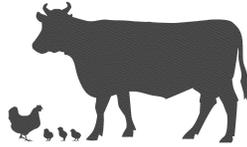




the
**SEARCH FOR
A
SIMPLE LIFE**



JULIE A. MURPHREE



Introduction

Philippians 4:8

I am a transplant. Originally a city girl, my roots had grown deep into the cement. I was well established in a bed overplanted with houses, buildings, stores, and people. My soil was primarily a mix of tarmac and concrete, with a little bit of dirt and grass tossed in.

Although I was okay with that life, deep down inside I always knew there was something else out there. Better soil. Cleaner water. More room to stretch my leaves and stems and grow into the person I knew I was meant to be.

I was in my forties before a ‘gardener’ came along with a good sharp shovel and transplanted me from all that tarmac and concrete to a healthy, rich soil on 60 acres of rural farm land. That ‘gardener’ was actually a dream that was ready to come true. The Country Boy and I came across the opportunity to relocate from the city to the country, and jumped at the chance.

Now, mind you, I had no idea what I was getting into. I felt the pain of my roots being pulled from the ground I was used to, trimmed, and wrapped in wet soggy newspaper in order to safely get me where I was going. But once I felt that rich, moist, delicious soil packed around me, I knew I was home.

We have often heard the phrase, “Bloom where you are planted”. To some degree, I agree with it. Our lives may be rooted in a lifestyle that was inherited, or just assumed we would follow. In that case, we may not have the healthiest of soil, or the required amounts of water, but we can take what we have and bloom.

Today, we are faced with any number of uncertainties. From food shortages to foods saturated in chemicals as they grow. From pandemics to stock declines and recessions. It only takes one country or world-wide catastrophe to bring us to our knees when it comes to caring for our families.

And because of that, learning to live as simply as possible increases your food security, lessens your dependence on outside sources, and broadens your sense of contentment and joy. It is a lifestyle where you grow your own food, get creative, build with your hands, spend quality time with your family, and get back to the basics of life.

Now that I have put this lifestyle into action, I have a garden, which improves each year. I am learning to save seeds and finding a variety of ways to preserve the harvest. I have learned to knit, crochet and weave, in order to make handmade gifts. And I am even learning, slowly but surely, how to use power tools and do minor maintenance on my car and tractors.

These are all things you can do with just a little planning, practice and effort. It is something you can do on your own, or with your family. Even your children can benefit greatly by learning how to provide for themselves, and one day, perhaps their own families.

From high heels to rubber boots. From dresses and brief cases to jeans and a shovel. From digging up well-established roots to being transplanted. This Farm Wife is now where she needs to be, and is well on her way to becoming the woman she was meant to be in the first place.

And yes. I have become a perennial bloomer. Just check out this new set of roots!

* * *

A total lifestyle change such as mine comes with its difficulties, its trials and a side dish of impatience, as well as joys and successes. We have grown up in a world of instant gratification. However, so much of what we have received has either grown boring or has broken, as most things aren't well made anymore.

As for boring, I strongly believe things grow boring for us because we haven't worked hard to earn it. We see it. Someone else has it. We want it. We buy it on credit. And long before the bill

comes due, whatever it is has broken, fallen out of fashion, or ends up on a closet shelf or under a couch cushion and has been forgotten.

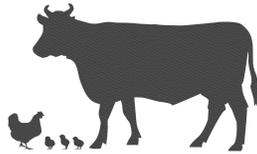
Maybe it is time to take a step back and determine what is most important to us. Perhaps we should examine our wants, and figure out if they are truly needs. Maybe, we need to spend less time trying to keep up with the Jones' and decide who *we* are meant to be.

If you find your lifestyle is no longer satisfying, here's another 'maybe' for you – maybe it is time to get back to a Simple Life. One where we work hard, wipe the sweat off our brow, dig in, and produce the things that really matter to us. One where we can enjoy our life, rather than bending over backward to have more, want more and get into debt trying to pay for it. A life less dependent on others – whether family, corporations or government – and learn to do as much as possible on our own. One where what we do have and have worked hard for, is more deeply appreciated.

Keep in mind. You cannot make the change all at once. It takes time, effort, and a great deal of thought. Start with a plan and figure out where you want to go and how you want to get there. Take it slow. Learn one thing at a time, then build from there. As you get comfortable with each step you take, your confidence will grow. You may find you love the journey of becoming who you were meant to be.

If you are considering living a more Simple Life, then this book can help. It is designed to give you thoughts and ideas of ways you can begin your journey. Each section offers an overview of what it will take to incorporate that portion into your new plan. Some sections have a bit more information than others. It is written this way to give you food for thought in each area, and then allow you to pursue those things that will work for you in more depth.

