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

July 15, 2005
Volume 5, Issue 23

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
- * How to Have More Joy
- * Your Ideal Family Vacation
- * Handling the Gift-Opening at Kids' Birthday Parties
- * Saving on Sun Protection

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~ Letter from the Editor ~

Hello to all our subscribers!

If you sent in a response to any of the questions in the last issue and do not see it listed among the other responses on our website, please accept my apologies. While we were on vacation last week, I used my husband's pocket PC to check my email. In my clumsiness with it, some messages were inadvertently deleted that I intended to save. So if your response is not posted, that is why.

Also, I wanted to quickly encourage everyone to take a minute to check out our sponsors for this issue. (If you are a nature lover, be sure to check out the Green Zone Tees ad in the classified section. I got my husband one of these T-shirts for Father's Day and he loved it!) Our sponsors help make this newsletter possible so please drop by their websites if you can.

Blessings,
Nancy
editor@countingthecost.com
(<mailto:editor@countingthecost.com>)

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~ Our Featured Sponsor ~

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Feature Article

Moments for Moms: How to Have More Joy
by Elisabeth K. Corcoran

I heard someone say recently that if you want to be more joyful, you need to start with simply being grateful. That makes so much sense. Joy comes in part through contentment in where you're at in each aspect of your life, and becoming content flows from an awareness of what you already have.

One afternoon recently, I gave myself an assignment -- to simply stop what I was doing and sit for 5 minutes and write down as many things that came to my mind that I love about my life or life in general. Here was my list:

- * The feel of the sun on my face on a not-too-hot-day
- * The sound of the wind chimes Sara gave me for my last birthday
- * When Jack walks up to me, blankie in one hand, fingers in mouth, and just stands next to me as if to say, "Bend down, Mom, I want a hug."
- * My new addiction -- Dunkin Donuts' Strawberry Bold Breeze with banana and yogurt
- * When I get something really right at work
- * Starting a new book by an author who always draws me in
- * When I'm writing something and it just flows
- * The feeling I have now that I'm exercising on a regular basis
- * Spending time with any of my closest friends
- * Shopping (when I've got some extra spending money, of course)
- * That my mother is starting up a prayer ministry in her church
- * The tulips in my front yard that were planted by the previous owner -- I'm pleasantly surprised each spring when they come up
- * A stay-at-home day with no place to go
- * When Kevin brings home a pizza at the end of a hard day -- heck, at the end of any kind of day

Then when the time was up, I was driven to write:
"Father, I am so blessed with big things and with little things. Each of those things above are blessings to me, actual gifts from You. Thank You for pouring out so much into my life. I am so sorry that I take this for granted -- that I take the daily good things in my life with a grain of salt sometimes, just expecting them to be there for me, as if I deserve this good of an earthly life. Thank You for showing Your love to me through such tangible means. I love You."

You can do this, too. You can carve out 5 minutes and write down every good thing in your life that you can think of. Or, if you really can't find 5 minutes, put a blank sheet of paper on your kitchen counter first thing one morning. Every time you walk past it during the day, stop and jot down two or three quick things. Then at the end of that day, glance over that list and take another minute or two to thank God for your personalized joy list.

"It will be a foretaste of heaven to us here below, if we are able to thank God for all His infinite goodness with all our heart." - Ottokar Prohaszka -

Elisabeth K. Corcoran is the author of "In Search of Calm: Renewal for a Mother's Heart," (2005) and "Calm in My Chaos: Encouragement for a Mom's Weary Soul." She is wife to Kevin, and mom to Sara, 8- $\frac{1}{2}$, and Jack, 7. Her passion is encouraging women and she fulfills that through heading up the Women's Ministries on staff at Blackberry Creek Community Church in Aurora, IL, and writing and speaking as much as she can. To learn more about Elisabeth's work, visit her at www.elisabethcorcoran.com.

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<A HREF=" <http://legacy4life.fourpointwellness.com> "> Click here .

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Readers' Poll Question:
Your Ideal Family Vacation

Our Newest Readers' Poll Question:
Transitioning Back into School Days

In this issue we've talked about vacations, but before you know it, back-to-school preparations and activities will be the hot topic of conversation.

In our newest Readers' Poll Question, we'd like to hear how your family transitions from summer back into the school year. We ask, "School will be back in session before you know it. What kinds of things do you do to help ease your kids back into the routine of the school year?"

