



Jill Duggar

Telling Her Truth

"I wanted to tell my story for my siblings, since some of them are going to face similar challenges to mine—if they haven't already," says Jill. Inset: the Duggar family, a year before their show began.





‘I Wouldn’t Wish Our Crazy Road on Anyone’

SIX YEARS AFTER LEAVING HER MEGA-FAMILY’S REALITY SERIES, JILL DUGGAR IS STILL STRUGGLING WITH THE PAIN IT CAUSED—AND SHE’S FINALLY READY TO SHARE HER FULL SIDE OF THE STORY

By **GILLIAN
TELLING**



Photographs by
**LARSEN
& TALBERT**

As a child, Jill Duggar wouldn’t have dreamed of disobeying her father, Jim Bob Duggar. “Pops” had raised his 19 kids to always do as he said, as part of the teachings of the Institute in Basic Life Principles, the ultraconservative Christian organization they belonged to. Jill was such a dutiful daughter that Jim Bob even nicknamed her “Sweet Jilly Muffin.” But after she married Derick Dillard in 2014, she began to question, well, everything: why her family believed women couldn’t wear pants, why she had to obey her father even as a married adult. She especially wondered why she’d never been paid for nearly 10 years of her participation on two hit reality shows about her religious mega-family.



Strict Modesty

On a 2001 trip, Jill writes, a girl asked why they didn't wear swimsuits: "It was the first time I remember feeling awkward about the difference between...my family and the strange lands beyond."



Fractured Family



In her new book *Counting the Cost*, which details her experience with filming *19 Kids and Counting* and its spinoff *Counting On*, Jill, now 32, writes that after she began pushing back on allowing cameras into her life, she discovered that "Pops" had led her to unwittingly sign a contract the day before her wedding committing her to continuing filming. She also claims he kept all the family earnings—a reported \$25,000 to \$45,000 per episode. Jill says that she and Derick asked for compensation, even getting a lawyer involved, and that Jim Bob eventually gave them a check for \$175,000. His takeaway? Jill maintains it was roughly \$8 million. (In a statement to *People*, Jim Bob and his wife, Michelle, said, "We love all of our children very much. As with any family, few things are more painful than conflicts or problems among those you love. We've aimed to deal honorably with our children, our finances and our other endeavors.")

Before the Rift

Jill and Derick in 2014, the year they married, with Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar. "I still honor my parents by living a respectable life," Jill says. Below: her new memoir *Counting the Cost*, out Sept. 12.



Counting the Cost isn't just about a fight over finances, however—it also details Jill's strict upbringing and how the reality series fractured her family, nearly destroyed her marriage and left her riddled with guilt. Now she doesn't know if her relationship with her father will ever be repaired. "I didn't want to have to write this story," she says. "But I had a wake-up call after I was [cheated] by someone I thought I could trust."

These days Jill's life looks nothing like it once did. There are no cameramen in her and Derick's home, no producers dictating what they should and shouldn't do, no passel of younger siblings to help take care of. As parents to three young boys, they have days filled with school drop-offs (their older boys attend public school), swim practices and trying to figure out what to watch on Netflix after the kids are in bed. Derick, 34, is now a practicing attorney. But Jill still grapples with the anxiety she lived with growing up—especially now that she's putting her full story out there.

"There will be naysayers, but I do feel like it's time," Jill says. "It's opening up a big can of worms. But we've met so many people who felt like they could relate to us, whether they lived a similar life to ours in IBLP or were just struggling with family relations." She adds, "I feel called to this, to help other people find their voice."

Jill was 16 when *19 Kids and Counting* premiered on TLC, and she writes that at first, filming was fun. They were allowed to buy whatever they wanted from the grocery store, like Lucky Charms cereal and frozen pizzas—a welcome respite from beef-and-bean burritos for a family that had been scrimping on Jim Bob's wages as a used-car salesman. They also got to take trips to places like Nepal for filming.

"There were definitely high points in our life that we wouldn't have been able to do without the show," Jill says. "But there are a lot of other things that I would not have been willing to sacrifice if I had been given the option, like having my child's birth filmed. But at the end of the day, there were certain things the show wanted to have, and there were no ifs, ands or buts about it. They might say, 'Well, we can do it in a way that's comfortable for



On Josh's Crimes: 'Anger Can Be a Good Thing'

"I'm angry," Jill Duggar says about her brother Josh, 35, who is serving a 12-year sentence for receiving child pornography. As a teen, Josh molested Jill and some of her sisters, according to a police report that was made public in 2015. Jill writes about how frustrated she was with her parents' protecting Josh, who was sent to an IBLP-owned facility for counseling: "You treat me worse than you treat my pedophile brother!" she once told her father. A lawsuit Jill and three of her sisters filed alleging invasion of privacy over the police report was dismissed by a judge in 2022. "Anger can be a good thing, especially when it propels you to be an advocate for justice," she says.



Protective Parents

"We've taken a step back with putting our kids in the spotlight," Jill says. "I crave a level of privacy for them that I wasn't given."

Counting On. In 2020 Derick confirmed they'd also left the IBLP, which Jill now describes as "a form of cult," though they're still heavily involved in their church. "We still want to seek God first and trust that everything else will fall into place," Jill says. Derick adds, "What made [IBLP] so dangerous is that Bible verses were taken out of context and used to control and manipulate people."

Jill also started wearing pants, got a nose ring and had two more sons, Samuel, 6, and Freddy, 1. Now she's making new mom friends, has taken up gardening and is learning to trust that not everyone in her life has a hidden agenda.

The only thing missing is the harmonious relationship she once had with her parents and siblings. "Jinger and Jeremy are very supportive," she says, adding that she and mom Michelle stay in touch. "But my relationship with my dad—it's not that I don't love him, but I have to set healthy boundaries for our own well-being." Derick says a lot of the problems with Jim Bob stem from family text fights. "It got to the point where I said, 'I'm going to file a request for a protective order if you don't stop [sending these texts],'" he says. "It's harmful and threatening and not healthy."

As for the reality show, Jill says she regrets it was ever part of her life. "I would not wish this crazy road that we've had to walk on anybody," she says. "I just hope for the future that we can restore some of these relationships and be in a better place. But I want the ultimate healing, so even if it takes 20 years, we'd rather wait that long than have healing that isn't genuine." ●

you, but we're still going to get it.'" (TLC did not respond to a request for comment.)

In the book, Jill says she and Derick clashed over their commitment to the series. Derick grew increasingly frustrated when he was told he couldn't inform his family or friends about their first pregnancy (son Israel, 8, was born in 2015) because it had to be a plotline on the show. He started to push back against the control Jim Bob and the show's producers had over their lives. Jill agreed but was fearful of what it might mean to learn to say no to her dad, who they say began trying to drive a wedge between them.

"He would say things like, 'Is this all you, Derick? Are you leading your wife astray and doing things that are not supportive of the marriage?'" Derick says. Jill adds, "Derick and I were arguing deeply. It was like, 'We need to either fight this battle together, or it's going to rip us apart.'"

In 2017 Jill officially resigned from the spinoff

A United Front

"Therapy helped us so much," Jill says of her happy marriage.

"We're now at a point where we do it for maintenance."

X
 'With my dad, it's still difficult. He and I don't have one-on-one contact. At all'

—JILL DUGGAR