

# *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 12- The Frugal Side of 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 the porch! Don't mind me – I'm just going through a box of yarn. These are the leftovers from other projects that have too much to throw out but not enough to do a big project. I have this idea to use some of my pin looms to create a lap blanket or two, so I am seeing which of these I can use.

I see that look on your face. You want to ask me why I don't just go buy more yarn. Well, I could. But one of my goals for living a Simple Life is being frugal. And yes, one aspect of that is the fun challenge to see what I can create with what I already have on hand. But living a frugal lifestyle is more than just searching through a box of yarn remnants to create another project.

When we think of living a frugal life, there are times we have a mental image of living with only the necessities to keep us alive – food, water, and shelter. Or we envision that poor man that lived in squalor, only to find out upon his death he was actually a millionaire several times over.

There is a big difference between frugal living and being a miser. A Miser is one that bases his self-worth on the amount of the money he has, and in the process, misses out on many of the joys of life.

A frugal person, on the other hand, is one who knows the value of a dollar and spends their money wisely. However, the frugal person isn't afraid to spend it on something they truly enjoy. They also aren't afraid to spend more on a quality item, as they know it will last longer, require fewer repairs, and can get the job done.

Living a frugal life is a combination of several things. First, we live frugally by scaling back to save money. Next, we find ways to fill the gaps between not enough income and too many expenses. And third, we learn the difference between need vs want. Another thing we can do is exactly what I am doing here – looking for ways to use what we have through repurposing.

Let's take a closer look at each one of these. First up, scaling back to save money is an extension of what we discussed last week with Simple Life Finances.

Once we have our budget and income and expense spreadsheet completed, we can see how closely our income covers our expenses. If it is a case of barely breaking even, or being in the red, we know we need to find a better balance.

To get started on cutting expenses, the first place we would start is within the secondary expense section. You may truly enjoy going to the gym every week, but you can work out at home instead of paying for the membership.

Other ways you can cut back on expenses are: Checking books out of the library and cooking at home, instead of eating out. You can do minor maintenance and repairs yourself, instead of hiring a handyman; and if a weekly coffee date with friends is your thing, instead of going to an expensive coffee shop, invite them to your house. Clear the clutter. Reuse and repurpose what you already have on hand.

And instead of going to the movies, entertain your family at home. Have a game or movie night or have a picnic in the back yard and play lawn games. Creating handmade gifts are not only frugal, but are one of a kind and much more personal.

There are tons of ways you can live a bit more frugally. But sometimes we can't always see the big picture and how it can help. If that's the case with you, then let me give you an example of how making frugal choices can help with the bottom line.

Are you a frequent flyer at a drive-thru for a soft drink? You know the drill – your time is limited and the drive-thru is easy. Instead, pack an ice chest filled with water and your favorite drink.

The average cost of a drive-thru or convenience store drink is close to \$2.50 with tax. Assuming you are shopping the sales, if you purchase a case of water, each bottle will cost you approximately twenty-five cents. A canned drink costs around thirty-three cents, and a bottle will cost close to forty-two cents. Compared to the drive thru, that is a savings of anywhere from \$2.08 to \$2.25 for each visit.

Let's do a little math here: If you spend \$2.50 on drive thru drinks 3 days a week, you spend \$7.50. That comes out to \$32.50 a month, or \$390 a year. If you pack an ice chest with the more expensive bottled soft drinks, your average weekly cost is \$1.26. That comes out to \$5.46 a month, and \$65.52 a year.

By packing an ice chest and staying away from the drive thru, you would save \$324.48 each year. It doesn't sound like much when you figure it on a weekly basis, but over the course of a year it really adds up.

You can even take it a step further. If you prefer water, instead of buying it in bottles, invest in what I call an adult version of a sippy cup. It's the metal insulated cups you can get most anywhere. Keep a jug of tap water in your ice chest, and just add to your sippy cup when needed. This way, your water is virtually free, and you can save even more.

Drinks in a drive thru are just one example of finding ways to spend less. You can also follow all the suggestions to cut your electric bill, from turning your air conditioning up by a few degrees, or hanging your clothes out on the line instead of using a dryer. The trick is to look at everything you spend your money on and think outside the box for ways to trim the expenses. Those pennies you save each month will start adding up.

When it comes to closing the gap between your income and expenses, there are ways you can do this. Of course, cutting your spending is the first way. But if your gap is still there, it's time to find ways to increase your income.

