

Best Deals of the Season For Moms with Young Kids

Out of Time

by Nicole Whitacre

The woman who wrote to the Washington Post advice columnist, Carolyn Hax, wanted to know why her friend, a new mom, no longer had time for her. Ms. Hax's response--though not too gracious--was dead-on-accurate in its portrayal of the life of a mom with young kids:

“When you have young kids, your typical day is: constant attention, from getting them out of bed, fed, clean, dressed; to keeping them out of harm's way; to answering their coos, cries, questions; to having two arms and carrying one kid, one set of car keys, and supplies for even the quickest trips, including the latest-to-be-declared-essential piece of molded plastic gear; to keeping them from unshelving books at the library; to enforcing rest times; to staying one step ahead of them lest they get too hungry, tired or bored, any one of which produces the kind of checkout-line screaming that gets the checkout line shaking its head.

It's constant vigilance, constant touch, constant use of your voice, constant relegation of your needs to the second tier.

It's doing all this while concurrently teaching virtually everything -- language, manners, safety, resourcefulness, discipline, curiosity, creativity. Empathy. Everything.

Or, as Ms. Hax puts it, “It's needing 45 minutes to do what takes others 15.”

So how does the mom with young kids make the best use of her time when she doesn't feel like she has any time?

We'll look at the best deals for moms (and yes, there are some!) this week.

(HT: Boundless)

Gospel Food

by Kristin Chesemore

My oldest son Andrew turned nine last month. It seems like only yesterday when I took that pregnancy test which told me, with those 2 pink lines, that I was going to be a mother for the very first time.

Even though it was almost ten years ago now, I still clearly remember the first three months of my pregnancy with him. I remember what food I craved (cheese) and what food I detested (chicken). I remember talking about food, dreaming about food, planning my food. I even had a list of specific restaurants I needed to visit. Ruby Tuesdays and (coincidentally) Andrew's, a diner near my work, topped the list. My body was telling me something: I needed food in order to care for and nourish the little one growing inside me.

The gospel is to our soul what food is to our body. Our souls need the gospel and we don't just need it once a month or once a week, or even once a day. We need it constantly--breakfast, lunch and dinner and in between.

We need to be constantly reminding ourselves of these amazing truths: that God sent His only Son to earth, to live a perfect life and die in our place, paying the price of all of our sins so that we might receive salvation. We are justified, not because of anything we have done or will ever do, but through our Savior's blood, shed at Calvary.

That's wonderful truth, you may be thinking, but I thought you were going to give me time-saving tips. Instead you are telling me that even though I can't remember where I put the keys or what day of the week it is, I've got to remember the gospel too!

Trust me, I understand. I've been there. But preaching the gospel to yourself is not another item on your to-do list, any more than eating is. The gospel is the fuel, the source of power, strength, peace and hope that will get us moms with young kids through today, tomorrow, and this crazy overwhelming season of our lives.

Without a steady diet of gospel truth our souls will shrivel and our strength will wane; but a steady diet of gospel truth will give us power to persevere, even in the most tiring of times.

But how do we find the time to preach the gospel to ourselves? Tomorrow we'll suggest a few ideas.

The Gospel for Busy Moms

by Nicole Whitacre

How do busy moms preach the gospel to themselves with the constant demands of caring for young children? How do we find time to meditate on the gospel when we need 45 minutes to do what it takes others 15?

Here are a few suggestions (nothing new here!) but we hope they give you some ways to get started (or re-started)!

Six Ideas for Preaching the Gospel to Yourself (for busy moms)

1. Take 15 minutes a day to read and re-read chapters from books on the gospel. *The Discipline of Grace* and *The Gospel for Real Life* by Jerry Bridges, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* by John Piper, *Living the Cross Centered Life* by Dad, and books by Charles Spurgeon--all are great places to start.
2. Listen to Scripture throughout the day.
3. Listen to sermons online from your local church and biblical teachers. Even if it takes you a week to get through one sermon, you'll benefit from the little bit you hear each day.
4. Memorize gospel Scriptures and gospel truths.
5. Write one gospel Scripture on a note card and post it where you'll see it often or carry it in your pocket for review throughout the day.
6. Listen to gospel-centered music.

