

# Counting the Cost: The Early Years

## *Volume II: February 1999 - January 2000*

Nancy Twigg, Editor and Compiler

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The information and ideas in this compilation of newsletters are offered as general suggestions only. The publisher has taken precautions to ensure that the content is accurate and trustworthy. Readers should exercise judgment in deciding whether a particular piece of advice is appropriate and applicable for use in their own circumstances.

# Introduction

You are about to embark on a journey. A journey that chronicles years of personal growth, naïve courage, and persistence in the face of pitiful odds. These pages contain a tale of one family's odyssey into unknown realms and overwhelming uncertainties. This is a story of one woman's struggle to do something that mattered even when it appeared that it didn't.

*But wait, you ask, isn't this just a bunch of back issues of a newsletter?* To this I must respond, "Yes and well, no." True, *Counting the Cost* was a printed newsletter at one time and true, this is a compilation of one year of its back issues. However, this volume and the other two that follow are much more than that to me.

## **A Bit of History**

Back in 1997 when my husband, Michael, and I both left good jobs to become self-employed, we never dreamed how much our lives would change. Obviously we had to adjust our spending habits, but even more so, we had to adapt our thinking habits. We had to learn many new skills and attitudes and approaches to just about everything. We found that living lightly can sometimes be lonely in a world that doesn't value thrift and resourcefulness. *Counting the Cost* newsletter became our way of reaching out to others. By sharing what we knew, we found that we also learned a great deal in the process.

For three years, *Counting the Cost* was a subscription-based printed newsletter. After three years, we discovered that the economics of printing and mailing a newsletter were not cost-effective. Around that same time, we also found (much to our surprise) that our first child was on the way. Soon thereafter *Counting the Cost* became the free, advertising-supported e-mail newsletter that it is today. At the time of this writing, the email newsletter has 6000 subscribers.

From a financial standpoint, *Counting the Cost* has never been very successful, but from a personal point of view, it has been a smash hit. Besides making many wonderful online friends, we were also afforded many unique opportunities. This little publishing enterprise has been a stepping stone to bigger and better things in many areas of our lives. We thank God for every bit of adventure we've encountered along the way.

## **How This Volume Is Different from Volume I**

In Volume I, you catch a glimpse of how humbly *Counting the Cost* began. In the first few issues, it is obvious that I was learning the ropes of desktop publishing. By the time one year had passed, I had gotten into the rhythm of newsletter production. *Counting the Cost* looked much more professional than during the first year, although I was still quite an amateur. I was also learning a great deal about drawing on the strengths and talents of others. In the Volume II, there are many more articles by guest contributors than in Volume I.

Another thing that is different is that the "Readers' Exchange" feature got the ax. The concept was good—readers sharing with other readers—but there was too little participation from subscribers. I used to feel bad about not receiving more letters from

readers until I read through the back issues of the now-legendary *Tightwad Gazette*. It seems that even Queen Amy herself had to come up with most of her newsletter content on her own during the first few years!

The “Readers’ Exchange” feature was replaced by a new feature called “Make It Yourself.” Although I had hoped for more submissions and ideas from readers, searching out new do-it-yourself ideas was fun. At times when the MIY column included a recipe, we often combined it with the monthly “Deliciously Simple” feature.

Again, I should note that many of the websites and mailing addresses mentioned in this volume have changed in the years since 1999. Some of these businesses have just moved around; others have gone belly-up. Rather than going back and updating each one, we left all the addresses as is to maintain the integrity of the newsletter in its original state. If you find a link that no longer works or an address you’d like to verify before sending correspondence, I suggest you use an Internet search engine such as Google.com or Yahoo.com to look for current contact info.

We also chose not to add an index to this e-book because this PDF document is searchable using the “Find” command. If you want to know if a particular topic has been covered in the this volume, use the “Find” command under the “Edit” menu in Adobe Reader. You can also access the “Find” command by pressing CTRL-F on your keyboard. For additional help, we’ve included a very thorough Table of Contents to assist you in finding the information you’re looking for.

Okay, enough chatter. Let’s get on to the business of simple and frugal living.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy". The script is cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the word.

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