

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 30- Spread Your Wings - Keep Growing

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!

There is nothing in the world worse than personal and spiritual stagnation. We, as humans, were designed to continue learning and growing, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.

To quit growing means that we are dead, or in the process of dying. That is a thought that I just can't stand to consider.

Here on the farm, I am forced so many times to learn something new – whether dealing with livestock that is having health issues, a garden that just won't produce well, or tackling the constant litany of repairs and how to do them right. And then, Nature gives you another little shove.

Did you know that stormy weather is a perfect time for learning something new? Well, I found out the hard way.

Last year, we had a snowstorm. For many of you, that may be second nature. But here in the south, we rarely even see a snowflake, much less roads frozen over, power outages, and having to dig our way out of the house and into the barn and coop. Businesses and schools were closed.

And forget going anywhere. There isn't a hardware store in the state that carries snow chains, and even if they did, not many of us would know how to put them on. Face it, we didn't have a clue what to do.

And it was our situation for several days. Even as a person who doesn't mind cleaning house, I can only do so much housework before I go crazy. Instead of looking at this weather-related prison with a grumpy attitude, I chose to see it as a challenge to learn something new.

For Christmas one year, The Country Boy was kind enough to build three rug looms – one for me, one for Lorea, and one for Kathleen. This loom is adjustable, and we can make rugs, placemats, and a runner, all on the same loom.

On a quiet Saturday, Lorea and I decided to tackle learning how to use it. It took a bit of study, but we each had a project started. While stuck inside due to the weather, I finally finished the rug, tackling the 'finishing off' portion with a few grunts, frustrations, and determination. The determination came in because I really wanted to move forward and try my hand at placemats.

As I am the one who usually has several creative irons in the same fire, I also wanted to finish another project on my floor loom and was curious to try another 'new' technique. All that project included was simply tying a new project on to the current warp. By doing so, I could change the warp color, but still use the same draft. Learning this process would save me time from having to thread dents and heddles.

I also had a knitting and crochet project sitting close by, and a Bible study I was working on, so boredom didn't have to be an issue. I had plenty to keep me busy.

When I hear people talk about being bored, it makes me wonder. For a few hours, or even a day, boredom isn't such a bad thing. It's an opportunity to rest your weary bones and rejuvenate your mental health.

Longer than that, though, I can only wonder just how much laziness is involved. If you are bored for any length of time, maybe it's time to stretch your wings.

We as humans should constantly be in a state of learning. It is how we grow and make a better life for ourselves.

As with a child, when his body starts stretching in an upward growth pattern, you will most definitely experience some growing pains and stir up the dust bunnies by stretching your mind.

There will be uncertainty. Mistakes. Failures. And plenty of returns to the instruction page. But when the dust settles, you will be able to add to your life's resume in a positive manner.

The first thing you should ask yourself is 'What' should I be Learning? If you aren't sure, then ask yourself a second question. What interests you? For the cook/baker/chef, go ahead and tackle that new recipe you have been wanting to try. Find one that has a technique which is new to you – such as trying out different starters for sourdough breads. Then bake bread using each one and see which one you like better.

Years ago, I spent several weeks housesitting and had to stay in residence. I had always wanted to learn how to make a soufflé. So, I tackled it. 12 dozen eggs later, I finally made one that didn't fall, and that I couldn't use as building material.

Would I ever do it again? Only if someone extremely special to me asked – and I don't think Jesus cares if I make Him a soufflé or not.

Are you interested in history? Take a tour through your local museum. Choose an era or topic and go to the library. Read everything you can find about the subject. Lately, I have been fascinated with the history of crafts. I now have several books on the subject, and still find myself wanting to learn more.

Look for local groups or people who would have knowledge. Ask them if they would be willing to talk to you. If they say 'yes', then bake (or buy) some cookies and head over to a prearranged meeting place. (Just as an aside – It isn't wise to meet strangers in their home or yours. Choose a public location for at least the first meeting, and until you are absolutely sure of your safety.)

We have wonderful plantation homes within an hour's drive, and I can't tell you how many times I have visited them. It's where I learned the history of The Stranger's Room and find that aspect of our Southern Plantations absolutely fascinating.

It was on one of those Plantation tours that my love for fiber arts ignited. The Weaving Room at Melrose Plantation, outside of Natchitoches, Louisiana, is home to a massively sized old loom and spinning wheel. This is where all the fabrics for daily use were made. It was love at first sight.

Since then, my heart has stretched to include most fiber arts, and I am still learning how to knit and crochet. Do you love the feel of yarn or fiber running through your fingers? Find a pair of knitting needles, a bit of yarn, and get clicking.

Got a new Bible study? This is a perfect time to do more than a surface reading. You can really dig deep, and research a bit more than normal. Go past the study – check on a study guide, read the explanations, follow up on the other referenced verses.

Another way to stretch your wings is to learn a new skill or improve one you already have.

The Country Boy considers himself a wood butcher, not a carpenter. But his desire for perfection makes him an ideal candidate for building some of my crazy projects. With each one, he learns a little more, and uses that knowledge to apply to the next one.

Right now, he is fighting, trying to get out of building me yet another loom – but since I love learning and really want that loom, I will ‘gently’ keep encouraging him until I get my way!

Still, when he is working on a project, and by being out there with him, I am learning another new skill, and discovering how to handle various tools. I now know ten different uses for pliers, hammers, wrenches, and grinders, so be afraid. Be very afraid of a Farm Wife bearing tools!

Speaking of which, ask yourself, “What do I depend on my spouse to do, that I could possibly do for myself?” I have an independent streak a mile wide, so if something comes up that I have to have the Country Boy do, then I go with him, pay close attention, and then work towards being able to do it myself.

Except for the days our generator quits. I’d rather not get in his way so we can have some semblance of power while the electric company works to restore it. But once the weather let’s up, I may just have to learn a thing or two about generators. You know – just in case.

Necessity is truly the mother of invention, so on one of those stormy days, look around the house and see what needs fixing or changing. Then look around to see what you have that can do the job.

If it’s a loose plug, take the time to figure out how to turn off the power before repairing it. Then get a book that shows you step by step how to do it.

Do your cabinets need organizing? Find baskets that will fit to store the small stuff, and jars with lids to store the dry goods. Get some chalkboard paint and design labels on them. Not only will your cabinets be clean, but they will also look fashionably fun.

No matter what you choose to do, just don't stop learning. Don't allow the excuse of age, lack of income, or too much television to get in your way.

Take a leap of faith in yourself; make room for mistakes; and get busy. And if you will excuse me, I have a loom to build. Which is much to the chagrin of the Country Boy, but he already knows he lives with a very determined woman!

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. 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 30.

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If you have questions or need some help with stretching your wings, stop by for an email visit at thevirtualporch@gmail.com. I would love to visit with you more!

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