

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Counting the Cost Ezine ~
Everyday Abundant Living at Its Best

April 1, 2008 issue
Volume 8, Issue 15

Ideas, insights and inspirations for living each day to the fullest.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, visit:
<http://www.countingthecost.com/subscribe.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
John 10:10

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ In This Issue ~

- * Letter from the Editor
- * Creating a Mom's Memory Jar for Mother's Day
- * Blogging for Fun and Fortune
- * How to Use a "Soap Buster"
- * Creatively Frugal Last-minute Birthday Gifts

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Letter from the Editor ~

Greetings to you all!

I hope you all had an exuberant Easter celebration. It felt strange having Easter so early this year, didn't it? The weather here in East Tennessee is beginning to warm. I am eagerly anticipating the days when I can go out for my morning job without several layers of clothing to keep me warm. I do believe those days will be here soon. Hooray!

By the way, since it is April 1st already, Mother's Day isn't too far around the bend. If you are looking for an out-of-the-ordinary gift to make for your mom this Mother's Day, be sure to read the "Creating a Mom's Memory Jar" article below by Personal Historian and CTC subscriber Melissa Edens.

Blessings,
Nancy
<mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Featured Sponsor ~

Your Ad Could Be Here!

Do you have a product or service that would be of interest to Counting the Cost subscribers? Why not promote your business and support this newsletter at the same time? Ad spots available as early as the next issue. For more information, contact Counting the Cost Editor Nancy Twigg at <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com>

<< << << << << << << << << << << <<

Feature Article:

Creating a Mom's Memory Jar for Mother's Day
by Melissa Edens

When I last visited my mother, I helped her work on cleaning out an overstuffed storeroom in her house. While we worked, Mom told me stories -- not fairytales but the stories of life. Her life. I heard about the first time the family had a tape recorder, an uncle who loved to play tricks (and the people he played them on), and another uncle who disassembled the family's brand new refrigerator the night before leaving for Navy basic training. (It was never repaired.) I heard the stories that are usually kept for "special" occasions, when the family gathers for holiday dinners. In the middle of one of Mom's stories, I stopped her -- but only long enough to grab my digital recorder and turn it on!

Had I asked my mother to tell me her stories, she would have declined, saying that she hasn't had a very interesting life. As we worked to declutter her home and her life, the sights, sounds, and smells of the past triggered Mom's memories and the hidden stories came to light. This brought to mind an idea for creating "Mom's Memory Jar." Creating a memory jar will help bring out your family stories by showing family members that people are interested in what they have to say and in their life experiences. The end result will be a treasure and a gift for you and for other generations in your family.

Begin by writing down a list of questions that you think will jog your mother's memory. Try to write out enough questions to fill a year; 52 questions will give you one story a week. Write or type the questions out onto strips of paper and drop the strips into a large Mason jar. On the outside of the jar, use a pretty ribbon to attach a notebook and pen that will be used to provide main points in answer to the questions. Include instructions telling the recipient to please tape the original question into the notebook and to write memory cues beneath the question. Remember to tell the storyteller that you'll be calling to hear and record the "rest of the story!" To complete the gift, wrap the jar in pretty paper or fabric before presenting it on Mother's Day.

Over the course of the following year, call or visit your mom once a week to record her stories on tape. Whether you are in contact from a distance or right next door, use the time together to renew your relationship with your mother, ask questions and learn more about who your wonderful parent is! At the end of each recording session, type out the question and answer and store it in a folder for later. By the end of the year, you'll have 52 stories to share. Copy them, add pictures and bind them for a one-of-a-kind keepsake book that your whole family will want to own -- and add to -- as the family grows!

About the Author:

Melissa Edens is a Personal Historian and resides in Maryland with her husband and three children. Melissa helps to create memoirs, memorial books and mini-stories for generations to cherish. She is a member of the Association of Personal Historians and has worked with deployed military units and families across the country. Learn more about Melissa and Heritage Transcriptions at <http://www.heritagetranscriptions.com>. "Turning oral histories into bedtime stories."

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Sponsor ~

DVDs from Counting the Cost Publications!
Are you looking for a biblical perspective on what it means to live simply as a Christian? Or has God given you a message that you believe He wants you to write about in a book? Check out these presentations on DVD:

- * Keep It Simple, Sister
- * The Joys and Blessings of Living Simply
- * Contentment in a Discontented World
- * Four Things Every Aspiring Author Needs to Know
- * How to Successfully Self-Publish Your Book

For more information, visit the CTC Video Store at <http://www.countingthecost.com/store/videostore.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Readers' Poll Question:
Blogging for Fun and Fortune

In the last issue I mentioned my new fascination with the Money Saving Mom blog (<http://www.moneysavingmom.com>). I love to visit Crystal's site to read up on all the frugal tips and money-saving info she shares.