Prize Your Husband

by Carolyn Mahaney

(The following is adapted from *Feminine Appeal: Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother*)

The first great deal for moms with young kids is to preach the gospel to yourself. Prizing your husband is the second way to make the best use of your time. Here's one woman's story of how she came to this realization:

Michelle poured her life and energy into her two small children. However, the demands and joys of motherhood crowded out her love for her husband. Friendships and service in the church even took precedence over her relationship with Peter.

They didn't have any major problems, but their marriage certainly wasn't exciting anymore. Intimate communication and even daily expressions of affection had dwindled. After nine years of marriage, their relationship more closely resembled an amiable business partnership. Michelle was so busy raising her daughters, she didn't even notice.

Michelle had ceased to prize her husband. There was a time when Peter was the most important person in her life, but over time her children and friends had become more significant. However, according to Scripture, these are faulty priorities.

The Bible makes it very clear that after our relationship with God, our relationship with our husband is to be our highest priority (Gen 2:18, 1 Cor. 11:8-9, Tit. 2:3-5). We were created to be our husband's helper, not our children's mother.

Certainly we are to love, care for, and nurture our children, but this love is to flow out of a lifestyle that is first and foremost committed to helping our husbands. Our husbands should always remain first in our hearts and in our care.

Above All Others

by Carolyn Mahaney

(The following is adapted from *Feminine Appeal: Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother*)

For moms of young children, the demands of motherhood can often—sadly—take first priority over her marriage.

But one of the most loving things we can do for our children is to prize our husbands. It provides a wonderful security in their lives, and it presents a biblical model for them and their future marriages. We want our daughters to prize their future husbands; and for our sons, we want them to find wives who will prize them.

Last week, we left Michelle so busy raising her daughters that she had ceased to prize her husband. Michelle was unaware that she was putting

her children before her husband until several faithful friends from church brought it to her attention. “It was like waking up,” she said, “I was blind to it.”

Michelle immediately began to make changes. She started by praying each day that God would give her greater love for Peter. But she didn’t stop there. She began to express affection in creative ways—through cards and letters. She took time to think about things that would bless Peter. She sought his opinion first instead of going to her friends. In short, she made her relationship with her husband her highest priority.

Her actions had a tangible effect. As a couple they began to pursue interests and activities that didn’t involve the children. “Things went so well,” Peter said, “that we began to look for more opportunities to steal away together and have fun and enjoy each other.” For their anniversary they spent a weekend alone. “The most enjoyable part was simply enjoying one another and our new-found romance. We had a blast!”

Let’s heed Scripture’s counsel and follow Michelle’s example. We should do whatever it takes to let our husbands know that we prize them above all others.

Shaping and Shepherding

by Carolyn Mahaney

Scripture does not leave us to guess about the “best deals” for parents. In every season of our children’s lives—beginning when they are very young—we are to make training them up in the discipline of the Lord our primary aim (Eph. 6:1-4).

This is a tremendous task, and far too important a topic to sufficiently cover in this series. Instead, we would encourage—no—strongly encourage you to do some study on your own. We want to recommend our four favorite books on child-training, along with a few choice excerpts.

Carolyn’s Pick: *The Shaping of a Christian Family* by Elisabeth Elliot

Part memoir, part parenting advice, this book not only gives simple, biblical advice for child-rearing, but a beautiful picture of a godly, loving home. Elisabeth Elliot’s parents raised six children to serve God, and she weaves their wise counsel throughout the book. Here are a few thoughts to consider:

“Training must come before teaching. [Teaching] is impossible unless the children cooperate. And they don’t cooperate unless they are disciplined from their earliest days. This discipline lays the groundwork for teaching.”
Katherine Howard (Elisabeth Elliot’s mother)

“The trouble with so many parents is that they do not begin early enough to insist on obedience, telling the truth, and respect for parents; and unfortunately many do not behave in the home in ways that inspire respect. Love, kindness, cheerfulness, and good times should abound in every Christian home, but these are stifled where there is disobedience, disrespect, and where the children’s will dominates. Parents are God’s representatives in the home and, like Him, they should keep the right balance between Law and grace.” *Philip Howard* (Elisabeth Elliot’s father)

