

Best Deals of the Season For Single Women

The Single Season

by Nicole Whitacre

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5:15-16

If you are a single woman, how do you make the best use of your time? What are the best deals of your season?

Maybe, as you look around, you don't see a lot of great deals in your season. Maybe you'd rather be in a different season. Maybe you'd rather be married.

You might be asking another question: *is singleness really the best season?*

Paul tackles this question in 1 Corinthians 7, responding to church members in Corinth who were quarreling (among other things!) about whether singleness was more holy than marriage.

Me? I prefer singleness, says Paul, “I wish that all were as I myself am” (v. 7). But he is clear: “I have no command from the Lord” on this issue (v. 25).

He continues:

“This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short...For the present form of this world is passing away. I want you to be free from anxieties...And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your own undivided devotion to the Lord” (v. 29-35).

Paul's point? Whether marriage or singleness is better—that's not the point! What ultimately matters is that time is short; that the days are evil. The real question is: *how do we as Christians live in light of eternity?*

“Marriage and singleness both present us with unique trials and unique opportunities for our sanctification” explains John Piper. “There will be unique rewards for each, and which is greater will not depend on whether you were married or single, but on how you responded to each.”

If you are single, you face unique trials. But your season also holds unique opportunities. And best of all there are unique rewards—rewards no less glorious or desirable as for those who are married.

How can you seize upon these great opportunities and their corresponding rewards? Let’s take a closer look at this verse and see what bargains we can discover.

Deal As If You Don’t

by Nicole Whitacre

The verse we considered yesterday, 1 Corinthians 7, serves as a kind of “financial advisor” for the single season. This passage informs you of quality deals and advises you against bad investments. In the context of answering this question about singleness and marriage, Paul gets to his real point:

“This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away” (vv. 29-31)

How do you avoid wasteful spending of your time? Don’t invest it all in “the present form of this world.” ‘Cause it ain’t gonna last.

“Form” here carries the idea of “fickleness [or] the changing fashion. There is nothing solid and lasting in this world’s system. It is its nature to pass away” (Gordon Fee).

Here’s a metaphor we women can understand: fashion. The world’s bargains are as fickle, as fleeting as this year’s “in” style. And they won’t come back again in twenty years.

“Believe me, there is nothing here that is worthy of your pursuit,” warns pastor Charles Spurgeon:

“If you give your soul up to anything earthly, whether it be the wealth, or the honours, or the pleasures of this world, you might as well hunt after the mirage of the desert or try to collect the mists of the morning, or to store up for yourself the clouds of the sky, for all these things are passing away.”

While we must live in this world and “deal” with it, we must not set our heart on it or put our hope in it or give up our soul to its offerings.

So what are the good deals of this season? More shopping for time advice from 1 Corinthians 7 tomorrow.

Undivided Devotion

by Nicole Whitacre

Now that we’ve considered what not to spend our time on in the single season (“the present form of the world”) we come to the first great deal of the single season. You probably noticed it in 1 Corinthians 7:34-35:

“And the unmarried or betrothed woman is *anxious about the things of the Lord*, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your *undivided devotion* to the Lord” (emphasis mine).

Free from the anxieties attendant upon marriage and family, you have the opportunity to live for the things of the Lord, to pursue undivided devotion to Him.

You have “a unique calling and a unique responsibility” insists pastor John Piper:

“It is not a calling to extend irresponsible adolescence into your thirties. It is a calling to do what only single men and women in Christ can do in this world, namely, to display by the Christ-exalting devotion of your singleness the truths about Christ and his kingdom that shine more clearly through singleness than through marriage.”

For a greater understanding of these truths you are called to display, you can read Piper’s sermon “Single in Christ: A Name Better Than Sons and Daughters.”

But first ask yourself:

What does my singleness say about Christ and His kingdom?

Is my life one of Christ exalting devotion?

Am I anxious about the things of the Lord or the things of this world?

Is holiness in body and spirit my highest aim?

Undivided devotion is cultivated through reading God's Word and prayer (Ps 86:11), and it comes with the promise: "The world is passing away along with its desires, *but whoever does the will of God abides forever*" (1 John 2:17).

Undivided devotion to Christ is, by far, the best deal of the single season.

