

**FATHER, BROTHER, LOVER, FRIEND:
FINDING "THE ONE"**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – Father

Fiction: Delilah – Girl, Sister &...?
Intro on Fathers
Guys and Fathers
Girls and Fathers
God and Fathers
Hope...
 Body
 Heart
 Soul

Chapter 2 – Brother

Fiction: Delilah – Girl, Sister &...?
Intro on Brothers
Guys and Brothers
Girls and Brothers
God and Brothers
Hope...
 Body
 Heart
 Soul

Chapter 3 – Lover

Fiction: Delilah – Girl, Sister &...?
Intro on Lovers
Guys and Lovers
Girls and Lovers
God and Lovers
Hope...
 Body
 Heart
 Soul

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter 4 – Friend

Fiction: Delilah – Girl, Sister &...?

Intro on Friends

Guys and Friends

Girls and Friends

God and Friends

Hope...

Body

Heart

Soul

Chapter 5 – “The One”

Fiction: Delilah – Girl, Sister &...?

Intro on God

Guys and God

Girls and God

God and Christ

Hope...

Body

Heart

Soul

Finding: “The One”

Body

Heart

Soul

Fiction: Delilah – Girl, Sister &... ?

1 Father

At thirteen years old, Delilah was only just realizing she was the only girl in her household. It wasn't so much that she was suddenly missing a mother, but instead she was noticing the difference of having just a father. And she was noticing the difference between being a girl and being a sister to her two brothers.

Dad worked downtown at the city bus garage as a mechanic. He worked long, dirty hours – he always had, so that was nothing new. Chris was the oldest and well, probably the most tolerant of her brothers. He was 17 now and had always been the one to make sure she'd eaten, had a lunch for school, and wasn't picked on... by everyone except Alec. He still had free reign to abuse and harass her no matter what Chris or Dad said.

Alec, just turned 15 and even his sudden interest in girls – wanting to smell nice, and keep his hair combed, wearing the coolest clothes – still wasn't enough to encourage him to start thinking of his sister as a girl, instead of just a nuisance.

But Delilah was starting to notice. She had started to notice that not only was she a girl – as opposed to being a little sister – but that she was definitely not the kind of girl Alec seemed to be mooning over lately. And she wasn't sure if she was the type of girl she'd seen Chris being so polite to at the bus stop everyday. They obviously liked him, but he kept his nose to the books, hung out with his friends from school and didn't really seem to need a girlfriend like Alec suddenly did.

And then there was Dad. Delilah couldn't remember him ever having a girlfriend. And to top it off, she couldn't even imagine any girl of any type actually wanting to be his girlfriend. From what she could remember of her mother, it didn't seem like she'd thought he'd been very much of what a girl would have wanted in a husband either.



I could be wrong but I think I remember a line from an old song that says something like, “I want a gal, just like the gal that married dear old Dad.” And if that’s the case for men, shouldn’t it also be the case for women? Not necessarily. For most women, the guy we’re looking for, the guy we think we want, or the guy we end up with is either exactly the opposite of our father or he accomplishes whatever “Dear Old Dad” couldn’t or he fills a void that Daddy has left behind.

These three categories of “fatherly inspiration” (or lack thereof) lead us to be with all kinds of different men. In fact, the kind of relationship we have or do not have with our fathers is a basis for many other relationships we have in life as well, including our relationship with God. Primarily it establishes the way we look at ourselves as well as what kind of relationships we will have. It is the filter through which we look at this aspect of our lives and what kind of person we’ll be in all of our relationships. It might dictate what kind of student we’ll be, what kind of employee we’ll be, what kind of girlfriend or wife, what kind of mother and possibly even sexual preference. It can even dictate whether or not we will believe in God at all.

Once we have our own behavior determined by way of Daddy’s behavior, we then maneuver through our relationships based upon the various categories of “fatherly inspiration” I’ve just mentioned. Fathers are quite influential – even the absent ones. For example, a father who is absent might imprint upon his daughter that she is unworthy or unlovable. Then when she goes into a relationship feeling unlovable, and subconsciously selects a man who will also be absent, in order to change her emotional father (or the emotions left behind by her father) through the new guy, he’ll invariably confirm her self-perception of being unlovable when he too cannot be changed and is absentee.

Do you see the cycle of confusion and pain that can be caused by the behaviors of our fathers? And not all of it is negative, not all of it is purposeful, or evil, or malicious. Even in a loving, benign, supportive and affectionate relationship with a father, we can inadvertently acquire detrimental perceptions of self and a detrimental selection process in choosing a mate – or heck, even in just choosing a date!

It seems like this puts an awfully huge responsibility on our poor fathers! Some of them deserve it, some of them can handle it and

still others will slip through scrutiny unscathed. Either way, it does seem disproportionately unfair – especially since so much of it is not overt but subconscious. Exposing these truths however, is not just so we can brow-beat our fathers with the information. Instead it is to bring healing and growth not only to ourselves but in our relationships with others. The burden of change is on us.