Talking about blogs last time lead me to ask our last Readers' Poll Question. I wanted to chat about our subscribers' experiences with blogging and maintaining a

website. I asked: "Do you have a blog or a website? If so, do you do it purely for fun or also for profit? What have you done to make your online efforts more profitable? What do you plan to do in the future?"

We only had a few responses to this question. Here is what our respondents had to say:

"Great topic! I am also a big fan of Money Saving Mom! I started a blog about a year ago. My blog focus is on stewardship and is called 'With All that I've Been Given.' I love blogging! I have met many wonderful people through this community, and am daily challenged and inspired. As a stay at home mom, it's been so valuable to find this network of other women. I have considered using my blog to make money. However, since I try to encourage simplicity and to de-emphasize material goods, it does not 'jive' with me to ask others to purchase products on my blog. I also prefer the clean look of blogs without advertising, even more so when you have little control over the ad content. In the future, I might consider pursuing an avenue where I could be paid for writing, but right now I'm having fun just posting what is on my heart and mind." ~ Carrie, Blog URL: <http://watibg.blogspot.com>

"My blog is purely for fun. I based my blog's name (Married to the Empire) on my husband's unusual hobby: dressing up as a stormtrooper from Star Wars. The closest thing I have to a blog theme is posting about the various charity functions and other events my husband and the other stormtroopers participate in. Otherwise, my site is just about my life in general, which can be anything from typical SAHW (stay-at-home-wife) stuff to youth work to time spent with friends. It's just a fun way for me to keep friends and family update-to-date on our lives, and it's opened the doors for meeting new people online. " ~ Anne Marie, Blog URL: <http://marriedtotheempire.blogspot.com>

"Just wanted to share my own website with you called 'Precious Balance.' We have 4 daughters. When one of my daughters was 10 years old, she developed a rare swallowing disorder called achalasia where she lacks movement in her esophagus. She often vomits at meals and it takes her a very long time to eat. The Lord has been very gracious during this past 9 years but one thing that was extremely beneficial to my daughter was getting her hair tested to see what minerals she was deficient in and if she was toxic in anything. That way instead of wasting money trying this supplement and that supplement, we knew exactly what her body needed. She became a lot stronger and I thought, 'I need to help people with this.' Most people do not know the benefit of this test. It is better than a blood test because if you get new hair growth, it represents about 2 or 3 months so you get a better picture of what is going on in your cells. Anyway, I have had about 2,000 visitors to our site and seen others helped. One baby was very sick in the hospital and it was a joy to see how much things had

improved when the parents tested his hair for the second time. There is a sample hair test on the website and more info if your are interested." ~ Francine, Website
URL: <http://www.hair-and-water-testing.com>

Editor's Note: While on the topic of blogs, I wanted to mention the blog of a dear friend of mine, fellow author and speaker Karon Phillips Goodman. Her blog is called "Receiving Grace, Reflecting God" and it can be found at <http://receivinggracereflectinggod.blogspot.com/>. Karon is a skillful writer and I'm sure you'll be blessed by spending time at her blog.

Thanks to these readers for responding. To peruse previous Readers' Poll questions and the responses we received, visit the "Reader Input" page on our website at <http://www.countingthecost.com/readerinput.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Our Newest Readers' Poll Question:
Have a Great Day

A great day for me is simple: quality time with God; quality time with my husband, Michael; quality time with my daughter, Lydia; and a little quality time leftover for me. If I can squeeze all those things into one twenty-four hour period, I consider it a great day. If I can throw some successful bargain-shopping into the mix, too, I feel like I'm in hog heaven.

In our newest Readers' Poll Question, I want to hear what you consider a great day. The question asks, "What turns an ordinary day into an extraordinary day? What makes a day great for you?"

The field is wide open. Send your response to this question to: mailto:countingthecost@knology.net?subject=Great_Day. Many of the responses we receive will be posted in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Sponsor ~

Too Much Clutter? Not Enough Clarity?
Nancy Twigg's new book, From Clutter to Clarity, will help you clean house -- both inside and out. Learn to deal with the clutter in your life by dealing with the clutter in your heart and mind. Check it out at <http://www.countingthecost.com/clutter.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

"Talk It Out" Question:
Who You Gonna Call? Soap Buster!