Become A Theologian

by Carolyn Mahaney

What does undivided devotion look like in real life? How do you put legs on it and walk it out? For starters, you should *become a theologian!*

Bruce Milne explains:

"[As] a matter of plain fact every Christian is a theologian!... By virtue of being born again we have all begun to know God and therefore have a certain understanding of his nature and actions. That is, we all have a theology of sorts, whether or not we have ever sat down and pieced it together. So properly understood, theology is not for a few religious eggheads with a flair for abstract debate—it is everybody's business. Once we have grasped this, our duty is to become the best theologians we can to the glory of God, as our understanding of God and his ways is clarified and deepened through studying the book he has given for that very purpose, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16)...[G]etting doctrine right is the key to getting everything else right...[A]t every point right living begins with right thinking."

Did you catch that? *Getting doctrine right is the key to getting everything else right.* If you want to live rightly in the single years—and I know you

do!—then you must think rightly about God. And in order to think rightly about God you must study His Word.

Can I encourage you—no, can I strongly urge you—to seize your single years and become the best theologian you can to the glory of God?

Use This Time

by Carolyn Mahaney

Every Christian is a theologian; but as a single woman you have a unique opportunity to study doctrine. I don't want you to miss it.

May I give you some motherly (or sisterly) advice?

I sit here today as a fifty-three year old wife and mother of four. My youngest son is in high school and for the first time in over thirty years, more and more of my time is “my own.” For the past three decades I have had very little discretionary time—and when my children were little, almost none at all. While I still made studying doctrine a priority, the reality is that my time was severely limited.

As a single woman you are probably very busy. You may be in school, have a job, serve in the church, maintain relationships, care for family...whew! I'm tired just thinking about your hectic life.

But whether you feel like it or not, you have a distinct advantage over the mom with small children: your time is your own. Despite the many, legitimate, demands on your life, you have great freedom to choose how you spend your time.

Please don't waste a moment of this precious and limited season. Be a student of God's Word. Study eagerly, study deliberately, study faithfully.

When you dedicate your time to growing in your knowledge of God, you'll make deposits into your future life that will yield blessing upon blessing.

School of the Word

by Carolyn Mahaney

At one time or another, we've all been students—driven to absorb knowledge by the beneficent shadow of our next exam. Minus this external pressure, though, our learning often slows to a trickle.

But our student-mindset shouldn't end with the diploma or degree. We should be lifelong students—first and foremost of God's Word.

As I said yesterday, the single season is one of the most valuable times of your life to pursue study of doctrine. But we don't drift into God's Word naturally. Beneficial study of doctrine will only become a reality if we have a plan and when necessary, some accountability.

There is no one-size-fits-all plan. Let me encourage you to begin by asking your pastor for advice. I assure you that he will be eager to help here! Tell him you want to more intentionally study God's Word and ask him to recommend a plan for you. This may include Bible commentaries, books on theology or the Christian Life. Some seminaries even offer courses to help you study God's Word.

Next, carve out some time—in addition to your daily devotions—for study. Maybe this is a Saturday morning when you're fresh, or a great Sabbath activity. But if you don't put it on the schedule, many other options will compete successfully for your attention.

Finally, ask a friend to be your "professor." Maybe you turn in a paper to them, summarizing what you've learned, or maybe they just check in to see how you're progressing.

To become a theologian you must retain your student-mindset, all life long.

Relationship Priorities

by Janelle Bradshaw

It's time to take a look at the second great deal of the single season: Relationships.

Women are, for the most part, relational creatures. Our world is often centered on family and friends. Yet, we are often more passive and receptive than we are intentional and purposeful in our relationships. We may allow people to drift in and out of our lives. We don't usually slow down to consider why we pursue certain friendships or neglect others. Emotions and feelings often dictate the way we go about our relationships.

If people are so important and consume such a big chunk of our time, then we must stop and prayerfully consider our relational priorities in light of God's priorities. *Do our relationships--the time we spend with others--*

bring glory to God? Are we investing our lives in the people God has called us to love and serve?

Tomorrow we'll consider the question: *"How does the single woman display her God-given femininity in her relationships with men?"*

Help the Men

by Carolyn Mahaney

Femininity is not a wedding gift; it's how we were created. Equal in worth and dignity to men, we nevertheless have different, divinely appointed roles. When God made Eve, He assigned her, and every woman after her, the honorable task of helper (Gen. 1:27, 2:18).

Carolyn McCulley explains the implications for single women:

“The Bible makes it clear in numerous passages that as Christians we are all here to serve. But there is a specific application found in Scripture for a wife to be a helper to her husband. Even before that gracious gift of a husband is provided, there are ways for the faint echoes of "helpmate" to be discernible in the lives of single women.”

When we consider the best deals of the single season, “helper” is near the top of the list. How can you make these “faint echoes” discernible in your life and more specifically, in your relationships with men?

