



You Are Your Father's Daughter

The Nurture Every Daughter Needs

—The Longing When It's Lost

By Dr. Earl R. Henslin

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The names of persons and certain details of case histories described in this book have been changed to protect the author's clients. In certain cases, composite case histories have been constructed from actual cases.

NOTE: This book is designed to provide information on the subject matter covered. It is provided with the understanding that the publisher and author are not engaged in rendering individualized professional services. These processes and questions are intended for group or individual study, and are not designed to be a substitute for one-to-one professional therapy when such help is necessary.

Visit: <http://DrHenslin.com> to learn more about Dr. Earl Henslin.

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

for the Revised Edition

The revised edition of *Your Are Your Father's Daughter* has a number of significant improvements. The entire text of the book was revised to improve the readability of the material. The author, Dr. Earl R. Henslin, wanted the book to be accessible to more readers.

At the end of each chapter, Dr. Henslin has added a section titled *A Closer Look*. It is an opportunity for readers to focus on the key ideas and principles developed in the chapter. At the chapter's end there is also an opportunity for *Personal Reflection*. Dr. Henslin has provided questions that will help readers apply the material to their lives.

In the revised editon, Dr. Henslin has added an appendix to provide more information and resources for readers who would like to further pursue this topic or expand their journey toward recovery. The appendix begins with *A Word on Brain Chemistry*. This insightful addition helps readers understand that some problems exist because of imbalances within the neurobiology of a person's brain. Therapy and counseling may prove ineffective for some until they receive appropriate medical treatment.

Suggestions for Group Study and Support provides practical insight about organizing and conducting a small group meeting. Dr. Henslin answers some common questions and concerns about a small group. He has provided a *Suggested Meeting Format*, and added an important section titled *Guidelines for Sharing* to keep the meetings safe and nurturing.

An appendix for *Recovery Resources* is also included. It lists a number of organizations and groups that provide twelve-step recovery support for a number of problems. A *Suggested Reading List* offers written resources and recommended reading for specific needs.

May these pages provide you a pathway toward healing or improving your own father-daughter relationships. May you begin a new journey toward recovery, wholeness, and hope. And may you understand that your healing journey is never a solitary road.. Your constant companion is also your Creator—the perfect Father.

DEDICATION

For Rachel, Amy, and Jill

Rachel, I respect and admire the young woman you are. I appreciate your honesty and directness with me. I admire the passion you have for life, and your adventuresome spirit. God has already used you so deeply in so many lives. May your life continue to be such a blessing and example of his love, power, and strength. Your sensitivity and creativity is far beyond what mine was at your age.

Amy, you are a precious and godly young woman. I do so admire your perceptiveness and ability to ask such penetrating questions. Such a talented young woman you are! You are so gifted academically, musically, and athletically. May you always guard carefully the sensitive and perceptive spirit that you have so tuned into the Lord. I so admire and respect your faith.

Jill, what a delight you are! Such a happy and joyful spirit. Your very being seems to radiate the life and passion of the heart of Christ. You are so bright and perceptive. You notice everything and take such delight in every bit of God's creation. I am so proud of you!

To each of you, I am sorry for the times I have failed you, for the times when I have not been there for you. May our heavenly Father guard, keep, and bless you. He has given each of you many gifts and abilities. May he provide you with a strong community of women with whom you can grow and flourish.

I love you,

Dad

Foreword by Dr. Charles Stanley

Every area of an adult woman's life is affected by the relationship she had, and continues to have, with her father. Past wounds can cause pain in the present. Many women do not understand what they missed or what they suffered. Many fathers do not understand what they neglected or the harm they inflicted.

Nothing—no amount of money or gifts—can replace the emotional and spiritual connection a father must have with his daughter. God can help us heal, forgive, and grow beyond past mistakes. Still, a woman has a place in her heart for her father. It may be wounded, wanting, or whole, but it is real, and it impacts her life today.

My own eyes and heart were opened by ***You are Your Father's Daughter***. I was instructed, inspired, and encouraged. It's rare to find a counselor who strives to search God's Word in such a compassionate way. Dr. Henslin finds our Lord's hope for daughters who take healing steps in the relationship with their fathers. Fathers discover new ways to build deep bonds with adult daughters. They learn the vital importance of their role with daughters who are little girls and teenagers.

