

# *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 18- Planning Ahead for Christmas**

*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!*

Has anyone told you lately what an incredible person you are? What an amazing person you've become? If not, let me be the one to do it.

WAIT. Please don't tell me you don't believe me. I hope I didn't see you shake your head in disagreement.

Here's the thing. We rarely believe ourselves to be amazing, incredible, or unique. The first problem is we know ourselves too well. Our thoughts keep reminding us of our weaknesses. We tell ourselves we aren't smart enough, strong enough, or are too afraid to be who we are. We may face a rejection we can't handle.

The second problem is our yardstick. We all too often measure ourselves against others. In some cases, it may be our friends or family. We do a comparison check against celebrities, co-workers, or a person we admire.

But the truth you need to understand is, you are not that person. You have been wonderfully and uniquely created by God. You are naturally going to be different than everyone else. You are not your Mama, your sister, your pastor, your neighbor. You aren't the celebrity you admire. You are you.

It took me years to learn this. I all too often hung my hat on who others said I should be. I tried hard to emulate those I admired.

There was a day, years ago, when I sat down and had a personal pity party. One where you could almost see the cupcakes, balloons, and confetti. I was trying so hard to be a good wife, mom, daughter, sister, friend, and child of God, and knew I was failing miserably.

There were tears, prayers, confusion, and frustration. My yardstick was measuring me against others I knew who seemed to have all the talents in those areas. And my personal cloth was constantly being cut too short.

It wasn't until I shared my anguish with a good friend that things started to turn around for me. Her words were simple but reached me in a way nothing else could. She was a friend who wasn't afraid to tell me how the cow ate the cabbage. Instead, she just figuratively started cutting the strings on the balloons and cleaning up the cupcake crumbs.

"Heaven forbid, Jules," she said. "You have it backwards. You don't want to be anyone else. If you are willing to change yourself into those people, then you also have to be willing to carry their baggage, as well as yours. Why carry everyone else's burdens when you have enough of your own? You are a unique creation of God. Be you. Take that uniqueness and own it, live it, love it."

One thing I have learned about living a Simple Life. It's sounds good on paper, but not everyone has fully discovered the person they were meant to be. They aren't sure of their capabilities, passions, or dreams. Instead, they have lived too long on the expectations of others.

Another reason some folks don't live a Simple Life is because they don't fully understand it. There isn't a set definition to describe what exactly it is. There is no blueprint, roadmap, or checklist. Consequently, they have no idea where to start.

I used the words my friend spoke to me that day as inspiration and encouragement to create a lifestyle that fit the person I am. Any changes, adaptations, or eliminations I made had to come from the foundation of who I am, what my passions are, and where I wanted to go. It wasn't a life anyone else could tell me how to live. I had to start from scratch and figure it out all by myself. I had to apply my uniqueness to this life and own it, live it, and love it. And if I didn't, I was the only one who could make the changes that would fit.

And that is the beauty of a Simple Life. It isn't one size fits all. This lifestyle may have a name, but everything under that umbrella is as different as the person who lives it. You get to begin wherever you choose to draw the starting line.

When you begin to live a Simple Life, you make your own blueprint. It begins when you bring your uniqueness to the table. From there, you build using your talents, your abilities, your individuality, and your perspectives.

The tools you use are your passions, your dreams, and imagination. If you love being a homemaker, be the best homemaker you can be. If your deepest passion is to become an artist, set up your easel, get out your camera or get your hands wet and dirty with clay and a pottery wheel. If all you long for is more time and less busyness, get your schedule and calendar out and start eliminating things.

With each piece you put into place, you grow. And as you keep growing, you get better, stronger, and sturdier. You begin filling your life with joy, happiness, and contentment. My Simple Life is going to be different from yours. I am a creative. I use my creativity in almost all aspects of my life, from writing and speaking, to my home, garden, and creating with my hands. You may be a creative but would rather apply it to organizing a community event, decorating cakes, or creating a quilt, none of which I am good at.

One of my weakest areas is math. I can handle my finances, but much more than that is beyond me. You, on the other hand, may thrive and shine every time you see a math equation. Your eyes see  $X =$  and from there you are off and running trying to find the solution.

These are the talents and gifts you were given. They weren't given to me. Consequently, these passions would be included in your Simple Life. I'm going to let you have them, and I'll take my weaving looms to another room.

Another way to help you design your own Simple Life is to take a good look at your strengths and weaknesses. Learn how to make both work for you.

Here's something you may not know about me. I love trains. Other than those at an amusement park, I've never been on one. It's on my Bucket List, but so far, no ticket. One thing I have always dreamed of having is a garden railroad. At first, it was a simple model train that ran circuits through an elaborate garden. There would be bridges over a koi pond, and tunnels made from hanging flowers.

When we moved to the farm, my dream garden railroad grew to be large enough for grandkids to ride on and the circuit would be the entire 60 acres. There would be a depot halfway through with a cute station where snacks could be purchased with play money that originally had to be earned through doing small farm chores.

I know. I know. I would have to win the lottery to fulfill that dream. But, not too long ago, I thought I might have found a suitable compromise. Don't laugh, but I saw this cool book on building steam engines one day. My mind immediately envisioned a small one, but still big enough the grandkids could ride around the yard.

The Country Boy can be creative, but his talent is taking an idea and finding a way to build it. He is very mechanically inclined and has a head for the numbers that I don't. I showed him the idea and asked if he could build one.

After some intense study, he determined that yes, it could be built. But then he proceeded to explain how much it would cost, and the destruction that could happen if something went wrong. Oh, well. It was a fun thought while it lasted.

As you can see, I have different talents than the Country Boy does. Where I can dream it, he can build it. We balance our strengths and weaknesses and work together to bring a dream to reality.

Your Simple Life can work the same way. You are strong in some areas. Let those strengths shine and move you forward. But when a weakness comes into play, embrace them as well.

First, you may have found an area where all you need is to do some research and put in a little practice time. But sometimes, all the practice in the world won't help you. That is when you have an opportunity to blend your weaknesses with someone else's strengths.

Living a Simple Life doesn't mean being someone else. It doesn't mean you have to do it alone. Even if you are single, there are still others around you who have their unique talents and gifts. Instead of trying to become them, encourage a stronger relationship by asking for help, and in turn, offering yours.

I just can't do the math, but the Country Boy can. His idea of a story is 'A Man was born, he lived, he died. The end.' He understands that by not doing the math, a steam engine toy could blow up and do serious damage. I know a story is so much more than just the basics. Without the details, any reader would walk away, completely disappointed.

We both have our strengths and weaknesses. To make our Simple Life work, we don't try to turn ourselves into each other. Instead, we ask for help. Even though we are still weak in some areas, we have accepted our own uniqueness.

You are an incredible person. You are uniquely created by a God who not only loves you immensely but has designed you for a reason. Don't carry someone else's baggage. Be yourself. Let your uniqueness shine through the Simple Life you design for yourself. Own it. Live it. Love it. And as you keep growing, just imagine being even more incredible. Isn't that something worth looking forward to?

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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 & Enjoy!

*julie*