Think about your answer and send it to us at:
editor@countingthecost.com?subject=School
(<mailto:editor@countingthecost.com?subject=School>)
We will feature as many answers as we can in the next issue and on our website.

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A Home Business Doesn't Have to Start in a Box.
If you are looking to create additional income or start a business, you've come to the right place. We do not sell, stock, deliver products, or telemarket. If you are not interested in those things, contact me!
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"Talk It Out" Question:
Birthday Party Blues

Is there a way to handle the present-opening portion of kids' birthday parties so that it doesn't turn into a frenzied free-for-all? That is the question one of our readers submitted in the last issue of the newsletter. Sue wrote:

"This weekend my preschool daughter attended another birthday party. It seems that at every one of these parties (including the party we hosted on my daughter's birthday), the gift-opening portion of the party gets completely out of hand. The kids practically trample over each other to see the gifts. They are all so excited that they grab at the gifts and sometimes even tear open the wrapping before the birthday child has a chance to do so. I'm not talking about bad children here. It just seems to me that the whole gift-opening scenario brings out the worst in otherwise

well-behaved children. Is there another way to handle gifts?"

I couldn't wait to read all the responses our readers sent in because I have often felt the same way. Here are just a few of the many we received:

"My son is 8 now, and I have noticed two things that seem to work:

1) Many parents do not have their child open the presents until AFTER the party. The presents are brought to the party and then they disappear. The children go on to play, do party games and have cake and ice cream. They never seem to miss the present opening at all! A few weeks later we get a personal thank you note for the gift from the child.

2) I read in a book once that if you are having a children's party at home, only invite the number of children that match your child's age. So, at age 5 we invited approximately 5 children, etc. This is so much more manageable. Opening gifts is very quick and is not mayhem!"

~ Rebecca

"Take the anticipation away from the gifts by having each child's name on a separate piece of paper in a 'hat' to be drawn individually. Then, at gift opening time, seat the birthday child at a table with his/her guests seated so they can observe. Draw a child's name from the 'hat'; let that child find the gift that he or she brought and take it to the birthday child. The birthday child then opens the gift, thanks the giver and gives the giver a 'Thank You' party bag. After that guest returns to the 'guest' area, another child's name is drawn. Each guest gets a chance to anticipate his/her name being drawn, have some time in the limelight with the birthday child and receive a small gift of his/her own to focus on." ~ Sherrie

"...I found that by noting in the invitation that gifts would not be opened at the party, parents could prepare their child that they would not see my child open their gift at the party. I took photos as my daughter opened each gift and sent those pictures, as well as the ones I had taken of their child interacting with mine at the party in the thank you note. Most parents commented on what a great idea it was to skip the gift opening at the party because it is so chaotic, gifts get broken, and undoubtedly the children want to play with the birthday child's gifts at the party. It also helps parents know not to stick around after the cake waiting for the gifts to be opened..." ~ LP

"The description of chaos at gift opening time puzzled me as I have never come across that situation, either in my home or at homes I've been to for birthday parties. The only suggestion I have is that adults need to take charge and stop the behavior, and communicate that everyone needs to sit and that the birthday child gets to open the presents! In my opinion, it's up to the parent to be in charge of this and organize it; it's your home and your

rules! Also, you decide whether or not the gifts get passed around for each guest to look at and whether they get played with at the party. It's okay to put them away after opening them and tell the children they'll have a chance to play (and the birthday child to share) at another visit." ~ Sharon

"We currently live in England and I find it interesting that people do NOT open their presents at parties. Once all the guests leave, then they open them in the privacy of their home with only their family around. I think this is a wonderful idea. There is no pressure to act like you like something you don't, and gift givers with less money does not have to feel bad that they did not give what everyone else did. However, they are also expected to handwrite a thank you note to each person a gift was received from. Yes, this is dying out, but it is really nice to know your gift was appreciated..." ~ BJ

Thanks to everyone who responded. As I said, we received many responses to this question. If you'd like to read more of the answers our readers sent in, visit:

<http://www.countingthecost.com/tio/birthday.htm>
<A HREF=" <http://www.countingthecost.com/tio/birthday.htm>
> "Handling the Gift-Opening at Kids' Birthday Parties"
page

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Our Newest "Talk It Out" Question:
Calling All Computer Gurus!