You Are Your Father's Daughter will benefit every woman who reads it. Fathers and husbands will rediscover the role God intends for them. Daughters and fathers will find the tools to connect or reconnect lines of communication and love. Sometimes reconnection is impossible, but wounds heal and hearts mend. Our Father in heaven is full of love and unlimited in healing grace.

Charles Stanley

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Visit: <http://DrHenslin.com> for more information.

CHAPTER 1—The Gift of a Father

The Nurture Every Daughter Needs

Long ago, a mighty empire stretched from the banks of Pakistan’s Indus River to the seacoast nations of the Mediterranean. It dominated civilization from India to eastern Greece. It extended from the Aral and Caspian seas in the North to the deserts of North Africa. Unsurpassed in greatness and wealth, this massive empire was known as the Persian Empire, and Xerxes was its king.

To celebrate his reign, King Xerxes hosted a party unlike any other. For six months, noblemen, princes, military leaders, and officials of the empire joined in lavish celebration. The king displayed his power and wealth—the splendor of his kingdom. The festive capstone was a week-long banquet. The bar was open from morning till night, and every man drank his fill of wine.

On the seventh day, the king was full of wine, yet unsatisfied. He wanted something more—he wanted his queen. Vashti’s beauty was renown, and the king wanted to show off. She was one more prize to display—one more sign of the king’s glory.

Queen Vashti wanted no part of the king’s exhibition. She had been around her drunken husband and his princes before. She would not parade before the drunken assembly—she would not submit to the humiliation. Drunks do not affirm or encourage beautiful women. They gawk, act out their lust, and think only of themselves. So Vashti refused the king’s command.

What a furor her refusal raised! The king became enraged. He brought together the seven wisest and highest ranking noblemen of his empire. He asked for their counsel and advice. The men were disturbed that Queen Vashti had expressed her feelings. They feared that women throughout the empire would follow her example. “This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen’s conduct

will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way," they cautioned. "There will be no end of disrespect and discord."

A public divorce was the advised course of action. They would make an example of Queen Vashti. All women of the empire would learn from her pain. "Let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she," they advised. "Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

The king followed through with the plan. His anger was quenched, his nobles were pleased, and Vashti was forever banished from his presence. The message went throughout the land. Women were warned to listen to their husbands—or else!¹

The old Persian Empire was not an easy or safe place for women to live. A woman's outward beauty was a source of pleasure for men. Her inner person was insignificant. This is the world into which Esther was born.

Death took Esther's parents. An orphan girl had little chance of survival. Like Ruth and Naomi, Esther was without property or protection. Ruth had grain fields to glean—Esther had but one advantage. She was beautiful—even in childhood. But her asset was also a threat. Harems abounded, and Esther's beauty put her at great risk. Still another fact threatened her survival: she was a Jew.

Esther did survive. God gave her a gift that made all the difference in her life. God gave her Mordecai, a cousin who took her into his family. The Bible says, "Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died."²

What a powerful statement! What a word of hope! For Esther, it meant protection and provision—a family and a future. Mordecai reached out to Esther and brought her under his care and covering. He saved her from all the cruel possibilities that awaited her. He became her protector, her tutor, her mentor and guide. Mordecai became her dad.

Circumstances have changed. Women today are better off, but they are also still at risk. On the surface, women appear to have self-sufficiency and legal protection—things unavailable to Esther. But below the surface and beyond the light of public scrutiny, women face the same injustice that Esther feared.

One out of four women alive today will experience sexual assault in her lifetime. Despite the sexual revolution, women are objectified more than ever. This is evident in advertising, television programming, and contemporary art and literature. Many male/female relationships still lack the respect, dignity, and maturity that women need. A formal complaint or a lawsuit for sexual harassment has become a woman's painful recourse. Women today still need a loving father just as Esther did.

