

# *Living a Simple Life* with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

## **Episode 3 - What is a Simple Life?**

*Welcome to Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. Thanks for stopping by! Grab a glass of Lemonade, pull up a rocker and join me for conversations about living the Simple Life. Go ahead. Get comfortable and settle in for a good visit. It's time to relax and enjoy!*

We often daydream about living 'The Simple Life', and as we do, we wax nostalgic about the way our grandparents lived. No cell phones. No computers. No traffic. No distractions. Just sitting on the front porch, drinking lemonade and visiting with the neighbors.

It sounds good, doesn't it? But that Simple Life they were living? There seems to be a misconception that 'simple' means easy. In reality, Grandma and Grandpa's life was harder. The 'simple' part of it just meant their focus was on priorities, such as feeding their family and keeping a roof over their heads – and not on the 'extras' – like a closet full of clothes or heading off to the islands for the weekend.

They usually worked from sunup to sundown doing the hard labor of tilling a garden by walking behind a mule, hoeing it, harvesting it, and cutting wheat and hay by hand – and none of that was 'easy'.

Today, unless it is by choice, we no longer have to do the back breaking physical labor, nor do we have to feed the mule. Life can still be simple. However, we still need to give it a definition. But even doing that isn't always easy. There are as many definitions for living a Simple Life as there are people who live it.

Two things that remain the same in this type of lifestyle is that it isn't rigid, nor is it one-size-fits-all. What works for me may not work for you. And that is okay. But knowing what it is will help you determine if it is even a good fit for you in the first place.

In order to give you the best idea possible of what a Simple Life is, I am going to share with you my definition and thoughts. From there, you can see what works for you, what doesn't, and begin to create your own definition.

For me, living a Simple Life is multi-faceted. It begins with slowing down, choosing your priorities, and following your passions. It means less focus on busyness just for the sake of being busy and more on what is important to you.

My definition would also include being less dependent on outside sources for food, entertainment, supplies, and our emotional, and spiritual needs.

A Simple Life is about time, and how we spend it. On one hand, you get to spend time – having more time with family and friends, pursuing passions, and doing more of what you love to do. On the other you get to save it – cutting out the things on your calendar that could be considered unnecessary, such as eating out instead of cooking at home, club meetings you no longer enjoy or running errands everyday instead of learning to group them all into one outing.

This type of lifestyle is also about eliminating any unnecessary worries and concerns. Worry comes in two types: things you cannot control, and things you can. When living a Simple life, you begin to fix those worries that you can control – things such as gaining control of your finances, maintaining your home, and managing your schedule. Those things you cannot control? You learn to turn over to a higher power and keep moving forward.

My own Simple Life began in a swing. I had become overwhelmed with trying to balance my home, farm, family, jobs, and constant trips to the city for holdover activities from my city life. I just couldn't keep up and found myself tired of being tired.

So, I basically grounded myself for a day. While sitting in that swing, the first thing I accepted is that I couldn't fix all of this in a single sitting. Instead, I had to take it step-by-step. Armed with a notebook and pen, I started with my priorities, and began to try and figure out what they were.

This is what my final list looked like: Faith. Family. Home. Farm. Profession. Passions. From that point forward, everything else I did would fall under one of these categories. Let's go down the list.

**Faith**, for me, is a priority. I have a strong faith in God. I am not perfect – at all. But I do strive to do the best I can, each and every day. My faith is the source of my inner strength. Each of us have our own belief system, and to at least some degree, faith is what will carry you through.

My **family** runs a close second to my faith. I have a husband, two stepchildren, grandkids, a Mom, siblings, and cousins that are really more like siblings. Within this category, I also place my friends. These people are my extended family, and I will do for them in the same way I would any family member.

My **home** is an extension of my heart. It is where I learn, love, work, play, and breathe. Home isn't a place. You can live in an apartment or mansion, in the middle of a hectic city or in a rural area where the closest neighbor is five miles away. Those are the structures you live in. Home isn't a structure. It is a place in the heart. It isn't a noun – it is an action verb. It is the location of where your life takes place. I also consider my community as a category under the Home Priority. After all, I have to live with my neighbors and within my community, so it just makes sense to me.

Not all people have a **farm**. It was our choice to relocate from the city and dip our toes in the water of homesteading. For me, it has to be a priority, as there are animals to take care of, fences to fix, pastures to maintain and gardens to grow. Because it needs care and nurturing – and because it is also one of my passions – it has to have a place in my priorities.

The primary reason for having a **profession** is to pay the bills. Most of us need a job to provide income. In the case of single people, most have no choice. If you have a spouse or partner, then you may be able to get away with one income, while the other cares for the home.

If the expenses are high enough, then it may be a case where both people work. And a few of us do both – we work from home. That may mean a remote position with an outside company, being an independent business owner, or as a writer, like me.

**Passions** may come in last on the priority list, but it also holds almost equal importance with the rest. It is following our passions that bring joy and happiness. The things you would list in your Passions category are most likely the things that help you to feel alive. Most of them stem from our natural gifts – creativity, numbers, organization, planning, and others. Your passions are what make your heart beat a little faster and brings a smile to your face.

When you live a Simple Life, everything you do will fit within your priorities. It is the list of things you begin to focus on. If it doesn't fit, then you begin to find a way to gracefully eliminate it from your calendar. When you are able to do that, then you will discover more time to focus on the things you want to do, possibly resurrect old dreams and goals, and start relaxing.

