



A Girlfriends
IN GOD
FAITH ADVENTURE

TRUSTING GOD



**SNEAK
PEEK**



**SAMPLE
ONLY**

**UNCORRECTED
PROOF**

Sharon Jaynes
Gwen Smith
Mary Southerland

Praise for *Trusting God*

“Reading this devotional feels like you’re chatting with your best girlfriends over lunch! These women make you feel like they know you—that they know what it feels like to be you. I love the variety and short length of each daily entry—you can read one in the time it takes to finish your morning coffee! Practical, sweet, and inspiring, *Trusting God* will help you do just that. And by the last page, you too will have some new girlfriends—Mary, Gwen, and Sharon!”

—JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD, author of *Self Talk, Soul Talk*
and *Lessons I Learned in the Dark*

“Girlfriends in God—Gwen, Sharon, and Mary—are some of the wisest women I know. My friends make trusting God seem simple, possible, and attainable. A girlfriend is someone who watches out for you, encourages you, and provides opportunity for you—and that is exactly what you will experience from these Girlfriends in God. If your life is feeling unstable, unsure, unreliable, or the path feels unknown, *Trusting God* will keep you under God’s umbrella of tender-loving care.”

—PAM FARREL, relationship specialist, international speaker,
author of best-selling *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti* and *The 10 Best Decisions a Woman Can Make*

“Trusting God in this world of uncertainty and economic upheaval isn’t easy. We all need to learn, relearn, or be reminded daily of the truth that God can be trusted for each day’s problems. True to their real and relatable style, this wonderful Girlfriends in God devotional is just what you need to encourage your heart and refresh your spirit.”

—GEORGIA SHAFFER, licensed psychologist in Pennsylvania
and author of *Taking Out Your Emotional Trash*

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Thank God for girlfriends!

This book is dedicated to our many Girlfriends in God all around the world. We look forward to the day we see your faces and hear your voices as we sing praises to our

God and King for all eternity. Until then, we're so thankful that God has allowed us to do life together.

1 Thessalonians 2:8

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Introduction



Girlfriends Talk About Trusting God

T*rust.* Now that's a tough word to wrap your heart around. On the one hand, you celebrate and cherish those people with whom you can safely share anything and everything—your hopes and dreams, your faults and failures, the good times and the bad. No doubt about it—a friend you can fully trust is a priceless treasure.

On the other hand, how many times have you heard the phrase, “Just trust me,” only to be disappointed or disillusioned? How many times have you put your faith in and counted on a person to do the right thing only to be deflated and discouraged? How many times have those words “Just trust me” turned out to be nothing more than an empty promise or a primer for disaster? Is anyone trustworthy these days?

What is trust? Webster's dictionary defines it this way: “To have faith or trust in, to rely on (someone) to do something or permit someone to use something in the proper way, to believe, to confide (someone or something) to a person's responsible care, to commit someone or something to the responsible care of (a person), to have faith in God.”

Your life may be blessed with people you can trust—friends who really do have your best interests at heart and are there when you need them. Your life may also be littered with people you’ve trusted who have let you down. Perhaps you’ve got scars to remind you of people who’ve held your heart carelessly, walked away flippantly, or broken their word unapologetically. It has happened to all of us. And the hurt from a broken trust can make it difficult to count on people again.

But here’s some good news: God is not human. God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He will never leave us or forsake us. He says what He means and means what He says. God cares for you unceasingly, provides for you immeasurably, and loves you unconditionally. And you really can trust Him.

As Girlfriends in God (GiG), we are learning to trust God as we walk through good times and as we celebrate life-wins. We are also learning to trust God through trials and struggles like the ones you may be facing. The storms may be a bit different in nature, but they are storms nonetheless. We want to share our lives with you, and we hope the truths we’ve learned will help you deepen your trust in God.