I know that among our readership we have some those talented folks who understand the ins and outs of computers. Recently I received the following letter from one of our subscribers:

"I'm forwarding this issue to show you how the newsletter always comes to me: blue, underlined sections that seem out of place with entirely different topics than the previous section and just portions of them showing. This happens regularly. I don't know what you can do, but thought you'd want to know." ~ Jane

Now here's the really weird part. When I looked at what she sent me, it looked fine to me -- nothing out of place, nothing underlined that wasn't supposed to be. Another thing that was strange was that Jane forwarded the message but it arrived to me as an attachment.

Jane did not tell me what kind of system she is using or how she receives her email (Outlook, Outlook Express, etc.). I know this might be a long shot, but based on this limited amount of information, can anyone tell us what might be causing this problem for Jane? If so, send your comments to: editor@countingthecost.com?subject=Computers

(<mailto:editor@countingthecost.com?subject=Computers>) Many of the responses we receive will appear in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.

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~ Our Sponsor ~

Is Your Group Planning a Retreat or Conference Soon?
If so, have you been given the task of finding a speaker for your group's next retreat? Make your job much easier by clicking the link below. When this Christian speaker speaks, seminar participants listen -- and walk away inspired and equipped to live more simply and purposefully. Even if your group's budget is limited, Nancy will work with you to create a program that fits your group's needs and its budget! Contact her today to discuss the possibilities. <http://www.countingthecost.com/speaking.htm>

<A HREF=" <http://www.countingthecost.com/speaking.htm> ">
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Creative Frugality Explored:
Saving on Sun Protection

It amazes me that sunscreen has gotten so expensive! The thought of paying \$6-7 for one bottle is hard to swallow. I know we can't skimp on sun protection, but surely there are ways to save.

In our last Creative Frugality question, we wanted to hear your ideas for saving on the cost of sun protection. We asked, "What creatively frugal strategies do you use to save money while protecting yourself from the sun's harmful rays?" Here are the answers we received from our readers:

"A local store has buy one get one free items, including certain brands of sunscreen. I've already got my supply for the summer. Another tip is to always keep the extra one in the car. There are times when we're out and need it." ~ Anggie

"I wait until just before spring begins and then I contact my AVON Representative for a catalog. A lot of times they do 2-for-1 deals where their tubes of sport block (plus bug guard) are two for \$5 or \$6. Planning ahead has you covered for the whole summer for less. Additionally, investing in a cheap bucket hat is a good idea to keep sun out of the face and off of the ears and scalp. I buy these at the end of the season on super-sale or pick one up at the local Dollar Tree. Dollar store hats are not the best quality, but if you're having fun and getting dirty and sweaty, you probably wouldn't want to wear an expensive hat." ~ Carrie

"This year I discovered that my local dollar store sells sunscreen (as well as many cleaning and household items and medicines) for only a buck!" ~ Rebecca

Editor's Note: I'd like to "Amen" Rebecca's comments about finding sunscreen at the dollar store. However, my local dollar stores don't always have the higher SPF sunscreens (45 or even 50) that I want for my daughter's skin. Last year I found some toward the end of the season but haven't seen any yet this year. Local stores have only carried sunscreen with 30 SPF lately. So to Rebecca's tip I would add this: If you find 45 SPF sunscreen at your local dollar store, stock up! Buy enough for the whole season since you may not be able to find it again at that price.

Thanks to these readers for responding. To do so or to check out previous topics of discussion, visit: <http://www.countingthecost.com/cf/creativefrugality.htm> "Creative Frugality" page

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Our Newest Creative Frugality Topic:
Frugal Teens?

In the next issue of the newsletter, we will explore the costs involved with raising teenagers. In keeping with that theme, our newest Creative Frugality question asks about your strategies for saving money on "teenager" expenses. We ask, "How do you save money on all the expenses related to raising a teenager?"

The field is wide open. Send us your tips for saving on teens' clothing, sports, outings, car insurance -- anything that has the potential of draining your bank account during your offspring's teenage years. Send your savings ideas to us at: editor@countingthecost.com?subject=Teens (<mailto:editor@countingthecost.com?subject=Teens>). We'll feature as many responses as we can in the next issue and on the website.

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~ What to Expect Next Time ~

Everyone talks about how expensive it is to raise teenagers, but is it really? In our next issue, guest contributor Jill Cooper, co-author of "Dining on a Dime," debunks the myth that teenagers are more expensive to raise than babies. Don't miss it!

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~ Counting the Cost Reader Classifieds ~

GreenZoneTees.com has beautiful, high quality t-shirts of