The Need for a Father

It is normal to need a father. Male and female both need a dad. It's how God wired us. Every human being wants to feel the presence of a loving father. It's natural to long for this close connection. We hunger for a father's support, understanding, and comfort. God made us with this hunger for a father—it's important. We see evidence of this throughout scripture.

The story of Jacob and Esau is a classic struggle for a father's approval.³ Jacob used extreme and deceptive measures to gain Isaac's blessing. Esau was a broken man when he realized that his father's blessing had been stolen from him.

This hunger for a father is seen in Joseph, one of Jacob's sons. Jealousy moved his brothers to cruel mistreatment. Joseph was ripped from home and family. Still, he prospered in his slavery and became second in authority to Egypt's pharaoh. He had all the power and wealth any person could want, still he longed to see his father's face.

Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for help. They did not recognize the man who controlled their fate. Joseph went to great lengths to break through his family's denial and ensure the safety he needed to reveal his identity. But when Joseph's oldest brother Judah

spoke of their father's love for his sons, Joseph's pain spilled out. His loud cries broke beyond his walls and found their way to the Pharaoh's household!

The murder of Abel was due to hunger for the heavenly Father's acceptance.⁵ Abel's offering of fatty meat from the firstborn of his flock received the favor and acceptance of his heavenly Father. Cain's offering of the fruit of the land did not. Cain responded to the rejection with rage not repentance. God told Cain how to bring an acceptable offering, but Cain could not rise above his anger and resentment. To quiet his pain, he killed his brother, who had been accepted by the Father.

The need to feel the presence and love of a father is foundational. A son needs the emotional and spiritual touch of his father's life. The men's movement taught us how to build and value an emotional bridge between father and son. And experience has taught us how the absence of this bridge leaves a man deeply wounded. A man, without this connection to his father, has an emptiness in his soul that longs to be filled. This hunger impacts every area of a man's life. Less is said about daughters, but women carry a similar wound.

The truth is that every human soul—both female and male—has space that needs to be filled through a deep relationship with a father. This is also true of the relationship with a mother, of course, but it is not our primary focus here.

The need for a father cannot be denied. Babies recognize the difference between their fathers and mothers by the time they are two or three months old. This is especially true of girls, who become attached to their fathers earlier than boys. Although both boys and girls attach to their mothers before they attach to their fathers, all babies need their fathers just as much as their mothers by the time they are eight months old.⁶

In the depths of her soul, a daughter truly needs her father. She needs him from infancy through adulthood. No matter what her age, she needs to feel that she is precious to him. She needs to feel his love, protection, encouragement, and sacrifice for her.

A daughter longs for her father's approval and affirmation. She seeks that recognition for every part of her life: her abilities, interests, accomplishments, and inner feelings. I have not met a woman, of any age, who does not want to hear her father say, "I'm proud of you." Nor have I met a woman who did not hunger for her father to put his arms around her and comfort her when she's hurting.

This fatherly connection and nurturing is not available to many daughters. Most fathers are not in touch with their own emotional and spiritual needs. For that reason, they find it hard to relate to the needs of others—especially a daughter. Many men have never learned how to give physical expression to their inner feelings of love and affection. Daughters are wounded when this important bond is weak or non-existent. Women carry that wound through all of life.

The hunger to heal that wound is strong. It often dictates the course of a daughter's life. It dictates how she views herself in the professional world and how she functions with men in the workplace. It dictates her intimate relationships with men, whether or not she will marry, the kind of man she will marry, and the course of her marriage. It dictates how she handles adversity in life, her response to failure, her pursuits of opportunities, her tendencies toward fear and worry, and her strength amid the physical and emotional threats of life in a dangerous culture.

An unhealed wound is a source of ever-present pain. And this father-wound is at the core of a woman's identity and personhood. Women seek a number of ways to ease the discomfort. It may be over-achievement, under-achievement, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual addictions, and codependency. Women also develop unrealistic expectations for the relationships that they have with men. A woman might fantasize about a knight in shining armor with a red Mercedes. He would be all-loving, all-caring, and able to rescue her from all her problems. She may have such a deep longing to be touched or held by a man that she seeks physical closeness with male authority figures. All of these responses, and more, come out of the heart of a wounded little girl. They are acts of a daughter who still seeks the love, affirmation, and approval that she never received from her father.