Our Girlfriends in God theme verse is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:8: “We loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but *our lives* as well.” So in these pages we have opened our hearts and homes and invited you to take a peek inside. But that invitation comes with a warning—our lives are sometimes quite messy.

The apostle Paul instructed all Christians to “put on the full armor of God.” It’s a pretty snazzy outfit: the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the sword of the Spirit, the sandals of the gospel of peace, and the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:13–17). A woman dressed in that power suit is armed and danger-

ous when the Enemy comes snooping around. While these verses tell of a figurative or spiritual armor, the actual armor soldiers wore during the time of Paul was fascinating—especially the shield. Shields were often made of heavy leather, which soldiers soaked in water to help extinguish the fiery darts the enemy shot at them. And the shields—oh, we’re so excited to tell you this—the shields had hooks on the sides. Why? We thought you’d never ask. The shields had hooks on the sides so that, in difficult situations, the soldiers could link their shields together and march into battle as one.

Girlfriend, that is exactly what we want to do with you in the pages of this book. We want to hook shields with you and march as one. We want to lock arms with you, connect our hearts with yours, and learn how to seek and trust God together.

No matter how you choose to work through this book—on your own, with a prayer partner, with a group of friends, or with a GiG group—we are with you. At the end of each week, you’ll find questions to ponder. We’ve called it “Now It’s Your Turn,” and that’s exactly what it is—your turn. We’ve taken you on our holy field trips, and then it’s your turn to tell about yours. We’d love to hear from you. We’ve set up a special page on our website so you can share what you’ve learned about trusting God. Just log onto www.GirlfriendsInGod.com and click on the “Trusting God” page to tell us your story.

Now, let’s get started on our journey to trusting God!

Girlfriends
IN GOD

Sharon Jaynes, Gwen Smith, and Mary Southerland



Bailing on God

Mary Southerland

Today's Truth

Trust God from the bottom of your heart. (Proverbs 3:5, MSG)

Friend to Friend

I absolutely love being a grandmother and wholeheartedly agree with the familiar adage, "If I had known grandchildren were so wonderful, I would have had them first!" Our fifteen-month-old granddaughter, Lelia Kay, sparkles with joy and has an infectious laugh that instantly captures your heart and compels you to laugh along with her. Consequently, our son, Jered, is always looking for ways to make her laugh. On a recent visit, he proudly demonstrated one of the new "tricks" he had taught Lelia. I was horrified!

Jered came home from work, scooped up his squealing daughter in his arms and grabbed her in a big hug. Lelia wrapped her little arms around her daddy's neck and then firmly planted a noisy kiss on his cheek. Tears filled my eyes when I heard Jered whisper, "I love you, Lelia." It was definitely a Kodak moment that left me totally unprepared for the moment that followed.

Lelia giggled, grabbed her daddy's shirt with both hands and

looked up at Jered, a mischievous sparkle in her eyes. I instantly recognized that sparkle and mentally added it to the list of things she had inherited from her daddy. Jered looked over at me and said, “Watch, Mom!” He tightened his hold on his daughter’s chubby little legs and said, “Bail, Lelia!”

Surely, I had heard him wrong. Nope! My precious grandbaby immediately fell backward through the air, arms and hands dangling loosely over her head, swinging her little body through her daddy’s firmly planted legs, laughing hysterically. My stomach fell and my mouth flew open as I watched her repeat this terrifying toddler version of bungee jumping. Not once did Lelia seem to be afraid. As far as I could tell, there was not the slightest hesitation on her part. I did not see an ounce of caution as she totally abandoned herself to the security of her father’s arms—creating a beautiful and profound illustration of childlike faith.

That picture of faith took on a whole new meaning as we replayed it over dinner. “I have to be careful,” Jered said. “Lelia will sometimes bail on me when I’m not expecting it.” (Yes, that statement did increase my prayer life.) I looked at my son and, as I had so many times over the years, marveled at his strength, thinking of the countless hours he has spent lifting weights, playing football, and now building and remodeling homes. Jered’s massive arms and shoulders are a testimony to his discipline and power. No wonder Lelia feels safe and secure in those arms.

