a change that happens physically in our brains. The more I learn about the physical side of what happens to us when we are betrayed, the more it makes sense to me that so many of us have issues with trust. And that’s not a bad thing we should be ashamed of. Nor is it a label we should put on ourselves—“Well, you know, I have trust issues”—like it’s a disease or a diagnosis we can’t ever heal from.

As a matter of fact, that day Dr. Amen showed me that the work I’ve done and continue to do is actually helping to heal my brain.³ The counseling, Bible study, EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing; a type of mental health therapy to help “alleviate the distress associated with traumatic memories”⁴), and taking better care of my brain through supplements and a healthier lifestyle is working. I remember my counselor once saying to me, “We have more hope and help than you have problems.” I now see that he was right. And I want to share that hope and help with you. So, I pray this book will be a significant and important part of your healing process.

Having trust issues makes so much more sense when we have some of these facts.

I also want to bring to light that the anxiety often accompanying