The Gift of the Father

Esther was fortunate. Mordecai took her into his family and raised her as his own daughter. Mordecai was a wise man. The conflict and cruelty he endured, as a Jew in captivity, taught him the ways of their world. He was not naive about the ever-present danger in which they lived. He gave Esther physical protection and care, but he knew she needed more. He played a very special role in her life, a role that every father can and needs to play.

Let's see how the story of Mordecai, King Xerxes, and Esther progresses: After a while, King Xerxes missed Queen Vashti. His servants and close officials were concerned. In a miserable fit, the king might remember who had suggested Vashti's banishment! So they proposed a search for a suitable replacement.

"Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king," they suggested. "Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

The king liked the idea. Soon the proclamation was heard throughout empire. This was serious business! No one dared to stand in the way of King Xerxes. "When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa. . . . Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem."

Esther was taken out of Mordecai's household, but she was not beyond his influence. "Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her."⁷

Mordecai had a father's heart! I admire his actions in response to Esther's new

situation. She was taken into King Xerxes' harem, and Mordecai stationed himself in the courtyard. Mordecai's love for Esther moved him to teach her how to survive in a dangerous culture. He had built a spiritual and emotional bridge to Esther's heart. Because of that connection, Mordecai was able to warn and advise her about the danger of disclosing her identity. That bridge also enabled Esther to trust Mordecai's wisdom and heed his counsel.

Esther was, at times, out of Mordecai's sight and protection, but she was never out of his mind or prayers. Day after day, he walked back and forth in the courtyard. He watched and waited for news. He inquired about her welfare and her needs. Mordecai didn't wait for her to cry out in need. He was involved, informed, available, and ready to offer whatever he had to give.

Mordecai shows us what it means to be a father to a daughter. Few women today will ever experience the gift that Esther received from this man. Instead of fathers who impart wisdom, we see fathers who inflict wounds. Instead of fathers who create safety, we see fathers who cause suffering. Instead of fathers who admonish the foolish, we see fathers who abandon the family.

A father like Mordecai is a life-long gift to a daughter. That kind of support and affirmation prepares a daughter for the development of her full potential in all areas of life. Psychologist Charles Scull describes in today's terms what the gift of the father means to a daughter:

A father is the first and often the longest connection a daughter will have with a man. The father-daughter bond (or lack of bond) shapes her future relationships . . . and influences how she moves out in the world.

If he encourages her efforts to achieve, inspires her budding self-confidence, and teaches her competency skills, she will more easily develop an authentic self-esteem. If he discourages her efforts, undermines her self-confidence, shames her body, or discounts her personal opinions, her self-esteem will be marred, and it may take many years for her

to learn to believe in herself.⁸

A father builds an emotional bridge to his daughter by learning how to be sensitive to his daughter's heart and being interested in what is important to her. Unfortunately, many fathers don't realize that it is important to pay attention to their daughters' interests. They may not know anything about their daughters' interests—much less take the effort to learn about them, encourage them, or participate in them.

Some well-meaning fathers try to correct or improve their daughters' efforts. They become critical rather than concerned. They fuel a competitive spirit rather than foster caring support. They note their daughters' accomplishments rather than recognize their daughters' affection. A daughter's interests come from deep within her heart. A father who does not recognize this will miss the opportunity to know and celebrate his daughter's life. And he will enlarge the wound she carries.

Fathers define masculinity for their daughters. A father's words, behaviors, and attitudes model manhood. A daughter learns something about all men from one man—her father. An abusive, manipulative, or controlling father may lead his daughter to feel that all men are supposed to be that way. A doting father, who spoils and pampers his daughter, may lead her to expect that “princess” treatment from all men. A needy or demanding father, who expects a daughter to take care of him, may cause her to see her role in life as a caretaker of men. In any of these cases, the daughter may grow up with unrealistic expectations of men and/or a distorted view of her place in the world of men. These misconceptions hinder her ability to survive and prosper.