And since you can't change what you don't know, let's start by getting to know the different kinds of influential fathers we all might have...

"Daddy Better"

Statistics tell us that more often than not, the woman whose father abused her will marry a man who will also abuse her. Now why would this be if we aren't actively looking for someone just like Dad? It's because subconsciously we want to be for the husband what we couldn't be for the father. It's not something we consciously choose – of course not! No more than being a child and choosing to get beaten. But it is as if we try to finally be worthy or good, or get the relationship we really wanted to have with our fathers through our husbands. The problem is we get the same relationship we had with our fathers when we subconsciously choose the same guy.

And so, if Dad was absent, we might choose a man who is also absent and then we try to change him and make him stay with us. We might bully him or guilt him, cling to him, suffocate him, manipulate him, coerce him or even entice him to stay with us.

I saw a woman at a Christian seminar once who was so needy that I wanted to create a diversion (mostly by shaking her and yelling "what is wrong with you?") and telling her husband to "run as fast as you can and don't look back!" Poor guy...

Initially when we first sat down I had overheard him agreeing with a joking comment against wives in general. Playfully I told him to leave her alone. But through the course of the event she could barely even leave him alone to watch the program. It was as if she was jealous of the attention he was giving to the speaker – the one we'd all come to see! She kept talking to him and touching him – rubbing his arm or

rubbing his back. She kept kissing him and holding his face towards hers, and if he didn't kiss her repeatedly when she demanded more kisses, she would smack him on the arm, pinch him and pout. He'd kiss her (with obvious frustration), and she'd give him a momentary break before launching in again. Even when he stood to praise the Lord and she raised her hands too, she kept one hand on his back. It made me think, how neglected and insecure was she, that she didn't even want her husband to "take" any of his affection and attention and give it to the Lord – the same God who had blessed her with a man who loved Him?

Good or bad, we cannot force our men to be what our fathers couldn't or change in themselves what Daddy couldn't (or wouldn't) change either.

"Daddy Different"

Sometimes it's better not to try and one-up Daddy with the upgraded version. Obviously, newer isn't always better. Some of us inherently realize this and we go for the exact opposite – we almost purposefully seek out someone who doesn't act like, think like, look like or even remotely remind us of our dads.

Sometimes this reaction is out of fear. If you've had an abusive, controlling or alcoholic father this kind of fear of repetition is probably a good thing.

Sometimes this reaction is out of rebellion. Maybe Dad wasn't so much controlling as he was strict or meticulously clean, or stiff and unaffectionate. By purposefully seeking out a man who is the exact opposite of one particular quality, we can become so focused on that one thing, that we miss so many other important deciding factors as to whether or not this is the guy for us.

Not only is this selection process unfair to us as women, it is also unfair to the unsuspecting guy who may have genuine, well-rounded feelings for the girl of his dreams, who happens to have only fallen for one single aspect of his being!

As for the girl – she may be trying to prove a point to her dad, or punish him for what he lacks. Neither will happen – especially since both father and daughter are unaware of this rift between them. All

that exists is that the daughter remains in emotional conflict with her father, and now is unhappy in her relationship because he suddenly is no longer "Mr. Right" when she starts noticing other aspects of his personality that she hadn't been previously focused on.

The attraction of opposites is no accident – not any more than actual magnetic attraction is an accident! So much of our mate selection is subconscious. We aren't taught how to choose a mate by our parents, we are taught by our peers who are just as confused as we are! And if we don't put any conscious thought to the matter, then our process is left to our subconscious desires, whims and fears.

I remember nearing college graduation and feeling at a loss regarding the direction of my life. I was a music major in school and was experiencing some racial biases in the music department. It was something I'd experienced before. Musically, my life outside of school was not shaping up to be very promising either. I reached a point where I was done with music – but the most outward expression of that was my specific and conscious decision not to date any more musicians!

In and of itself, that may have been a good idea. What was not necessarily a good result of that good idea was my new selection process for who I would date. I fell for the first non-musician who asked me out. I didn't ask that guy anything else about his likes or dislikes; how he treated his mother; where he hung out; what kind of car he drove; who his friends were or why they were dropping his friendship like a hot, moldy potato. "Are you a musician?" I'd asked. He chuckled and said no, he was applying for a job in a technologically advanced industry. But applying for the job and actually having the job (or any job at all) was a little technicality I didn't bother paying attention to.

That guy ended up having no direction, no motivation, delusions of grandeur and short-man's syndrome all in one frustrated, non-musician package. It was a frustration he managed to unleash on me and around me and because of me. Details, ladies – details! In fact, I once heard Oprah Winfrey say (regarding party planning) "love is in the details."