

# *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 7 - Making the Shift to 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!*

Welcome back to Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View! Go ahead, pull up a rocker and settle in for a visit. Today we are going to talk about how you can get started making the Shift to living a Simple Life.

No matter how you define living a Simple Life, there are ways you can accomplish your goals. And to help you formulate the idea of shifting to a Simple Life, think of this as a new journey, filled with fun, adventure, and wonder.

If you haven't already defined what a Simple Life means to you, take some time to do that. Your definition is what you will use to pinpoint where you want or need to go next.

Now, let's start shifting. First, take a good look at your definition. What about it appeals to you most? It may be the idea of slowing down. The thought of getting out of debt may be the reason. Or it could be that you want to focus on growing your own food, spending quality time with your family, or just having time to follow your passions.

When you look at your definition, get an idea of everything you want to accomplish, then put those ideas in order of priority. See which one seems to appeal the most. It is that one you will focus on first.

As I have said before, shifting lifestyles isn't an overnight thing. It isn't something you truly want to try to accomplish in a short time span. Instead, the biggest aspect of a Simple Life is learning how to relax and enjoy – even when the journey gets tough.

So to prevent added frustration or getting overwhelmed, to start your shift you need to find one thing you want to start changing.

Although we are going to talk specifically about setting goals in the next Episode, let's do a quick example to get your started.

For most of us, the idea of living a Simple Life means slowing down, focusing on our priorities, and having extra time to do the things we love to do. But right now, you have so many commitments you don't know where to start.

Your first broad goal in shifting your lifestyle would be – Finding More Time in My Day. From there you would narrow it down even more. For instance, you may not be able to do a clean sweep of your calendar, but you can set a goal such as “Find an extra 3 Hours per Month”.

From there, the first step you would take is to sit down with a calendar, journal, or your appointment book. Look over everything you have coming up in the next 3 months. Next, pull out your Simple Life notebook and get ready to make another list.

Divide your list into 4 columns. In the first column, write down the commitment. In the second column, write down how much time this commitment takes. Be sure to include travel time as well. The third column is for any costs involved. This can be gas to get there, dues, meals, or anything else you would need to spend money on to attend this function. Column 4 is for you to determine how important this commitment is.

For instance, if you go to church every Sunday, it may rank high on your priorities. But if it is a committee you were roped into joining, it may be very low on the priority list.

Now that you have all of your commitments listed, the cost, time and priorities determined, this is the list you will use to start freeing up your time. Starting with the lowest priority, find ways to eliminate that commitment from your calendar. Then move to the next, until you have either reached your 3 hours a month goal or eliminated all the unwanted commitments.

Some of us also need incentives to reach a goal. In this case, determine what it is you want to do with those extra 3 hours. Do you want to use it for quality family time? Do you have a passion you want to pursue? Or do you just want that extra time for yourself?

Once you determine what it is you want to do with your time, then be sure to write it down. You may even want to write it in all caps and highlight it. This acts as a reminder of how important reaching this goal is.

And just so you know, this exercise can be done with almost any reason you want to make the shift to a Simple Life. If you want to get out of debt, review your spending habits, make a list of the current expenses, and determine where you can cut back.

The important part of this exercise is knowing where you stand and where you want to go and then forming an idea of how to get there. As I said, we will talk more about setting specific goals next week. So, for now, just determine which order you want the items in your definition to fall.

Now that you know which one you want to tackle first, start working on that one. And here is why: Because what you are currently doing has become a habit.

According to Healthline.com, it can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days to break or change a habit. On the higher side, that breaks down into a little over 8 months. Breaking habits means being aware of the bad habit, a strong desire to break it, and applying a conscientious effort to make the change.

As with every rule there is an exception. If your definition includes both slowing down and getting out of debt, the act of working on one may actually help you with the other. For instance, if you have cleared your schedule of commitments that have been costing you money, then you are starting to save a bit of money by no longer paying dues or through gasoline expenses.

You may not be focusing on getting out of debt right now, but you have still made a strong step towards doing just that.

Before you start to make a lifestyle shift, it helps to know where you stand right now. This is basically an understanding of who you are, what you know right now, and how your education and life experiences will help you on the journey.

And just to clarify, 'Education' doesn't just mean academically. Education also comes in the form of daily living. Going to school may mean we learn how to read, write, and do math problems, but daily life teaches us more.

It is through living that we learn how to be compassionate. We learn how to love. We learn the nuances of personalities. But we also learn skills that are not taught in most schools - how to cook, clean, grow our own food, and so much more.

You can call these daily life skills 'On the Job Training' because every day you engage in living, you learn something new.

If you need some help to know where you stand, it is beneficial to create a personal checklist. This list will include things you want to learn how to do all the way to things you have accomplished.

For instance, my personal checklist included things such as: Cooking and Baking from Scratch, growing a Garden, Handmade items and gifts, Community Involvement, Finding Quiet Time, and a category I call 'Make Your Own', which includes things like cleaning products and baking and spice mixes. This isn't an exhaustive list – mine had other things on it, and yours may, too.