The view of masculinity that a father projects influences how a daughter views God. The bridge a father builds to a daughter is physical, emotional, and spiritual. The health and strength of this connection plays a formative role in her spiritual life. In his relationship with his daughter, an earthly father mirrors the attributes of God the Father. He gives his daughter her first glimpse of her image and understanding of the heavenly Father.

Without an emotional bridge from her father, a daughter may not trust what he teaches her about life and about God. The wound and weakness in their relationship diminishes the power of his words. A daughter, who does not feel safe with her earthly father, may find it difficult to open her heart to her heavenly Father.

A strong emotional and spiritual bond between a father and his daughter provides a sense of security. A father's close and consistent connection serves to remind a daughter that God the Father is never far away. So the emotionally involved and present father offers an unfailing "God on earth" type of assurance during the best and worst of times. The sure presence of the earthly father and the heavenly Father establish a platform of security from which a daughter can venture into new territory and take risks.

The Difficulty of a Father

God's intended role for a father is a sobering responsibility. Most men are unprepared for the role. Some men grew up with the idea that "provider" was the primary job description of a father. A good father worked long and hard to meet his family's material needs. He went to the kids' games or performances when he could. He was firm, not fierce in his physical discipline. He made sure the kids went to church. Basics like these were considered to be the attributes of a good father.

Today life is different. The meaning of fatherhood has broadened. A father's job description is greater than we had assumed. Fathers are expected to meet not only financial needs, but emotional and spiritual needs as well. Fathers are confronted by expectations that seem foreign to them. Fathers are expected to be emotionally connected to their wives and children. They are expected to recover from their own dysfunctional family backgrounds. They are expected to deal with their own woundedness, codependency, and addictions. And they are expected to do this with the support of other men.

In addition to these expectations, men are told to exercise daily, improve their minds, participate in Bible studies, pray, read and memorize scripture, and more! The old job

description for a father was much easier than the new one. The responsibilities, expectations, and necessities of a father's life can be overwhelming. Men cannot hope to accomplish this on their own. They need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the support of other men. It will not be easy; still the father's job description must change. Today's sons and daughters need all the spiritual and emotional tools a father can give. They need every advantage to survive and thrive in a complex and dangerous world.

A father's greatest hindrance is his own emotional and spiritual need. He cannot connect to his children unless he is connected. The emotional and spiritual bridge established by his father determines his ability to connect with his children. Masculine emotion is learned primarily through relationship with the father.

A man, who missed the opportunity to connect and learn from his father, is not without hope. Healing begins as a man faces the pain and grief of his lost or ineffective relationship with his father. This emotional and spiritual process helps a father respond to his children on that same level. That is why I am such a strong advocate of recovery and healing for the father-wound in men. A father, who is in touch with his own woundedness, is able to relate to his daughter with sensitivity, compassion, and truth.

I have two older children and two younger children. I dearly love each of my children, yet I have a deeper and more intimate connection with the two younger ones. The difference is in me and in the maturity of my own recovery time. My recovery experience has enabled me to respond to my children on emotional and spiritual levels unavailable to me before.

My youngest daughter used to explode with excitement when Dad came home. The jingle of my keys in the front door sent her flying down the hall. Like the Town Crier she would yell, "Daddy's home!" I hugged, and she snuggled. With her head buried into my chest, she would say, "Daddy! My Daddy!" She would hold me tight and wait for me to respond. And I could respond and meet the need in her heart to be loved by her father. I can experience and respond to that connection between us more each day. Every day that I face and deal with my own recovery needs is a day of growth and greater emotional and

spiritual sensitivity.

Even with the help of personal recovery, it is no easy thing to father a daughter. The world of the daughter is different from the world of boys. Fathers know boys—it's familiar territory. Girls are a puzzle. Fathers prefer boys to girls by a four to one margin. Some men experience grief at the birth of a daughter rather than a son.⁹ Other men feel confusion. Many men are at a loss to know what to do with a girl. The helplessness grows as the girl ages, and the move into adolescence is the most difficult time.

A father's confusion and lack of knowledge wounds his daughter. Families with sons are less likely to divorce than families with daughters.¹⁰ Even with the family intact, a daughter may sense her father's discomfort or distance. The daughter assumes that she is in some way defective and unworthy of her father's attention and heart. Still, the daughter's need for an emotional and spiritual connection with her father is just as great as the son's need.