Of course that’s a big subject—way too big to cover in this little post. But let me make one simple suggestion: you can help by encouraging godly men to lead. You can display your femininity by making room for godly men to practice servant leadership.

Now, this doesn’t mean you should follow the leadership of any and every man. And of course you must never allow a man to lead you into sin or lead you away from God’s priorities for your life.

But where possible, in your relationships with godly men in the church and in your life, do what you can to encourage them to take the initiative.

Granted, this is not always easy. And I am not promising you that all men will automatically lead in response to your encouragement. What matters is that you are cultivating the habit of making room for the leadership of men in your life.

The Lord has put certain men in your life—fathers, bosses, friends—and they need to know that you incline toward following their godly leadership instead of resisting it.

For example, if you have a big decision to make—seek out your father or your pastor or your small group leader’s counsel. Don’t independently assume you can do without wise leadership. Rather, give these godly men an opportunity to lead.

In your small group or with friends, don’t always be the one to initiate activities and plan events. Carolyn McCulley suggests pitching your idea to one of the guys in your group of friends. Ask him to lead, but then offer your assistance in any way you can.

And whenever you observe a godly man step up to lead a group activity, voice your appreciation and display a willingness to follow. Even if their leadership is not perfectly executed (and it probably won’t be!), your encouragement will spur them on fulfill their God-given role.

Choose Friends Carefully

For more on friendships please see chapter 4 of our book, *Shopping for Time*

Nurturing Children

by Carolyn Mahaney

In the past week, we’ve considered the single woman’s relationships to men and what kind of friends she should pursue. But there’s one more relationship that it is a great deal in the single season: children.

You can express your femininity by nurturing children. In Genesis 1, we see that male and female were created to be fruitful and multiply. As women we are created to be life-bearers. Our bodies have been designed with the ability to mother—to receive, to carry and bear children, to breast feed. Our body prepares itself repeatedly to conceive and bear young.

So, how does a single woman enter into the meaning of motherhood if she doesn’t have children of her own? How does she express her femininity as life-bearer, as nurturer?

Elisabeth Elliot answered this question:

“A single woman can have children! She may be a spiritual mother, as was Amy Carmichael [missionary to orphans in India], by the very offering of her singleness, transformed for the good of far more children than a natural mother may produce.”

Single women, you can express your femininity in this season of your life by nurturing other people's children.

When you babysit, you are giving expression to your femininity. When you take an interest and reach out to children in your sphere of relationships, you are displaying your God-given gift of femininity.

And may I say “thank you” on behalf of all of us mothers! Thank you for the way you nurture our children. Thank you for the countless times you have served us through babysitting. Thank you for the way you have loved our children as if they were your very own. It means so much to us!

However, you are doing more than just blessing us, you are honoring God by giving expression to the nurturing aspect of your femininity

A Tale of Three Women

by Nicole Whitacre

In response to Mom's post on Thursday, Caroline sent us a wonderful email about three generations of single women nurturing children: I was single until I was 35 (now have 4 year old twin daughters--our double blessing). I have been in three positions when it comes to singles nurturing children.

As a child we had a friend called Donna who came for tea every week, babysat, and had much godly input for me and my brothers. I am 44 now and still think of her as part of our family and although I rarely see her anymore, I always remember her with enormous affection and some of her advice helps me still.

As a single I had the privilege of being very close to several families with children. I was a young lady whose main aim was (and always will be) to be a Proverbs 31 wife and mother. I found it incredibly hard being single, but found great fulfillment in spending time with the children of my friends. I worked with children, and also went to one friend every week to help her with her children when her husband was working late. I also babysat and spent time with other friends and their children. I adored all of

them, and felt enormously privileged when they called me their friend, and when I heard them repeating phrases I often used!

As a Mum with young children now, I have a special friend called Helen who comes for tea once a week and helps put my daughters to bed, prays with us all, reads them stories, comes on outings with my husband, children and me, and babysits. When my daughters talk about extended family, they always include her. She has great input into their lives and I feel privileged to have her as part of our lives.

Just as I called Donna "my Donna" and my friend's children called me "my Caroline," my children are now calling Helen "my Helen. I am truly blessed!

Prepare for An Important Career

by Carolyn Mahaney

Just to recap, the best deals of the single life we've looked at so far:

Pursue Undivided Devotion
Become a Theologian
Help the Men
Choose Friends Carefully
Nurture Children

Our sixth suggestion for how to best use your years as a single: *Prepare to be a wife and mother.*

Now I realize that not every woman will get married and have children; but truth is, most women will be wives and mothers someday. And for the majority of you who get married and raise children, you will spend a considerable portion of your lives in the homemaking profession—from twenty or thirty to upwards of fifty years or more. That's no small amount of time!

