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**Trust Betrayed: Penn State Scandal Shows Confidence Misplaced**

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**What Happened:**

On Nov. 9, 2011, Joe Paterno, head coach of the Penn State football team and the winningest coach in major college football history, was fired. The 84-year-old man had been caught in a sex abuse scandal that rocked the college and the country.

Jerry Sandusky, Paterno's longtime defensive coach, has been accused of sexually molesting at least eight boys during the past 17 years. All of the boys were a part of The Second Mile charity—an organization founded by Sandusky to help at-risk children. Paterno and other Penn State officials had learned of the alleged abuse, but while the university banned Sandusky from bringing children on campus, it never alerted the police to Sandusky's activities.

Sandusky abused not only these children, but his influence—the trust he was given regarding the young boys who turned to him and his organization for help. The Penn State structure protecting Sandusky betrayed the children. While the abuse was obviously horrendous, we can't lose sight of one of the story's saddest aspects: These kids placed their trust in people who weren't worth that trust.

“Coaches have the same obligations as all teachers,” wrote Paterno in his 1989 autobiography. “Except that we may have more moral and life-shaping influence over our players than anyone else outside of their families.”

It's not just coaches and parents who wield some serious influence and trust, of course. Anytime we're in relationship with someone, there's a level of influence and trust that's going to be there, too—and it works both ways. We trust and are influenced by others. Other people trust and are influenced by us. When that trust is betrayed—through a lie or misdeed, the hurt can be horrible.

We all know people are fallible. The only One who is guaranteed never to let us down—never betray our trust—is God. As Christians, we're called to be good examples of who He's all about, which means we're to be worthy of the trust people place in us.

**Talk About It:**

Who do you trust? What have they done to earn that trust?

Has someone ever broken your trust? What happened? How did it feel? Were you ever able to trust that person again? How long did it take?

Have you ever hurt the trust of someone else? Was it an accident? Were you ever able to fix things?

**What the Bible Says:**

“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song” (Ps. 28:7).

“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know Your name will trust in You, for You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You” (Ps. 9:9-10).

“Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God” (2 Cor. 3:4-5).