To make matters more difficult, men have few models of how a father can build an emotional bond with his daughter. This father-daughter connection is not common in our culture. My own father is now discovering the importance of this emotional connection. He admitted to my sister, "When you were growing up, I did not know how to relate to women." This is true of many men in my father's generation—and they were models for my generation.

As I became aware of these needs in myself, I shared my insights with my oldest daughter. I admitted to her that this father-daughter stuff was new to me. She said, "Well, Dad, you do a pretty good job anyway. You have your days, but you do a good job." That's the best a father can do. Take one step at a time—one day at a time, and discover the truth about his own emotional and spiritual life. And he can allow that discovery to open his heart to his daughter who needs him.

The Insufficiency of a Father

No father can be everything. The role God has ordained for fathers is not an easy one. It can be overwhelming. But God does not intend a father to be anything more than a father. A father can only meet the relational needs that a daughter has for a father. He cannot do what the mother needs to do. He cannot do what grandparents need to do. He cannot do what aunts and uncles need to do. He cannot do what the spiritual and professional mentors in his daughter's life need to do. He cannot do everything. No individual man or woman can meet every need a daughter has as she grows from infancy through adulthood.

For example, a father teaches his daughter a little bit of what it means to be feminine. But it is the mother who plays the vital role in the development of a daughter's feminine identity. A daughter also needs female and male mentors on her journey through adult life. These mentors offer the daughter strength and perspective that she could not gain from her father or her mother alone. A daughter always needs strong, supportive relationships with other women—friends to help her carry life's burdens.

The father has a unique role among all the other relationships in a daughter's life. He cannot be everything, but he can be a constant. He can be there no matter what turns his daughter's life takes. He can be available to listen to her heart and take an interest in her world. He can be alongside her as she discovers how to function in the world. He can acknowledge her unique blend of needs, interests, and abilities. He can keep his eyes open and prepare her to face potential pitfalls in her life and relationships. And he can be there to offer support and assurance when she reaches out to him.

This focus on the father's role does not minimize the role of the mother. A daughter needs a mother with spiritual strength, emotional connection, and active interest in the needs of her daughter's heart. A daughter is most blessed if she has a mother and a father who love the Lord, love each other, and are committed to a spiritual journey of healing here on earth. Both mother and father have a vital contribution to make to a daughter's life. It is especially important for fathers to realize that they can be a gift to their

daughters in the same way that Mordecai was a gift to Esther.

In my writing I use a number of terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers. I also put my own spin on some common terms. In this revision edition, I have added a section titled *A Closer Look* at the end of each chapter. It is not a glossary, but an aid to help readers understand and focus on key principles developed in the book. *A Closer Look* contains terms, concepts, and ideas that I do not want anyone to miss.

The strength of my personal experience comes from three important influences in my life. Like a strong rope with intertwined cords, three significant elements combine in my life. The first of those three cords is my personal, Christian faith and my confidence in the Bible as God's standard for life. The second is my professional education and clinical experience as a counselor. The third cord is my own personal recovery journey with the Twelve Steps which includes the support I have found within the recovery community. The combination of these influences affects my use of language and my understanding of the terms chosen for *A Closer Look*. But more importantly, these three influences enrich my life and increase my ability to help others.

Abuse—A simple understanding of abuse is the violation of a boundary. A controlling or manipulative parent or spouse causes abuse. Rage, volume, and physical intimidation may cause abuse. Disrespectful and demeaning language is abusive. Inappropriate touching or sexual contact with a child is abuse. Inappropriate emotional dependence upon a child is abusive. Unrealistic expectations placed upon a child can cause abuse. And of course, neglect of a child's needs is abusive.