But before we begin with the details, there is still a bit more you need to consider.



Before We Move Further

Philippians 4: 6-7

‘Settle’. We have all heard the word before. Your Mama probably told you to ‘settle down’ when you were young. In other words, you needed to ‘be still’.

It is time for you to ‘settle down’ is another familiar phrase. It was used when the time came for moving out, getting a job and starting your own home. A synonym for settle down in this case means to stay in place.

It is also something we do when we feel we can’t get what we want. We ‘settle’ for second, or even third best. Although it isn’t readily acknowledged, when we ‘settle’ for something less than we want, we are accepting defeat. We are telling ourselves it is too difficult, too far reaching, or we don’t have the time or energy needed to reach that goal. We end up ‘settling’.

I know. I have often found myself ‘settling’, using all three interpretations. I tell myself to ‘settle down’ when I go faster than my feet and mind can carry me. I have definitely settled down here on the farm. It is my home, my heart and my sanctuary. And yes, I have often caught myself

trying to settle for less than I want. I just get to a point where I am exhausted after having tried every possible thing I can think of to reach a goal I have set for myself, yet still haven't reached.

What surprises me most is that, once I have rested for just a bit, I discover an untapped piece of energy deep inside. I think of one more idea that just might work. I stand up and take the next step. At that point, one of two things happen.

First, that little moment of rest helps my mind to 'settle'. I begin to think more clearly. I can once again rationalize what has been done and learn from the mistakes. More ideas are allowed to break through the mental frustration. My heart gives me the pep talk I need, and the next step is taken. Faith in my abilities has been restored. The goal is there in front of me once again, and I can see each obstacle that needs to be overcome.

Second, it is that one additional attempt that moves me forward to reaching that goal. Something slips into place. Determination and tenacity begin to take over. Before I realize what is happening, the goal I set is now well within reach.

Each obstacle has been approached, studied and examined. With the proper tools, I go around the first one, under the second, over the third, and knock down the next one. Before you know it, I have reached the original goal. And I learn from all the mistakes, hurdles and setbacks. That knowledge is packed away in my tool box along with the hammer, chisel and shovel. I am prepared to tackle the next goal.

Living a Simple Life can be just as difficult, especially for those who have become dependent on outside sources and technology to live. We 'settle' for what others think we need to be successful. We 'settle' for a job because we have either been groomed for it, or it was expected of us. We 'settle' for the food the grocery stores have to offer. We 'settle' for things that run on microwaves, electricity and moving parts. In our defense, we haven't really been taught there is any other way.

Yet, somewhere, deep down inside us, we wonder if there is something else out there. Our subconscious whispers we have more to offer. Our dreams drift like bubbles on the air, enticing us with the freedom to float and beautiful iridescent colors. Yet, we allow them to pop and fade away, because we are unable, or unwilling, to define them, capture them and embrace them.

Moving to the farm from a deep-rooted city life was as intimidating as it was freeing. I made goals, put plans on paper, and felt like I could conquer the world. When reality set in, I was at first ready to put on boxing gloves and fight it tooth and nail for the things it said I couldn't have. I didn't want to settle, I wanted it ALL!

It took time, but I finally understood that 60 acres cannot handle what 1,000 acres can. Two people cannot do the work of hundreds. To some degree, I had no choice but to 'settle'. But that didn't mean I had to give up.

Our main goal is, and always will be, to live as simple of a life as possible. With that goal in mind, we began the arduous task of detaching from the corporate, governmental, technological and outside world.

We now grow 75% of our own food. From vegetables, herbs and some small fruit, to eggs, meat and dairy products, our freezers, pantry and refrigerators are full. We wake up to fresh air, pastoral scenes, and a contentment that is deep seated. Bread is in the oven, the cookie jar is full, and all of our food is fresh, naturally grown and delicious.

There are still obstacles, work, frustrations and exhaustion to face. But we see them for what they are, and have learned to accept them for what they are – an education in Life. We have no choice but to attend class. The difference is we choose to listen to the Professor, do the homework and study for the tests.

We can either 'settle', 'settle', or 'settle'. For us, we don't want to 'settle' (be still and allow life to pass us by), or 'settle' (accept anything less than what we want). Instead, we chose to 'settle' (accepting reality and taking the rest of our goals by storm).

You, too, have that choice to make. Are you just going to settle? Or are you going to live life to the fullest, capture those beautiful dreams and create a life that brings out the best of who you are?