Beside each of these items, I also added a 'grading' system. For each one, I wrote down the percentage of my knowledge in each area. This was my system: a 0% – 25% – which meant I was just getting started. 26% to 50% showed I was making progress. 51% to 75% reflected I would be considered an Advanced Beginner, and 76% to 100% showed I had reached a comfort level in that category.

Knowing where you stand isn't all about skill levels. It also involves doing a bit of inventory. Your inventory lists will include material items that you may already have, or items you will need. Take for instance a goal of learning how to preserve your harvest. You are going to need water bath and pressure canners, dehydrators, and freezer containers. If you don't have the money for the more expensive items, then start your lessons with freezer containers. As time progresses, you can save for the more costly things.

In shifting to a simple life, there is a serious question you need to ask yourself: Are you Settling?

Settling is something we do when we can't get what we want or need. We 'settle' for second best. Now, sometimes, settling is okay. We 'settle' for using (and repairing) what we have, while we are saving for a newer model. Or we 'settle' for the used car that is in great shape and fits our budget rather than buy the 1959 Corvette we have dreamed of having since we were a kid. This is a smart kind of settling, and shows we are paying due diligence to our finances. However, there is another type of settling that isn't so healthy.

Although it isn't readily acknowledged, when we 'settle' for something less than we want, in a way, 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'. These are just a few of the ways we can 'settle':

- We buy a 'quick fix' instead of saving for a long-term repair. We purchase inferior products, which we have to replace frequently, rather than saving for quality, which can last a lifetime
- We stay in a dead-end job instead of finding a better one out of financial fear. This is a tough one. We need to have a job to pay the bills, but the one we have makes us miserable. However, the job we really want means taking a pay cut – and can we really afford to do that?
- We go along what others think we need instead of listening & following our heart. It's like walking through freshly poured cement that is quickly drying. We can see what we want on the horizon, and dread being stuck, but know if we step out of the cement, we will face the frowns and disapproval or disappointments of our parents, spouses, or friends.

At some point in time, you will reach your Settling threshold. You no longer want to settle but aren't sure how to move forward. To do this, you first need to have a shift in mind set and attitude and begin to take the first steps. You start saving. You learn to say 'No'. You stand up for what you want, instead of what others want for you. It may be difficult to do at first, but in the long run, it can be well worth the effort.

Keep in mind – Settling isn't all about material things. We can settle in different areas of our lives: personally, professionally, spiritually, and creatively. Start small and gain the confidence and courage you need to tackle the big things.

The next consideration is family. Family comes in all sizes, shapes, and people. You have blood relatives, and then there are friends, neighbors, and mentors who are as good as family.

With each person, it helps to know the benefits of the relationship and things you can learn from each one.

Think for a moment about the people in your life. Is there one that is understanding and encouraging? This needs to be the one you share your plan with and go to when things get tough. Is there one that does something you would like to learn how to do? Earmark this one as a mentor.

And as much as we don't want to hear criticism, we still need that one person we can go to who will play Devil's Advocate with us. This is the person that will help you see the pit falls along your journey. And by knowing them in advance, you can find ways to avoid them or get around them, long before they show up.

If it helps, consider these people your pit crew. Each one brings a talent or benefit to your journey.

Now for my favorite part of the Simple Life Journey - Break Time! With every journey, we need to take time to refuel. We may have to stop long enough from trying to reach a goal to save money in order to complete it. We may need to learn more by taking a class or doing additional research. Or we may need to stop long enough to regroup by doing something different to prevent burnout. This break time can also be as simple as sitting on the swing and not thinking about much of anything at all or taking time to reflect on your progress.

And just remember. Even a journey towards a lifestyle that helps you slow down can get wearisome. We also need to refuel our minds and bodies by doing something for ourselves. Learn to take a break every now and then to do something fun and different. This will help clear your mind in order to better focus on a 'glitch' in your plans or make a decision on what the next step should be.

At this point, you may feel too overwhelmed to even try to shift to a Simple Life. Living the one you have now just seems too familiar and easy in comparison. But don't worry. All that you are learning can be done in baby steps. Just take one thing at a time. Give each step a chance to soak in before trying to move to the next thing. Remember, this journey is designed to help make your future brighter and better, which means you have an entire lifetime to work on it!

Now that we are ready to make the shift to a Simple Life, be sure to stick around. In the next Episode, we are going to take what you have learned and break it down into setting goals. However, if you are still at a crossroads and need a little extra help with all the information you learned today, just stop by for a visit at [thevirtualporch@gmail.com](mailto:thevirtualporch@gmail.com).

And if you want to learn more about the topic at hand, get a transcript of this Episode, or download the freebies that will help you navigate this episode, 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 7. And be sure to hit that Subscribe button, so you don't miss a single visit!

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If you are still at a crossroads and need a little extra help with all the information you learned today, I have a helpful 25-page eBook that filled with this same information and worksheets that you can use. If you sign up for my newsletter, it is free! Just head on over to the Resource page at [www.thefarmwife.com/podcast](http://www.thefarmwife.com/podcast). Scroll down to the bottom and click the Subscribe button!

And always remember, if you need any help, have any questions, or just need me as a support person for your pit crew, you can always stop by for a visit at [thevirtualporch@gmail.com](mailto:thevirtualporch@gmail.com). I am more than willing to help in any way I can!

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*julie*