Codependency—Care-taking, people pleasing, and unhealthy servitude or loyalty can be codependent behaviors. Codependency is an addiction to others, and it can take many forms. Some codependents help and “do” for others so that they can feel good about themselves. Their sense of self-worth comes from the value that others place upon them. They might work long hours and sacrifice themselves all for recognition or praise from the boss or the “biggies”. Others enmesh themselves in the lives of others through controlling, fixing, or enabling. They mistake dependence and neediness for love and

commitment. Codependents live their lives through the experience of others. But it takes it toll. Codependents are often resentful, angry, tired, and worn. They are the martyrs. Their thankless efforts never scratch their deepest itch—all the concern for others leaves them bankrupt, empty, and ill.

Recovery—Recovery is the journey toward healing that begins when we recognize that our lives are broken and beyond our ability to mend. The form that recovery takes will vary according to the individual—twelve steps, psycho-therapy, spiritual experience, mind and body, etc. In some cases, recovery begins in our late thirties and forties because unconscious physical and psychological processes urge us to seek health and a greater well-being. Our well-practiced coping strategies don't work as they once did. The pain of destructive relationships or lifestyle patterns intensifies and cries out for resolution. The physical impact of internal pain and tension begins to appear through illness or disease. Psychological and spiritual decay leads to physical breakdown. When the physical signs appear, we have a choice to make. We can continue in our denial and ignore the signs, or we can face the difficulties head on. In some cases, we are forced to make that choice—physical conditions threaten our life. The move toward spiritual and emotional healing, moves us toward physical healing as well. And the journey toward healing brings out our core self. The recovery process uncovers the true person inside. It releases gifts and unique potential.

The Father-daughter Connection (or “Bridge” or “Bond”)—An emotional and spiritual connection between a father and his daughter is a bond of feelings, values, and truth. A connected father is emotionally available to his daughter—in touch with his feelings, and open and responsive to hers. A connected father can express the affection he feels and the value he places on his daughter. A connected father is in touch with reality about himself and his daughter. This connection also offers an unfailing “God on earth” type of spiritual assurance and security during the best and worst of times. The sure connection and presence of the earthly father teaches the sure presence and availability of the heavenly Father. It establishes a platform of security from which a daughter can venture into new territory and take risks.

The Father-daughter Wound—Daughters are wounded when the important bond between father and daughter is weak or non-existent. A father's absence, abandonment, or abuse are often to blame. Women carry that wound through all of life.

1. In what ways is your father-daughter relationship different from the one that Mordecai and Esther shared?
2. What specific elements of Mordecai and Esther's father-daughter relationship would you most desire for yourself?
3. Through your life, when or where have you felt the deepest need for a father?
4. How have you sought to meet the needs that have not been met through your relationship with your father?
5. Take a few moments to honestly evaluate your relationship with your father. What comes to mind? Specifically thank God for the times your father has been a gift to you. If you have never known your father, thank God that he is the perfect Father.

NOTES:

About the Author



*Learn more about
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Dr. Earl R. Henslin is a licensed marriage, family, and child therapist. His Brea, California practice through Henslin and Associates focuses on marriage, family, and child counseling, and he conducts training sessions and seminars for professionals such as pastors, physicians, and therapists who work in these areas. He holds the doctor of clinical psychology degree from Rosemead Graduate School of Biola University, where he is a part-time instructor. He is a member of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and the Christian Association of Psychological Studies. Dr. Henslin is one the founders of Overcomers Outreach, a nonprofit ministry that assists local churches in establishing twelve-step support groups. Dr. Henslin networks closely with the Amen Clinic of Behavioral Medicine. He and his staff do assessments and evaluations for SPECT Brain Imaging Scans and follow-up care.

Henslin and Associates provides outpatient treatment and networks with different inpatient treatment facilities for the treatment of adults concerned with codependency, incest, alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, sexual addiction, men's issues, and other issues of dysfunctional families. A nationally acclaimed speaker, Dr. Henslin

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Other Books by Dr. Earl R. Henslin:

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The Cliff's Edge: 10 Principles to Restore Hope and Rebuild Family

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Inside A Cutter's Mind: Understanding and Helping Those Who Self-Injure

(co-author: Jerusha Clark and Dr. Earl Henslin)

Secrets of Your Family Tree

(co-author: Dave Carder, Dr. Earl Henslin, Dr. John Townsend, Dr. Henry Cloud,

Alice Brawand, M.A.)