If the gap is really wide, you may want to consider taking on a part-time position. You can do this for a month, six months, a year – however long it will take you to close the gap.

You can also consider working from home. Several companies offer remote employment. In some cases, it may be something you can do in the evenings, which will allow you to continue working at your current job, and still have a second income without having extra travel time.

If the gap is there, but doesn't need much in the way of closure, you may want to think about other ways to earn a little extra. I call this 'Butter and Egg' money. This is an old way of defining that little extra income because these were two items most homes had in excess. Folks would sell to neighbors, and sometimes to the local grocer.

A few ways you can earn Butter and Egg money are through garage sales, signing up for a flea market booth, selling eggs, excess produce, and value-Added Products such as Jams, Jellies, and other Canned Items. You can sell handmade items online, such as through Etsy.

You can also sign up for 'when needed' positions, such as a poll worker, substitute teaching, cleaning houses, babysitting, and others.

Learn the art of barter. This is a system where you trade goods of equal value. You get what you need and can offer someone else what they need. No money is exchanged, but everyone walks away happy.

The next thing you need to think about is the difference between need and want. Needs are things you literally have to have to survive, or to get a job done efficiently. The very basic needs of life are food, water, shelter, and clothing, so let's use a couple of those as a need vs want comparison.

You NEED a roof over your head, but do you really NEED a larger, more expensive home in a swanky neighborhood, or are you just looking for the prestige? Clothes are a necessity, but do you have to wear designer versions, when a less expensive brand will work just as well?

Before you purchase anything, determine if it is a need or a want. And if you think it's a need, ask yourself why it is necessary, and why a less expensive product won't work just as well.

If you are truly honest with yourself and determined to cut your expenses, you are going to have a difficult time proving to yourself that a \$90,000 new vehicle is better than a \$20,000 used one in great condition and with low mileage. And here's a thought on that - the moment you drive a brand-new vehicle off the lot, the value of it drops anywhere from 5% to 20%. That used vehicle might just look better now, don't you think?

There are some exceptions to this rule. For some items, you may want to choose based on quality. A quality item may cost more, but usually they last longer. A cheaper version may have to be replaced more frequently, which ends up costing you more in the long run.

These are just some of the ways you can close the gap between your income and expenses and help cut back on your spending. But there are other ways you can live a frugal life.

One of my favorite things to do is repurpose. I have a stack of old clothing in my craft room I plan on using. They may end up being anything from rugs to quilts, to doll clothes and more.

Broken dishes can become pieces for mosaic work. Rusted buckets make great flowerpots. Picture frames can become weaving looms. A friend of mine used her dad's old neck ties to make a skirt. I never would have thought of that, but it turned out to be one of the cutest things I have seen.

When repurposing, the trick is to think outside the box. Look at things from a different perspective and see how it can work for you.

Even with living a frugal life, there is a balance. Some folks think they need to keep a death grip on their finances and can never spend money for things they want. That isn't the case at all.

For instance, the reason I am reusing all this yarn is twofold. One, I want to see how the lap blankets turn out before I invest even more money in them. But I also want to learn how to do rug hooking. I have most of the supplies already to do that, but I still need a few more things.

By not spending money on the yarn for the lap blankets, I can buy what I need for the new craft, and still feel comfortable with the expense. It is okay to spend money. The trick is to not break the budget in the process.

If you want something, but don't really need it, think about why you want it, and how it can be helpful. Then decide if it is worth the price, or shop around to see if you can get it for less.

The trick is to learn to balance between having a Death Grip and gaining Comfortable Control. If you want it, it has benefit, and you can afford it, get it. If there just isn't enough old clothing that will work for your craft project, buy the fabric, or go to the Thrift Shop to find what you need.

Frugal living isn't a case of never spending money. It's making wise choices on how you spend it.

And don't worry. Anyone can start living a frugal life. It isn't difficult, it just takes some time, thought, and dedication to get in the habit.

Now, I'm thinking I have enough yarn here to make a cute lap blanket. I'm headed inside to grab my pin looms and will be back in a minute. While I'm grabbing supplies, just sit back and enjoy a bit of quiet time and start thinking about ways you can be more frugal.

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand, or get a transcript for 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. To help you out, this is Episode 12.

If you have questions or need some help moving forward with a more frugal and simple life, just stop by for an email visit at [thevirtualporch@gmail.com](mailto:thevirtualporch@gmail.com). And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax and Enjoy!

*julie*