What do you do when you have little bits of soap that you hate to throw away? You use a gadget called a "Soap Buster" to make all the little pieces into one big bar of soap. But what if you have a Soap Buster but don't know how to use it and can't find the instructions? That was the problem one of our website visitors recently submitted. Lynn wrote:

"I found your site when I was searching for information on the Soap Buster. The Soap Buster is a gadget that presses small, leftover pieces of soap into a new bar. I saw a couple of postings about it and other ways to reuse soap on your website. What I'm really, desperately looking for are instructions for the Soap Buster. I have one, but have lost the instructions somewhere along the way. I'd really like to start using it again. Your site is the only site where I've found people talking about it. Is there some way you could help me get the instructions for it? Thank you so much for your time; it's greatly appreciated!" ~ Lynn

Interestingly, only one person actually knew how to use a Soap Buster, although others wrote to give suggestions for other ways to reuse slivers of soap. Here are the responses we received:

"I had a soap buster gadget a couple of years ago and would like another. Where can I get one? The instructions are to take some pieces of soap heat them in the microwave for about 30-60 seconds and then put the hot soap in the gadget. Put the cap on the bottom and turn the knob all the way until you can't turn it anymore. Then wait about a minute. Then take the new bar out and let it cool." ~ Laurie

"I don't have a gadget for soap chips, but this is what I tried once. Wash about one-half cup of soap chips by shaking them in water in a small yogurt cup. (You would be amazed at how dirty they can be.) Soak them overnight in a small amount of water to cover. Drain off a little water and then cook them in the microwave until melted together. Soft soaps like Ivory's green bar work best for this. Press until firm, let the chunk dry, and you have a nice round piece of usable soap!" ~ Anonymous

"I have a soap saving tip I learned from the Tightwad Gazette years ago. When you get down to just a sliver of soap, get out the new bar and lather them both up. Then put them together and let them dry. They will eventually blend into one bar of soap and the sliver will not be wasted. I don't know if this will help answer the question, but I use this idea all of the time." ~ D. in Knoxville

"This is the site for the Soap Buster:
<http://www.pittstownsoapworks.com/html/products.html>. The price is \$19.95...Why not just use a hamburger press device, or something like that?" ~ Anita

"I don't have the instructions for the Soap Buster, but I do have directions for using those slivers of soap to make new soap. They can be found here:
<http://www.ktca.org/donnasday/creative/activ19.html>
Maybe your reader will find this useful." ~ Lisa in NH

"I put the pieces into a 'scrubbie' purchased at the dollar store. When the scrubbie needs to be replaced, I simply buy a new one and start over again!" ~ Anonymous

Thanks to these readers for taking time to respond. To peruse previous "Talk It Out" questions and the responses our readers submitted, visit our "Reader Input" page at <http://www.countingthecost.com/readerinput.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Our Newest "Talk It Out" Question:
Dealing with Distractions

How do you stay focused when distractions threaten to send you down one rabbit trail after another? That was the question one of our readers recently asked. Julie was particularly concerned about distractions during her morning time with God. She wrote:

"I would like to hear how other readers deal with distractions when they are trying to have quiet time. Even though I get up early so I can have peace and quiet, I still find my mind wandering off while I read my Bible and pray. Do you readers have any tips for keeping focused so that my quiet time is productive and not just a pitiful attempt to give God my undivided attention." ~ Julie

This is a good question since we all have to deal with distractions from time to time. Send your suggestions to: <mailto:countingthecost@knology.net?subject=Distractions>. I will forward Lynn's email address to you so that you can email her personally.

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Sponsor ~

* Simplify from the Inside Out *
Do the women of your church need to a time to refocus and refresh? Do they need a weekend of encouragement and inspiration? Is your women's ministry group in need of a dynamic speaker for an upcoming conference or special event? Author Nancy Twigg teaches women how to declutter life from the inside out.

Visit <http://www.nancytwigg.com> or email Nancy at <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Creative Frugality Explored:
Happy Belated Birthday

Oops! What do you do when you suddenly realize you've forgotten an important someone's birthday?

Belated -- or almost belated -- birthday gift-giving was the topic for our last Creative Frugality discussion. The question asked, "What do you do when you need to put together some sort of birthday gift in a short amount of time? What ideas do you have for birthday gifts that are creative, inexpensive and easy to pull together quickly?"

I know many of our readers have a gift shelf filled with gift items they've found on clearance, recycled gifts, treasures they've found at yard sales, etc. Whenever they find themselves faced with a forgotten birthday or anniversary, they simply pull something from their stash. That is a great approach, but what about those folks who don't have a gift shelf or are just getting one started? I wanted to hear some quickie ideas that will help these people. Here are the responses we received:

"A quick birthday gift for any mom of young children is free babysitting! Simply design a coupon indicating number of hours you are willing to babysit, etc., and insert in card." ~ Jen

"I've been keeping a 'gift shelf' since we bought our house 8 years ago. I currently have 6 large Rubbermaid boxes full of gift items. I like to shop for items at a deep discount that are sort of generic. We have 2 children and so I stock up on boy and girl toys. After Christmas time, I purchase all kinds of basket stuffers. These can be used at Christmas time for next year. Some items can be use for gift baskets in a pinch. I also try to buy baskets at garage sales where they are 50 cents each. Often I find items that I can gift from garage sales as well. It's difficult to budget for gifts. But I like to forecast a dollar item for each person and I often go under. I have been tempted to buy more for that person but I try to keep that thought in the back of my mind to help me resist the temptation. Finally, aside from kids' toys, I try to give items that can be used up. We have way too much stuff in this world of ours! I also like to make items that can be used (for example: bees wax candles, gifts in a jar, etc)." ~ Christine

"How about those items you have never used? Maybe a purse, or an item of clothing you've put away until it could be altered. You might have some new kitchen or bath towels that are nice and fresh. Makeup? Hair ornaments? Books you were going to read 'someday'? Unused drinking glasses?

Picture frames or albums you've never filled? And if you are out of wrap or bows, you can use a brown paper bag with buttons glued on or stickers, artificial flowers, or maybe the front of a greeting card you received. Recycle! (Just beware of giving to anyone the same gift they gave to you!)" ~ Anonymous

"I am a scrapbooker and often turn to my stash of ribbons and pretty paper to dress up an ordinary gift. I usually have the ingredients on hand to make a batch of brownies, cookies or muffins. Most people appreciate gifts from the kitchen. For others, especially the teens in my life and my kids' friends, I usually pick up a gift card good for one movie rental and throw in a bag of microwave popcorn and some candy. No clutter and a useful, yet inexpensive gift!" ~ Christy

Thanks to these readers for taking the time to respond. If you'd like to read more or browse through previous discussions, visit the "Creative Frugality" page at: <http://www.countingthecost.com/cf/creativefrugality.htm>

<< << << << << << << << << << << <<

**Our Newest Creative Frugality Topic:
Telephone Tips**

I heard a news story recently which stated that close to 50% of all households in America now rely fully on cell phones for phone services rather than landlines. The reporter said that this trend toward simplifying things by having only one phone service is causing an unexpected problem. Because part of the fees and taxes we pay on phone services goes to support 911 services, the emergency services are experiencing a budget crunch due to a decrease in funding. Isn't it funny how there is always a domino effect in the choices we make? What we do in one area of our lives inevitably spills over and affects other areas, whether we anticipate it or not.

Speaking of phone services, that brings me to our newest Creative Frugality topic. I would like to discuss anything and everything related to saving money on phone services. The question asks, "What creative strategies do you use to save money on your phone services? How do you cut corners without cutting the quality of the service you need?"

In this question, I would like to focus specifically on landlines, not cell phones. We explored saving on cell phones about a year ago. (Check out that discussion here: <http://www.countingthecost.com/cf/cf102.htm>) Think about how you keep your phone costs low and send your tips to us at: <mailto:countingthecost@knology.net?subject=Phones> Many of the responses we receive will appear in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ What to Expect Next Time ~

In the next issue, guest contributor Karon Phillips Goodman reminds us of the "4 R's" of fully and abundantly experiencing God's grace in our lives. Don't miss it!

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Counting the Cost Reader Classifieds ~

Mrs. D's Homestead - soaps, stories 'n' stuff. All natural handmade goats milk and Jersey cream soaps; luxurious lotion bars, lip butters and more! Custom gift baskets available. FREE shipping on orders over \$25! Read about our homestead life and shop in the homestead store at www.mrsdshomestead.com.

* * * * *

Love Your Customers & They'll Keep Coming Back!
Customer care is 99% of what it takes to build repeat business. Show your customers YOU care with quality gifts from Bishop's Corner! Dropshipping available. Nearly 850 products under \$20! <http://bishopstn.com>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Additional Resources from Counting the Cost ~

Counting the Cost Editor Nancy Twigg is available to share the message of simple, frugal and meaningful living with your organization, church group, or Bible class. Nancy specializes in presentations to Christian audiences, but can tailor a message to fit almost any group and any budget. For more information, visit:
<http://www.countingthecost.com/speaking.htm>

For a complete list of audio and printed products produced by Counting the Cost Publications, go to:
<http://www.countingthecost.com/catalog.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Counting the Cost is a free, "by-subscription-only" publication that is sent around the 1st and 15th of every month. If at any time after subscribing you wish to unsubscribe, visit this page on our website:
<http://www.countingthecost.com/subscribe.htm> Simply enter your email address, select "Unsubscribe" and then hit "Enter."