And the commands in Scripture to love, follow and help a husband, to raise children for the glory of God, and to manage a home from which the gospel goes forth encompass a vast responsibility. The role of wife and mother requires an extremely diverse array of skills—everything from management abilities to knowledge of health and nutrition, to interior decorating capabilities, to childhood development expertise. If you are to be effective in this role, then you must study these subjects and many more.

A career as a wife and mother demands considerable expertise, may encompass decades of your life, and has the potential to spread the gospel to your family, church, community, and future generations. Now that's worth preparing for, wouldn't you say?

(adapted from our book *Girl Talk: Mother-Daughter Conversations on Biblical Womanhood*)

“Study to Show Yourself a SAHM”

by Nicole Whitacre

One mom of young kids has some advice for single women. Heather Koerner wants to tell you what she'd tell her single self, if she had the chance.

In “Study to Show Yourself a SAHM” [SAHM=Stay At Home Mom] she describes her unexpectedly rough entry into her new role as full-time wife, mother, and homemaker:

I'm not sure when it hit me.

Maybe it was the morning I sat watching my 3-month-old daughter sleep next to me on the living room floor as I folded what seemed like the third laundry load of burp cloths that day. There was a lot about the moment that I had expected — love in my eyes, wonder in my heart. But there was also a lot I hadn't expected — a house that had once been orderly and clean that was now stacked high with piles of laundry, dirty dishes, baby paraphernalia and one exhausted, not very attractive looking mommy.

I remember thinking, This is so hard. I'm not sure I can do this.

And I remember being overwhelmingly frustrated. For crying out loud (which, I think I was at that moment), I have a graduate degree. I've taught trigonometry. I've met deadlines, edited copy and run conferences. Why in the world can't I handle one tiny baby and a 1,200 square foot house?

Heather echoes what most new moms think and feel (including us!): This is so hard! Why can't I handle this? But that's when Heather had her epiphany:

I suddenly realized...that I had spent six years in college preparing for a career in which I spent five years. But I had spent no time preparing myself for the career that I was about to embark on for the next decade.

It's not that I thought my education was wasted. Rather, I realized I was so concentrated on preparing for one aspect of my future life and so blind to the fact that I should be preparing for all aspects of my future life.

If being a full-time wife, mother, and homemaker is a job God may call you to some day, and if the stakes are high (because they are), and if the challenges are steep (because they are), isn't it a career worth preparing for?

Read Heather's article for some great advice on how to embark on a course of study for what could be the career of a lifetime.

Devoted to Good Works

by Janelle Bradshaw

Now we come to our final "best deal" of the single season.

And we find it in 1 Timothy 5:9-10.

"Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work."

This verse explains which widows are eligible to receive help and care from the church if they have no other means of support. But its application is for all of us, because it is a description of the life and character of a godly woman.

I want you to take a look at the final phrase—"has devoted herself to every good work"—At first glance, it may appear to be a little vague. Kinda like what happens when I can't come up with a concluding sentence for one of my posts, so I just tack on something nice-sounding but essentially meaningless.

Not the case here! There is nothing vague about this concluding remark. Paul is making a very clear point. In case we got the idea that we could check off one of each of these good works and qualify as a godly woman, Paul raises the stakes considerably. He says the godly woman is devoted to good works. As one commentary describes it, she is “energetically and diligently giving herself” to this stuff. I can imagine this woman constantly looking and listening, ready to serve upon discovery of the slightest need.

Do you remember the t-shirt that was popular a few years back with the slogan that read, “Tennis (or Basketball or Fishing) is Life. Everything else is just details”? Well, here Paul is saying that the godly woman’s outlook is: “Devotion to Good Works is Life. Everything else is just details.”

Bringing up children, showing hospitality, caring for the afflicted—these aren’t things the godly woman does one time, like a community service requirement. Good works are what she is giving her life, energy, time, and heart to. Good works are what she is all about.

But there is one other word that makes this phrase even more powerful. Yep, it’s that little word “every.” “Every” quite simply means “every.” It doesn’t mean “some” or “most,” but every. The godly woman doesn’t limit herself to good works that are easy, or get her the most attention, or are her top favorites. She practices good works of all kinds. And we can safely assume that they aren’t all pleasant.

Not such a vague phrase after all, huh?

I think John Wesley’s well-known quote expands nicely on what Paul is saying here:

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can.”

Cause everything else? It’s just details.*

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