



## Foreword


Deep-O-Tionals, though recently published to be shared with the world, is over two decades old and was originally intended for an exclusive audience. That's right, Mesu first shared these devotional studies back in the 1990's with an email subscriber list of a hundred or so folks mostly comprised of family and friends. The reason I share this history is to help give context to the deeply personal nature of what you are about to read. The places, events, and people described here are indeed from a bygone era; however, the messages themselves of how God's Word impacted Mesu's life then are timeless. In fact, since becoming a renowned Biblical novelist, Mesu is often asked by her readers, "How did you get your start writing?" or "How do you infuse your fiction writing with such truthful depth?" or "From where do you get your story inspiration?" The answers to all these questions and many more lie within these pages!


Some may be wondering about the strange name—*Deep-O-Tionals*. Hopefully, the subtitle—*Devotions with Depth*—helps somewhat. But perhaps it would be good to share that as a young mother of two elementary-aged daughters, Mesu had to work hard to find time to get her heart and mind set for the day. She knew she needed God's help, and she knew that God's Word was key to such pursuit. She often felt torn between the desire to do an in-depth Bible study and the reality of only having a brief time to spend in "devotions"—her daily quiet time with Jesus. So, she developed a systematic approach over the years that combined journaling, Bible study, and prayer—all in 15 minutes a day!

There are four parts to the daily studies. Each section is marked by a symbol that indicates the emphasis for that portion of the study. They are as follows:

 **STORY:** The introductory paragraphs seek to hook the reader with real life experiences that "touch the heart."

 **SCRIPTURE:** The Bible passages with insights are shared to engage the student and "teach the mind."

 **SPIRIT:** The prayers shared invite the presence of God into the devotee to "transform the life."

 **BONUS MATERIAL:** The last section is extra content that helps "Sheep Going Deep."

Finally, a brief note about the Biblical passages contained herein. From the beginning, Mesu was committed to including the complete Biblical text for each daily entry. Over the years she has used NIV, ESV, and several other translations in her personal study. In this edition of *Deep-O-Tionals*, we used World English Bible. The reason is simple: this is a public domain version of Scripture that allows for the full text of each Biblical book without copyright restrictions. Of course, you may want to use your preferred translation to accompany your deep dive into this study!

Also, I want you to know that what you experience within these pages is authentic Mesu. She laughs, cries, and cusses (not too much!) her way through this tumultuous life. I invite you now to read with excitement and expectancy that the same God who guides Mesu with His strong and steady hand calls us all to dive deep into life with Him!

Dr. Roy A. Andrews (aka—"Author's Husband")

Day 1

Genesis 1:1

## THE CENTRAL THEME



Every sentence, paragraph, report, or story must have a central theme or topic—a golden thread that weaves together the information into a lovely tapestry. The choosing of that golden thread is not for the faint of heart—it’s the key to good story telling. For example, one year our family embarked on an incredible cruise adventure. My challenge now is to decide which theme to weave through my story so you can enjoy it to the utmost. Should I simply list the ports of call? Let’s see, we started in Auckland, New Zealand, on December 28 and proceeded each day to a different city in that country: Tauranga, Napier, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. The final day we sailed through Fjordland’s Dusky Sound, Doubtful Sound, and Milford Sound. Hmmmm. That account seemed rather boring, didn’t it? And our cruise was anything but boring.

So let’s try another theme. How about all that went wrong with our trip? We missed the first five days of the cruise—one of those days because of bad weather, the other four due to (at best) unhelpful (and at worst) incompetent folks at our cruise line. We were then stranded in Auckland’s airport for more than three hours because Royal Caribbean’s rep never showed up to meet us. When we finally got on the ship, a driving rain caused us to miss our first port altogether. The food was terrible—no lobster tails served the entire cruise. Four of the six ports were a thirty-to-forty minute drive inland, and the cruise line shuttle buses were outrageously priced.