“Called to be a mother, entrusted with the holy task of cooperating with God in shaping the destinies of six people, she knew it was too heavy a burden to carry alone. She did not try. She went to Him whose name is Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father. She asked His help.” *Elisabeth Elliot* (describing her mother’s faith)

Nicole’s Pick: *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* by Tedd Tripp

Elisabeth Elliot recommends this book for its “remarkably clear, biblical, and practical teaching.” I keep it in the basket beside my quiet-time chair and refer back to it often. *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* lays a biblical foundation for parenting and builds on that with biblical methods and training objectives and procedures for each stage of your child’s life. It is gospel-centered and infused with gospel-hope. Here are a few quotes: “You must regard parenting as one of your most important tasks while you have children at home. This is your calling...There is nothing more important. You have only a brief season of life to invest yourself in this task. You have only one opportunity to do it. You cannot go back and do it over.

You live in a culture in which there are opportunities for you to do things unheard of in history. You are presented daily with scores of opportunities. There is more than you could ever do. [But] to do this job of parenting well, it must be a primary task. It is your primary calling.”

“The child trained in biblical obedience is better able to understand the gospel. The power and grace of the gospel is most deeply understood, not by those who never face their biblical duties, but by those who do.”

Heart-Work and a Holy Calling

by Carolyn Mahaney

Janelle's Pick: *Don't Make Me Count to Three* by Ginger Plowman

The subtitle of this book, “A mom’s look at heart-oriented discipline” is the perfect description of why this is one of my favs when it comes to child-training. Ginger Plowman combines her witty writing style with the truth of God’s Word to help moms learn how to use Scripture as the basis for the training and discipline of their little ones. She has packed the book full of specific Scripture references and helpful advice on how to come alongside and help our kiddos see the sin in their hearts and their need for a Savior. Some quotes to get ya started...

“God’s Word has plenty to say to parents if we diligently read it, apply it, and reap its fruit. Truly, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2Pet. 1:3).”

“If we are to really help our children, we must work backward from the behavior to the heart. We must be concerned with the attitudes of the heart that drive his behavior. We do this by communicating with our children in such a way that they are caused to not only understand a Christ-like attitude, but that they learn how to flesh it out in their lives.”

“When you help your child to understand what is in his heart, you are teaching him to evaluate his own motives, which will help to equip him for his walk with Christ as he grows into an adult.”

Kristin's Pick: *The Duties of Parents* by J.C. Ryle

In this sobering, yet inspiring classic, Bishop Ryle calls us to consider from Scripture our holy calling as parents to “train up a child in the way he should go.” He provides us with 17 helpful “hints” on parenting that simply “ought not be lightly set aside.” Here are a few excerpts to whet your appetite:

"Train with this thought continually before your eyes: The soul of your child is the first thing to be considered. In every step that you take about them, in every plan and scheme and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, 'How will this affect their souls?'"

"Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea 'it is a little one.' There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little

weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone and they will soon be great."

J.C. Ryle encourages us to: "Train well for this life, and train well for the life to come; train well for earth and train well for heaven; train them for God, for Christ, and for eternity."

Training Before Teaching

by Kristin Chesemore

On Tuesday, my mom quoted Elisabeth Elliot's mom: "Training must come before teaching. [Teaching] is impossible unless the children cooperate. And they don't cooperate unless they are disciplined from their earliest days. This discipline lays the groundwork for teaching."

Several years ago, Mom wrote a post illustrating this truth. I'm re-posting it today as a reminder for all of us moms. Let's make the best use of our time to diligently train our children.

Gateway for Knowledge

by Carolyn Mahaney

Last Thursday night occasioned another one of my husband's surprises. He's provided a gazillion of them for me through the years. He simply told me what time to be ready and how to dress. This time my surprise was dinner at a homey, rustic restaurant followed by the play "The Miracle Worker" at a nearby theatre. It was a wonderful evening.

And if you will indulge me I'd like to say a word to my husband. (He is in Sun Valley, California at present, due to being the guest speaker at Grace Community Church this past weekend.). CJ, I hope you read this today because I simply want to tell you again how grateful I am to be your wife. Thank you for thirty years of devoted, passionate, exhilarating love. I don't deserve you!