I decided then and there that I want to be like Lelia. I want my faith in God to grow to the place where I can bail on God and totally abandon myself to my Father’s safe, strong arms, secure in the knowledge that He will catch me when I fall. I want to obey God without fear, trusting Him to be all I need. I want to depend on and experience God’s power and strength as I plunge into His plan for my life,

knowing that He is aware of every step I take, that He monitors every breath I breathe and sees every tear I cry.

It can be scary to trust God if we insist on fully understanding the step of faith He is asking us to take. Proverbs 3:5 assures us that we really can trust God from the bottom of our hearts—with every part of our lives. We tend to focus on what we can see and explain instead of choosing to focus on God and His promises. We need to grow and mature in Christ, but we also need to remain childlike in our faith.

Jered has never dropped Lelia. It probably has not even occurred to her that her father could or would drop her. Lelia's trust in her daddy is complete and whole. And I can assure you that Jered delights in that trust and will do everything he can to protect it. God is like that too. He celebrates even our tiniest step of faith and rejoices when we abandon ourselves to Him. How about you? Are you ready to bail into the arms of God?

Let's Pray

Father, I thank You for the strength and power of Your love. I praise You for Your faithfulness in my life. I long to believe You wholly, and I want to walk in a radical obedience to Your truth. Help me to choose faith over fear and trust over doubt. Teach me to rest in Your arms and trust Your heart, even when I don't understand Your process. I choose to place my faith in You. In Jesus's name, amen.



He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Sharon Jaynes

Today's Truth

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. (Psalm 91:11)

Friend to Friend

It was a beautiful crisp February morning when Steve and I traveled from our college town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to Charlotte to announce our engagement to Steve's family. The night before, God had decorated His creation with a dusting of snow and tipped the trees with shimmering icicles. All of nature looked as if it were dressed for a wedding ceremony. I was sure God had done this especially for me. Ice-laden trees bowed their branches all along the highway as if to sing, "Here comes the bride."

It was one of those Southern days that couldn't decide if it was the end of winter or the beginning of spring. As the day wore on, the bright sun warmed the earth to melt the snow and de-ice the trees. However, by nightfall, the temperature began to drop.

Steve and I headed back to school about seven o'clock that night. Just fifteen miles from the university, we approached a steep incline. We didn't realize that the downhill side of the road was covered with a sheet of ice.

As we began our descent, our car hit the thin veneer and began to spin out of control.

"Steve! We're going straight for that car," I cried as we headed directly into a set of oncoming headlights.

Seeing there was nothing he could do, Steve took his hands off the steering wheel and cried out, "Oh, God! Help us!"

One second we were headed directly toward an oncoming car. The next we were sitting off the side of the road in a ditch, facing in the opposite direction. Our bodies were pinned safely back into our seats. We did not have on seat belts.

"How did we miss that car?" I asked. "Where did it go? How did we get in this ditch?"

Shaken, Steve simply replied, "There's only one answer to those questions: God."

My mind immediately thought of Elisha and God's heavenly army of protecting angels. Elisha was an Old Testament prophet who warned Israel every time their nemesis, the king of Aram, was about to attack. The king was enraged and demanded to know the informant's identity. How did Israel always know what he was about to do before he did it?

"Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom," the king's officers told him (2 Kings 6:12). So the king sent out an army of men to capture him. Listen to what happened when Elisha's servant woke up the next morning and saw the king's vast army surrounding them.

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked.

“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (verses 15–17)

When God lifted the veil that separates the visible from the invisible, Elisha’s servant caught a glimpse of the heavenly host that stood armed and ready to protect them. And those same angels are protecting God’s children today.

In the natural scheme of things, there is no way Steve and I could have avoided a head-on collision with the other car that night. But I believe there was nothing “natural” about the incident. It was the *supernatural* protection of God that reached down from heaven, picked up our spinning car, and gently set us off the side of the road facing backward. If we had landed in the ditch facing forward, the sheer impact of the sudden stop would have ricocheted our bodies through the windshield. No, there was nothing natural about any of this.

When I was a little girl, I used to sing the endless verses of “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.” Lines like, “He’s got the itty-bitty babies in His hands, He’s got my momma and my papa in His hands, He’s got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,” and on it goes. On that frigid February night, over thirty years ago, I added a new verse for that song: “He’s got me and Steve in His hands.”

And here's a verse I'm singing today: "He's got you and me, sister, in His hands." I don't know of any other place I'd rather be. And in that you can place your trust.

Let's Pray

Dear Father, thank You for protecting me. Thank You for the angels that You assign to watch over me. I can be at peace today knowing that my very life is in Your hands. In Jesus's name, amen.



The Trust Fall

Jwen Smith

Today's Truth

When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. (Psalm 56:3, NLT)

Friend to Friend

Our arms were braided across each other's, and our hands were locked tightly. As the young girl stood on the tall tree stump above us, she looked over her shoulder and saw with her own eyes that our formation was tight, that we were ready for her. She heard with her ears that we would catch her, that we would not let her get hurt. Yet the fear that screamed in her head told her not to do it. Not to fall backward.

Her legs shook and her lips quivered. Other campers had gone before her, and her cabinmates had successfully caught each one. But this camper hesitated—allowing the looming possibilities of failure and pain to paralyze her from action. The risks just seemed too great.

She trembled.

We encouraged.

She cried.

We encouraged.

Then, finally, with determination in her heart, she took the plunge. She fell straight backward onto the safety net of our arms. We bent low to the ground, giving way to her fall, and caught her with cheers of excitement. She did it! As her trembling legs regained their confidence, she stood tall and beamed from ear to ear—realizing that she had faced her fear. Joy was felt from heart to heart as each of us rejoiced with her.

Mission accomplished!

Early in the day, we had trekked across the campgrounds to the trust-fall station as a group of counselors and campers who didn't have a shared experience among us; we were an unconnected strand of strangers. Now our wooded team-building time had come to an end, and we left the trust-fall station having bonded deeply as a group of new girlfriends prepared for a fresh journey of fun and adventure.

Each of us took turns at the trust fall that day. We all faced that same set of scary circumstances and were forced to work through our doubts, tremblings, and fears. As a result, we learned valuable lessons and strengthened our relationships with one another.

Since my days of being a camp counselor, I've faced many scary trust falls in life: financial trials, relationship strains, relocations, sick loved ones, and difficult family matters. I've trembled and I've cried. I've been paralyzed by what-ifs and whys. We all go through difficult seasons and trials, times when we want to *see* the invisible arms of the One who says He will catch us, times when we are afraid to fall into them.

Wherever we go and whatever we face, God is with us—yesterday, today, and forever. He bids us to “live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). He wants us to trust Him. He catches us when we trust fall, when we live by faith. And to encourage us along the way, He spurs us on by sending a cloud of witnesses who testify of His

faithfulness. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Today, whether you identify with the shaky young camper on the trust-fall stump or with the cabinmates who were filled with encouragement for her, God wants you to trust Him...right where you are. It might be scary. Tears might be shed. But God is faithful and can be trusted.

Like the psalmist, let's choose to say, “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?” (Psalm 56:3–4, NLT).

When we trust fall from our struggles into the faithful arms of God, we are freed from the fears that paralyze us. Trust Him today, friend. A great cloud of Girlfriends in God witnesses is cheering for you!

Let's Pray

Dear Lord, You are good, loving, and faithful—and You know exactly what I'm facing. Please take the burdens of my heart from me. Help me today to fall into a deeper place of trusting You. In Jesus's name I pray, amen.



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