Once my priorities were set, I knew the next step was to do a bit of dreaming about how my new Simple Life would fit into those priorities. We are going to talk more about how to dream in the next episode, but for now, let me give you a short list of the things I believe should be included in living a Simple Life. These will also be some of the specific topics I will go into more detail in future episodes:

**Homemaking** – this area covers so many things: cleaning your house, getting organized, living frugally, decorating on a budget, cooking, meal planning, hospitality, and more.

**Gardening** – growing your own food is not only delicious, but also cost saving. It may also become more necessary than we ever imagined. Just recently we went to a grocery store and were amazed at how bare the shelves were. After going to five stores to get only 75% of the items on our list, we realized our ability to grow our own food, to whatever degree we can, may need to be a stronger focus.

**Cooking, Canning, and Preserving** – In the first place, cooking meals at home taste so much better than most food in restaurants. And by cooking yourself, you can adjust the spices and ingredients to fit your own preferences. If you just can't do without that certain dish at your favorite restaurant, the internet is filled with copycat recipes. By cooking at home, you can also save money – both on the food you eat and the gasoline it takes to get there.

If you grow a garden, learning how to can and preserve the harvest can also lower the grocery bill, since most of what you buy is now already sitting within arms reach of your kitchen because you canned it yourself. Plus, the fruits and vegetables taste better, as they aren't picked before they are ripe and shipped.

**Finances** – this is a subject that may make you groan. I have to confess – dealing with our finances is one of my least favorite things to do. But in order for us to keep a roof over our heads, it has to be done. However, it isn't just about paying your bills. It takes money to support all of our priorities and passions, so the more we understand and control our spending habits, the more money we have to pursue the things we want to do.

**Living with Less** – Learning to live with less isn't a matter of stripping yourself down to the bare necessities – food, water, and a roof over our heads. But living with too much stuff means having more to maintain, clean, and store. In some cases, we have so much 'stuff', we don't even know what we have any longer, much less use it all. If we aren't careful, we will have so much stuff there will no longer be enough room for necessities – or maybe even the people living in the home! Living with less can easily translate into having more time to spend on what is truly important.

**Family Time** – I think in our busy worlds, family is the one thing that suffers most. There isn't time to spend with each other, much less create the deep bonds that hold our families together. By living a Simple Life, you have more time to do fun things, like going on a picnic, playing lawn games, or even having a movie night at home. You can also find more one-on-one time with a child or spouse.

**Getting Creative** – now we're talking my language. With very few exceptions, if it is a craft, I want to learn it. Since I began actively pursuing a simple life, I have learned how to knit, crochet, weave, and more. I recently obtained a spinning wheel, and you will find me on many weekends and evenings trying to master the art.

As I said before, getting creative doesn't necessarily mean crafts. You can express your creative nature through cooking or baking the perfect loaf of bread. A love of numbers, organizing, planning, building, and even writing are creative outlets.

When pursuing a creative endeavor, you can turn those results into items for your home, gifts for others, or even things you enjoy seeing or using yourself.

**Mentoring** is an important aspect of my Simple Life. It is one of those enjoyments that work both ways. I have spent countless hours teaching young children a craft or even how to cook and bake. There are women in my life that spent precious time with me teaching me homemaking skills, gardening tips, canning and preserving methods, and life lessons in general. I value those people and the time I spent with them either learning or teaching.

One of the top aspects of living a Simple Life to me is being able to take a day off to **rest**. Let's face it. Regardless of the life we live, there usually isn't enough time in the day to just rest and reflect. But not doing it is a great way to drive ourselves to exhaustion. Our bodies and minds need this time to regroup and rejuvenate.

This is just a sample of my definition of living a Simple Life. Determining which of these areas fit with your priorities and passions is up to you. But let me finish by saying this:

Living a simple life may not be easy. But to know that you have worked hard each day – weeding the garden and growing your own food; being good stewards of the land you have been given, whether that land is an apartment balcony or 100's of acres; taking care of your home and family and being active in your community, is to find a contentment that is rarely known. It is a life that can nourish you as you nurture it.

Take living a simple life into serious consideration. Sit down and enjoy a cold glass of lemonade and ponder your current lifestyle. Is it too busy with things that aren't truly contributing to a good life? Is it a confusing road of cloverleaves, backed up traffic and mind scrambling noise? If so, you may want to consider pulling off the freeway of life and taking your journey along the backroads.

Now, it's time to help you create your own definition, and I have a freebie you can use to do it. I have designed a library of sorts which I call 'Learning to Live a Simple Life'. It is a series of Mini-Workbooks which will walk you through the different steps you can take to change your lifestyle to one that is more enjoyable and manageable. Volume 2 in the series will help you define what a Simple Life means to you.

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand, get a transcript of this Episode, or find the download link for the free mini-Workbook, just visit my website at [www.thefarmwife.com/podcast](http://www.thefarmwife.com/podcast). That is the Resource page for this podcast and I have it set up by episodes to make things easier to find. For this one, just look for Episode 3.

And if you have questions or need some help with creating your own definition, you can stop by for an email visit at [thevirtualporch@gmail.com](mailto:thevirtualporch@gmail.com). And don't forget to hit that Subscribe button so you don't miss out on a single visit!

Join me each Monday for more episodes on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next one, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax and Enjoy!

*julie*