So back to what I was saying. We went to see "The Miracle Worker." Most likely, you are familiar with the plot. It's the story of Annie Sullivan's struggle to teach the blind and deaf Helen Keller how to communicate. Initially Annie found it extremely difficult to teach Helen due to her wild and violent behavior. But then Annie had a revelatory moment. All of a sudden she realized: "Obedience is the gateway for knowledge to enter the

mind." She understood that she needed to first teach Helen to obey before she could teach her knowledge.

At this point in the play I couldn't help but think of my daughters, Nicole and Kristin. That's what they are doing. They are attempting to train and discipline four little boys to obey so they can impart knowledge. And not just any knowledge, but the most important knowledge of all—the message of the gospel.

So to all moms with little children I desire to encourage you today. I want to cheer you on in your efforts to discipline and train your children to obey. It's hard, exhausting work, I know. Just watching my daughters makes me tired. But it's worth it. Because an obedient child is a receptive child. And with a receptive child you can teach them the good news, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Now that's a goal worth striving for, don't you agree?

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Prov. 22.6

Pay Attention

by Carolyn Mahaney

Mothers are responsible to mold and shape lives; to raise children who, in the words of G.K. Chesterton, "require not so much to be taught anything as everything."

"I might as well be at the controls of a moon shot," reflected one mom, "the mission is so grave and vast." And so it is. The training and discipline of our children in the fear of the Lord is an awesome task, demanding of our full attention (see Deut 6:5-9).

That's why, if there's one concern I have for this generation of mothers, it is the potential for distraction.

Blogs, facebook, twitter and texting allow moms at home to stay connected with the outside world like never before; the Internet makes it possible for women to contribute skills and gifts to the church and the marketplace, while at home with their children. These are all tremendous blessings, and when used wisely, can bless and serve our families and glorify God.

The Proverbs 31 women, long before the Internet, managed a wide range of tasks for the good of her family and community. (But did you notice what

time she woke up each morning?) Depending on a woman's capacity, gifting, personal discipline, as well as the ages and number of children, there may certainly be room for other things.

But we must be watchful that these "other things" don't distract us from our primary task of mothering. We must walk carefully through this season, with all its opportunities, and make the best use of our time with our children.

Truth is, we can't effectively train our children on the side. We can't discipline them here and there. We can't teach when we've got a free moment. We can't mother intermittently.

Inconsistent training is ineffective training.

If we are distracted by projects or pleasure, we may miss valuable teaching moments, opportunities to encourage, disobedience that requires discipline, or a chance to show affection. These moments, once lost, are gone forever.

So ladies, may I encourage you, as I do my own daughters, to give training and discipline your first and full attention. Walk carefully, and keep your eyes on the mothering road.

More thoughts tomorrow.

A Question of Priorities

by Carolyn Mahaney

So how do we walk carefully through the season of mothering young children? How do we know if we're distracted or focused on the right things?

We need to determine biblical priorities for our season, and then consistently evaluate whether or not we are living according to those priorities.

For moms with young kids, it's pretty simple. Three non-negotiables top the list:

1. The gospel
2. Your husband
3. Your children

Ask yourself: Am I preserving these biblical priorities as my top priorities?

Then consider other activities—from your daily Internet or cell phone habits or hobbies or pleasures like reading or television or hanging out with friends—to significant endeavors such as a home business or serving opportunity.

Ask yourself:

Does my time spent on _____ cut into my time for consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines?

Does _____ hinder me from putting my husband's needs first?

Does my investment in _____ distract me from the teaching, training, discipline, care and encouragement of my children?

Does my level of involvement in _____ cause me to be rushed, hurried, distracted or anxious in caring for my family and training my children?

If we're consistent at checking our facebook wall but not in prayer, or if we're attentive to our etsy site or blog but not our children, then we need to make a change.

What eliminating distractions looks like, tomorrow.

First Things First

by Carolyn Mahaney

If less important activities are infringing upon more important priorities, we need to make a change. But what does this look like?

Does this mean that moms with young children can't have a life beyond warming milk bottles, reading bedtime stories, and repeating endless "no touch"es and "stop fighting"s and "sit still"s?

