

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 34- Count & Use Your Blessings

Hi, I'm Julie, and I teach folks how to live a Simple Life. It's usually during the holidays when we wish for just that lifestyle. As it is we are overwhelmed by all the extras added to the normal daily routine.

Thanksgiving is a holiday where we truly want to fulfill its purpose of giving thanks for all of our blessings. But somewhere between the dressing and the sweet potatoes, we start focusing more on what we haven't done yet, and whether our table is long enough to separate feuding family members in order to prevent as much sniping and belligerence as possible.

I am a big advocate of counting my blessings. On Thanksgiving, I strive to think about everything I have to be grateful for. Even with the verbal missiles flying, I am still grateful for those constantly feuding family members. While I am washing up the seemingly never-ending stack of dirty dishes, I keep counting. And I do my best to carry that over into each and every day, whether it is Thanksgiving Day or not.

But recently I came across a quote by W.T. Purkiser. He said, 'Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our Thanksgiving.'

I have often counted my blessings, but honestly? I never gave pause to think about how I can use them. During one of my Afternoon Tea breaks, I sat and pondered these words. During that session, I saw the importance of asking myself two questions: "What are my blessings?" followed up by "Just how do I use them?"

The first question was relatively easy to answer – among some of my top blessings are a God who loves me in spite of me, a family to cherish, a roof over my head, food to eat, and a farm that provides so much for us.

It was the second question that made me really have to break down my blessings. Still, some were easier than others. My faith in God can be shared in little ways – such as an honest smile and a kind word. It can be shared in big ways – sharing Christ through words, seeing and meeting the needs of others, and just striving to live a life that reflects Him.

Using the blessing of my home meant learning to be more hospitable, preparing a meal for a sick neighbor, or providing a safe place for my family to live.

Sharing the gift of my family took a bit more time but was almost as easy. We could work together as a family to help others, or I could 'loan out' the Country Boy to help clear roads of trees and debris after a storm.

These are the easiest blessings to think about. But we also have other blessings we don't consider as blessings.

Take a moment to think about the obstacles you have in life. We think of them as a hardship. But did you ever stop to think those obstacles could be a blessing in disguise?

When we have to overcome an obstacle, it may be we are being taught a new lesson. In order to move forward, there is something we need to learn in order to better fulfill or understand the next part of our journey.

Finding a way around that obstacle means we have to stretch our minds, skill levels, and even our attitudes. Moving forward before we learn these lessons may make the road ahead of you even more difficult to walk.

An obstacle may also be a warning sign. To continue the path we are on may mean dealing with even more difficulty than we were ever intended to go through. These obstacles are designed to help us stop a moment and think things through. From there, we may be able to see a better path, just off to the side.

Another way an obstacle can be a blessing is to just slow us down. We live in a fast-paced world, and all too often we feel if we do slow down, we will get run over. If being run over by the busyness in your life is a problem for you, encountering an obstacle may be a way of telling you that you are on the wrong road altogether.

You may not consider your talents as blessings, but in reality, they are. You and I may have the same type of talent, but if we look closely, we use them in different ways. I am blessed with a creative mindset. You may be too. But where I apply my talent in creating things with fiber through weaving, knitting, and crochet, your creative spirit may lead you to woodworking, pottery, or even glass blowing.

But not all of us have similar talents. You may have a caring talent that leads you to becoming a medical professional. I may be able to hold your hand and offer words of encouragement during your illness but trust me – you don't want me administering shots, medication, or taking care of your body in an emergency situation.

No matter what our talents are, they should definitely be considered a blessing. It is through these talents we can provide skills to improve our own way of life. They can also be used to help others. A talent with finances can help someone learn how to manage their money and be able to survive a decrease in income or unexpected medical bills.

A talent for carpentry can help us make our own repairs or build homes for the homeless. And a talent for teaching can open up new and positive horizons for everyone around you.

One of our blessings may be that we have a roof over our heads. But that covering of shingles is also a shelter for the very home we live in. Using the blessing of a home comes in many different forms.

First, it does provide a sanctuary for our family. But it may also be a safe haven for friends. In the case of Thanksgiving, our home is used as a gathering place. In it we provide a delicious meal, and conversation.

But do you also realize you are offering gifts and blessings of friendship? Your home is a place where people not only feel welcome, but also included. The people gathered around the table are given nourishment for not just their bodies, but also their hearts and souls as well.

You may think of growing a garden as a skill. But in reality, it is a blessing. Knowing how to grow food allows you to not only feed your family but your neighbors as well by offering them fresh produce. The skill of gardening can be a blessing within a blessing, as you can also teach your children and others how to grow and produce their own food.

When you face that pile of dirty dishes in the sink after the last slice of pie has been devoured, you may think of it as anything but a blessing. Instead, view it as one. Those dirty dishes mean folks felt comfortable and welcome. It means they are going home with well-fed bodies and hearts.

And there is one blessing to washing up dirty dishes we rarely consider. We now either have quiet time to ourselves to think and count our blessings or have a bit of one-on-one time with a child or family member who is willing to help. That time together can be used to offer support and encouragement, teach a life lesson, or share in a bit of laughter. And their help? That, too, is a blessing!

Speaking of dishes – my dishwasher recently quit working. At first, I just gave a sigh of frustration, thinking about all that extra work. But after giving it a moment of thought, I realized it was a blessing in disguise.

Not having a dishwasher gives me the opportunity for a bit of unexpected prayer time. It also means a few extra moments of conversation with The Country Boy, as he is always willing to help clean the kitchen after dinner.

When Thanksgiving rolls around, you know this is a time to count your blessings. But with each blessing you count, also consider how you can use those blessings to help others. And when you measure the success of how well your Thanksgiving Day went, don't think about whether or not Uncle George and Grandma Suzie will ever resolve their differences, or if your team will win the game.

Instead, measure the success by how well you used the blessings you've been given. And by being able to know they have been used well, then, and only then, will you realize you have truly had a successful day.

Know that this year I will be counting you as one of my greatest blessings. My wish for you is to be blessed beyond measure.

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 34.

If you have questions or just want to stop in for a visit, you can do that through email at 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 & Enjoy!

julie