



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 fifteen 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 37:1-11

TMI



Research has uncovered a serious disease that affects one out of three individuals. It's abbreviation is TMI, but you may know it as, "Too-much-eous Information-eous." (Okay, just so we're clear—I'm making all this up.) The symptoms of Too-much-eous Information-eous (TMI) are easy to recognize. The TMI carrier shares more information than his/her hearers need to know, should know, or even *want* to know. A TMI carrier talks long after his/her listeners have stopped listening. TMI can be contagious when an otherwise discreet or tactful individual endures repeated exposure to a TMI sufferer.

To protect ourselves from this modern epidemic, we have a powerful yet simple weapon at our disposal, a single question posed to anyone you suspect might suffer from TMI. Simply make good eye contact and ask, "If you were to describe yourself as a punctuation mark, what would you be?" If the person answers, "Exclamation point, period, or question mark," you may safely pursue a healthy conversation. However, if the individual answers, "semi-colon, comma, or (heaven help us) ellipsis—a triple dot at the end of a sentence," RUN! You have encountered a TMI carrier, and your social graces may be in grave danger!

If you believe you may have already been infected with the TMI germ, perform these simple tests at your next social gathering: #1) If you don't get invited to a social gathering, you are probably a carrier; #2) If you go to a party, and people's eyes glaze over the moment you begin speaking, you may be a carrier; or #3) If you go to a party, and they ask you to refill the food trays and punch bowl—and you've never met the host/hostess—you may be a carrier.

My advice to you, if you have already been infected by the TMI germ, is to end every story with, "And then I found five dollars." At least then all your stories will have a happy ending! Our biblical example of a TMI carrier: Joseph, Jacob's eleventh son....



Gen. 37:1-2 — "Jacob lived in the land of his father's travels, in the land of Canaan. This is the history of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being **seventeen** years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph **brought an evil report of them to their father**" (**emphasis added**).

- You would hope that by age seventeen, Joseph would have found more creative ways than tattling to solve problems. Granted, some instances require the intervention of a mediator; however, could Joseph's tattling have been avoided with a more tactful attempt at diplomacy? Joseph's runaway tongue shares TMI with others, building walls where a little wisdom might have built bridges. Too often, even adults are guilty of tattling in order to gain support for their "side" of an issue.

Gen. 37:3-4 — "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a tunic of many colors. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him, and couldn't speak peaceably to him."

- It seems Joseph wasn't the only one suffering from TMI. Jacob, too, seemed to share his favoritism too freely. Rather than recognizing the sin of dividing his household, Jacob flaunted his dysfunction by draping Joseph in the richly ornamented proof of his fatherly love. It was TMI and became salt in the wounded hearts of his other sons.

Gen. 37:5-8 — “Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him all the more. He said to them, ‘Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around, and bowed down to my sheaf.’ His brothers asked him, ‘Will you indeed reign over us? Will you indeed have dominion over us?’ They hated him all the more **for his dreams and for his words**” (**emphasis added**).

- Joseph's brothers hated him for two reasons—one was beyond Joseph's control, the other was TMI. Joseph's dream was a subconscious response initiated by God, foretelling a future event that the Lord would indeed bring to pass. However, Joseph's mistake was sharing his spiritual insights with folks who could not/would not/did not appreciate hearing about Joseph's heavenly encounter. We must choose carefully those with whom we share God's work in our lives.

Gen. 37:9-11 — “He dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, ‘Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me.’ He **told it to his father and to his brothers**. His father rebuked him, and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will **I and your mother** and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to the earth before you?’ His brothers envied him, but his father **kept this saying in mind**” (**emphasis added**).

- Okay, the first dream-share we can chalk up to an “oops” for silly young Joseph. But when the kid adds fuel to his brothers' already white-hot flames of hatred, we've just got to shake our heads and say, “Yo, dude! TMI!” Since he included his father in this second explanation, I'm wondering if he thought he might get Jacob's approval.... Oops, miscalculation. I find it interesting that Jacob asks if Joseph's *mother* and he will come and bow down—Rachel is dead. Jacob chastises Joseph, but Scripture says that Jacob “kept this saying in mind.” Perhaps Jacob knew this impulsive, extravagant son, who has a severe case of TMI, has also been called by God for a special purpose. I find great comfort in that....



- ✓ Lord, help me to exhaust every avenue of reconciliation before I share an issue with another. Forgive me those times my emotions seek out support in a situation that I should have kept between me and an offending brother or sister. Show me that Your approval is enough to keep TMI to myself.
- ✓ Lord, search my heart. Is there something in my life that is displeasing to You and hurtful to others? Am I, as a wife, mother, or friend inflicting pain on those around me by flaunting any part of my life? On the other hand, help me forgive those who inadvertently (or purposefully) display their blessing like a trophy and arouse my envy. Forgive my covetous heart, that I might enjoy the complete contentment only You can give.

- ✓ Lord, help me choose wisely those to whom I confide my spiritual treasures. Teach me to discern which truths are to be shared only with You and which can be shared with friends who are like-minded in Christ.
- ✓ Lord, I see the faults in Joseph and Jacob—and many of the Bible characters—and they mirror so many of my own shortcomings. Having battled TMI all my life, it continues to plague me from time to time. Can you still use me, Lord? Even though I say the wrong thing at the wrong time? Even though I tell more than anyone needs to know? I trust Your power and wisdom to be greater than my weakness and flaws. Let it be so, Father. Let it be so.



Genesis 42:3-9 — “Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob didn’t send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with his brothers; for he said, ‘Lest perhaps harm happen to him.’ The sons of Israel came to buy among those who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. Joseph was the governor over the land. It was he who sold to all the people of the land. Joseph’s brothers came, and **bowed themselves down to him with their faces to the earth**. Joseph saw his brothers, and **he recognized them**, but acted like a stranger to them, and spoke roughly with them. He said to them, ‘Where did you come from?’ They said, ‘From the land of Canaan, to buy food.’ Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn’t recognize him. **Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed about them**, and said to them, ‘**You are spies!** You have come to see the nakedness of the land’” (**emphasis added**).

- Joseph was about seventeen when he was sold into slavery. He was about thirty when he entered Pharaoh’s service and between the ages of forty and forty-two when his brothers came from Canaan to buy grain. Throughout these twenty-five years of hard knocks, Joseph seems to have been cured of his TMI disease.
- What cures people of offering TMI in social situations? In work situations? In church situations? In family situations? Joseph was deceitful with his brothers here. Is there a difference between being deceitful and holding back information? Where is the line of integrity between the two?