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## Deal's "Daily encouragement for the smart stepfamily" (book review)

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# Book Reviews

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Deal, R. L. (2018). *Daily encouragement for the smart stepfamily*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers. 378 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9780764230479

Ron L. Deal is an author, public speaker and licensed marriage and family therapist. Considered a leading author in the U.S. on blended families, Deal is a consulting editor for the *Smart Stepfamily Series* which includes titles such as *The Smart Stepfamily*, and *Dating as a Single Parent*, amongst others. Deal collaborated on this title with award winning author Dianne Neal Mathews. Mathews is a well-known writer and has authored four devotional books including the Selah award winner, *Designed for Devotion: A 365-day journey from Genesis to Revelation*.

*Daily Encouragement for the Smart Stepfamily* is a one-year daily devotional which provides guidance at a glance. Each daily dose of encouragement is laid out on one page and includes a short prayer for the reader to reflect on a central topic. These readings are aimed at assisting blended families navigate the myriad of issues and trials that can occur every day. Deal explores topics such as parenting, step-parenting, forgiveness, coping with loss, bonding with children, and relationship building. There are also readings which focus on specialty days and holidays such as Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Father's Day and Christmas.

As any parent knows, modern living can be demanding and often takes a toll on both the individual and the family. Taking time out of a busy schedule to read a book can be an enormous challenge, however, what Deal has provided is a daily resource that can be accessed quickly and absorbed as a snapshot of advice. Each reading is brief, informal and focuses clearly on the topic, while the short prayer reinforces the central message and gives ample space for reflection. The author's objective for this book is for the reader to peruse the message, vocalize the prayer and then try to apply one element or insight from the reading into their daily life, helping them re-orientate their thought process.

With an increase in the number of blended families, this title provides moments of inspiration and nuggets of wisdom that would benefit any blended family member.

Each message can be used for discussion and contemplation within the family unit. Deal has provided an honest and down to earth book that meets the challenges and pace of modern life. This book is ideally suited to the general reader, blended family member, along with counsellors or facilitators who may find it useful as a recommendable resource.

**Reviewer**

Elizabeth A. Nolan, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary