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

April 15, 2009 issue  
Volume 9, Issue 16

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

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

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~ In This Issue ~

- \* Letter from the Editor
- \* The Great Garage Sale Dilemma
- \* Reminder: Current Readers' Poll Question
- \* Reminder: Current "Talk It Out" Question
- \* Reminder: Current Creative Frugality Question

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~ Letter from the Editor ~

Dear Friends,

As most of you read this issue of the newsletter, my family will be in sunny Orlando, Florida, soaking in all the magic of Disney World. Because our family's travel plans required this issue of the newsletter to be completed way before the 15<sup>th</sup>, we're doing something a little different this time. Instead of the normal Counting the Cost fare, this issue is what I'm calling a "mini-zine": a "lite" version of our regular ezine containing just the feature article and the poll questions from the last issue. By May 1<sup>st</sup>, we'll be back to our regularly scheduled programming and the usual newsletter features.

Also, I have a quick announcement for any of our readers who live in the Seattle, Washington area. On Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, I will be the keynote speaker at the Women of Grace conference hosted by Grace Lutheran Church in Des Moines, WA. If you are interested in attending the event, you can learn more details at <http://www.gotgrace.com>.

Blessings,

Nancy  
<mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com>

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Feature Article:  
The Great Garage-Sale Dilemma - Is It Worth Having One?  
by Jennifer Swanson

"Anyone want to go 'sale-ing'?" Dad would ask us kids, laughing at his own joke every time. It was a common Saturday-morning greeting in the summer, and we enjoyed the adventure of driving around looking for deals. For a kid without much of my own money, it was a fun way to make my own choices and purchases. In reality, we needed to have a garage sale more than we needed to shop at one.

As an adult, I have a love-hate relationship with garage sales (or "tag sales," a more refined term used by the sophisticated). I love them because they promote reusing and recycling items. And if you're on the selling end, a garage sale provides motivation to declutter, organize, and clean your garage. (My friends in the U.K. have "car boot" [trunk] sales, similar to flea markets in the U.S., though a bit less formal and with a much cooler name. Imagine that--their entire collections of cast-offs fit into their autos!)

There are other good reasons to have a garage sale. Kids are often motivated to part with their treasures when they know they can keep the profits; you also have a practical way to teach them how to total a sale, make change, and count money. A multi-family sale is a fun activity that builds community with your neighbors, team, or volunteer organization; you'll attract more customers than having one by yourself. With enough experience, you might really cash in. Last summer, Wayzata Community Church's two-day sale grossed over \$168,000 to benefit community outreach and service programs.

But I hate garage sales because they slow the decluttering process. You don't get to free up space until after the sale is over--and that could be a while. Until then, you have to

commit storage space in your home or garage to serve as a staging area for future-sale items. Often the donation value of an item is higher than the price you'd earn at the sale. If you can handle delayed gratification, you'll appreciate the difference when tax time comes.

Finally, garage sales are time-consuming. You could make less than minimum wage for all the hours you put in, and you'll still have to deal with whatever doesn't sell.

Considering all this, if you decide that having a sale is the way to go, keep in mind these four rules:

1. Clean everything. Period.
2. Organize your display. Random boxes of stuff frustrate buyers and send them elsewhere. The more attractive and orderly your setup, the more you'll sell. Borrow folding tables from everyone you know. Hang clean sheets over anything that's not for sale, so your buyers won't be confused. Make your pricing obvious and simple to understand.
3. Price everything to sell. Don't waste your time and energy on a garage sale if you aren't ready to part with your unwanted items at garage-sale prices. The primary purpose of your sale is to clear out some clutter. If your main hope is to make money, you might do better on eBay or consignment. Remember, your typical customers are bargain savvy, so keep your prices below those of clearance racks and thrift shops. Be ready to negotiate, especially at the end of your sale. Put up a "1/2 Price" and/or "Make an Offer" sign to help move whatever's left.
4. When the sale is over, be done with it. A friend of ours repacks everything and saves it for his next garage sale. Some of his stuff hasn't sold in years. Let it go. Donate it to charity, or list it on Freecycle.

Every garage sale has its pros and cons. If you have a busy schedule and need space right away, donating is the way to go. But if you truly enjoy the experience as a fun way to release clutter, you just might get a couple of added bonuses: new friends and a little extra cash.

About the Author:

Jennifer Swanson is a professional organizing consultant, speaker and voluntary simplicity advocate. She publishes a free monthly e-newsletter designed to help you simplify your life. For more tips, visit <http://www.JenniferSwanson.com>.

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REMINDER: Current Readers' Poll Question:  
What Will They Say about You?

Recently I saw a T-shirt slogan I liked. It said, "Live your life so that the preacher won't have to lie at your funeral." What a great reminder to live a life that is not only praiseworthy, but most importantly, pleasing to God.

In our newest Readers' Poll question, I'd like you to think for a moment. The question asks, "What would you like people to say about you at your funeral? How do you want to be remembered by those who knew and loved you?"

This topic may seem a little off-the-wall, but it's one that's been on my heart recently for reasons I'll explain in the next issue. Think about it and send your response to us at: <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com?subject=Funeral>. Many of the responses we receive will be posted in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.

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REMINDER: Current "Talk It Out" Question:  
Question about Children's Consignment Stores

While we are on the topic of children's consignment sales, one of our new readers submitted this question. Apparently in wake of new child safety laws, she is having trouble finding places to take her children's clothes to sell on consignment. Janise wrote:

"I have a question about shopping for kids clothes at consignment stores. Since the new law went into effect in February banning the sale of anything (toys or clothes) for kids under 12 that contains lead or phthalates, I can't find any consignment stores in our area that will take or sell children's clothes. I hadn't used consignment stores before because we mostly used hand-me-downs, but my daughter had