Well, that theme is worse than boring—it’s ungrateful and depressing! So let’s try a happy theme. We arrived in Auckland a day before the ship docked and stayed at a fabulous five-star hotel. Our girls base jumped from the Auckland Sky Tower (the highest building in the southern hemisphere) and lived to laugh about it! We ate dinner each night with three wonderful couples: one Russian/Canadian, one Australian, and one Israeli, who became dear friends. Roy won the ship’s ping-pong tournament (and got a gold medal) on his birthday! New Year’s Eve came twice—once in New Zealand time and again eighteen hours later as we watched the ball drop in New York. We caught a glimpse of Sydney’s harbor before being whisked away to the airport. And most importantly, we spent nine glorious, restful, uninterrupted days with our adult daughters and the precious parents-of-our-hearts in a fabulous part of the world we’d never seen before. Doesn’t that theme sound better?

And I could choose other themes and tell you much, much more, but I had to just hit the highlights. And so did the writers of Scripture. Those who wrote God’s Word wrote with one theme in mind—God—and then they hit the highlights. As I read the introduction to Genesis in Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, it occurred to me that the reason Genesis reads like Swiss cheese (it has lots of holes—come on, keep up!) is because the author only included information that was central to the theme of God. All those questions like, Who did Cain and Abel marry? Where do dinosaurs fit in? Where exactly was the Garden of Eden? Who were the Nephilim? don’t really matter in the central theme of the story about *God*. So, the author left those details out! So move on. Get past it. Enjoy the story he DID write...



**Gen. 1:1a** — “In the beginning, God created...”

- Right there it is. The author, probably Moses, tells us the theme of his Book. God. As Eugene Peterson said in *The Message*, “First God...If we don’t have a sense of the primacy of God, we will never get it right, get life right, get *our* lives right. Not God in the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at center and circumference; God first and last; God, God, God. Genesis pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled.”

Genesis is all about God because our lives are to be all about God. There was nothing before God, and everything after Him, He created. After Creation, we find God at the center of every reported incident, every life, every struggle, every victory.

**Gen. 1:1b** — “...the heavens and the earth.”

- Do you get a little squeamish when people talk about fortune telling and spiritual forces in the dark world? Let this verse calm all your fears. God is the ultimate *Creator*. Without His creative power, nothing would exist. In heaven above or on this earth or under the earth—our God reigns. He created everything human eyes have seen as well as the science not yet uncovered. He created the physical world that we taste, touch, see, hear, and smell; just as He created the metaphysical world that is beyond our senses. But let there be no mistake: There is one God, and He reigns over His Creation—the heavens and the earth.



- Lord, I have a tendency to make everything about ME, including the Bible. I want it to explain the questions *I* have, to solve problems *I’m* enduring. Please help me to read Your Word as a story about YOU, as a way to discover Your character and a bridge to cross into new territory in our relationship together.
- Lord, as I have come to know you as my Savior over the years, You’ve become my Friend and my Comforter. It’s been a blessing to know You more intimately each day, but with that intimacy comes a level of familiarity that threatens to diminish my awe of Your power. As I read Your Story, reawaken my awe at Your power and glory.



**John 1:1-2** — “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”

- We’ll see in Genesis 1 that God spoke Creation into being, and the Apostle John tells us that Jesus was that creative portion of the Trinity present at Creation.

**John 1:10** — “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world didn’t recognize him.”

- I think this is one of the saddest verses in the New Testament. Look at the Jewish leaders as the Gospel writers describe them. Some were devout and committed to the Old Testament Scriptures. They’d convinced themselves that they were following the Law—the only “Bible” they had at the time—to the “nth” degree. Yet they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah when He came to earth. It was largely the uneducated, needy, ordinary people who followed Jesus.

- What does this say to you about how we should *watch for God* in our world?
- If God's Word is important enough for Him to have preserved its accuracy for thousands of years, how important is it to read it *rightly*? What does it mean to read God's Word *rightly*?