Of course not! But given the significant amount of time it takes to effectively teach, train, discipline, care for and encourage young children, you won't have time for much else for a while. Motherhood is and should consume a majority of your time and attention

So how do we eliminate distractions to this primary responsibility?

Let me answer with an illustration: A while back, I decided I would use the five minutes it took for my coffee to brew each morning to check my email, blogs I enjoy, etc. Before I knew it, five minutes turned into twenty minutes and my time with the Lord was shortened or rushed.

So, I set up a boundary for myself: no email or blogs until I have my quiet time, my husband has left for work, and I've sent my son off to school in a peaceful manner.

This isn't legalism. I was simply taking measures to protect the most important from the less important. I want to keep first things first.

So what structures do you need to set up in your life to keep the training of your children a priority? Maybe you only look at email over naps or get up early to work on your home business. Maybe more drastic action is necessary. You may need to put a project on hold or set aside your hobby for a season.

Whatever it takes, let me encourage you to clear away all distractions. There's a time for every season under heaven, and the time to train your children in the ways of the Lord is *now*.

Search

by Janelle Bradshaw

As mom pointed out on Monday, our mothering mission is "grave and vast." It can often seem like an overwhelming assignment. That's because it is. We aren't called to figure this out on our own. We need help. We need the wisdom of others. So let's go and get it.

Search the Scriptures! Prayerfully seek mothering wisdom from the Bible. What does God's Word have to say about parenting these little ones? We need to develop biblical convictions about our role and responsibilities.

As I'm typing this post at my computer, my eyes keep darting to my little note-card with all my "Caly Scriptures." I keep this note-card in a prominent place to remind me of my responsibility before the Lord, and to encourage my soul with the promised fruit of obedience.

Search Out Others! My mom probably wants to hide when she hears me coming. She has been barraged with my parenting questions (sometimes the same ones over and over) for the last three years. The Lord has also

blessed me with a church full of “second moms” who have much wisdom and experience.

Friends, we have to take the initiative. The “older” women in our churches would love to share their wisdom—all we have to do is ask. If necessary, let’s bang down doors and beg for help. Let’s keep these ladies busy!

Search Good Books! The Lord has also blessed us with the wisdom of others in the form of books. I was never a big reader until I became a mom. Now I read any biblical parenting book that I can get my hands on. Then I read it again.

If you don’t know where to begin, check out the four books that we recommended last week (here and here). They will get you off to a great start.

This parenting task takes work and effort. But the reward is well worth it. One of my favorite “Caly-verses” at the moment is Proverbs 29:17: “Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.”

Caly has helped me see my desperate need for help, but she has brought much delight to my heart. As I was leaving her room the other night after putting her to bed, I heard her little voice say, “Mom, I love you very so much.”

Pure delight!

Strength for a Weary Mom

by Kristin Chesemore

We began this series by asking: “How does the mom with young kids make the best use of her time when she doesn’t feel like she has any time?” We’ve looked at a few essential deals for this busy season:

1. Preach the gospel to yourself
2. Prize your husband
3. Parent all the time
4. Pay attention
5. Pursue help in parenting.

I want to close the week by reminding you of one of my favorite promises from God's Word. Galatians 6:9 says: "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

This verse was a source of strength to me when I was carrying my one year old, chasing my two year old and correcting my four year old. I didn't feel like I was bearing much fruit, but this verse provided faith for the future.

My kiddos are now five, six and nine, and the challenges are a little different. I'm dealing with arguments between my five and six year old and the heart issues of my nine year old. But I'm still holding on to this wonderful promise.

May I encourage you to hold onto this verse as you seek to faithfully sow into the lives of your little ones? The harvest won't come today. And it won't come tomorrow. Maybe not even next year or the year after that.

But we must be faithful to sow today. Faithful to train. Faithful to teach. Faithful to discipline. Faithful to love. Or, as it says in this passage, faithful to "do good." And we must trust God that He will fulfill His promises, that we will reap a harvest in due season if we do not give up.

My expectations are not for today, or even tomorrow--but my hope is in God who has promised that, someday, my labors will bear fruit for Him. Even though my body is weary, my soul gains new strength from this promise.

I pray it strengthens you as well.*

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