

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 43 - Is It Self-Sufficiency, Self-Reliance, or Living a Simple Life

I love roses. They are beautiful flowers, and come in many different sizes, shapes, and colors. Some have no scent at all. Others have a rich aroma that seems to sooth your very soul.

They also come in various types: Floribunda, Tea, Rugosa, and Rambling. Each of those groups have even more names – A Faithful Friend is a Floribunda; Alexandra is a hybrid Tea; Albertine is a Rambling. And there is a long list of other names to go with the types. My favorite is the fat, fluffy cabbage rose, which has so many petals it truly does resemble its namesake.

In Shakespeare's romantic tragedy, Romeo and Juliet, the famous balcony scene has Juliet giving a soliloquy based on the premise that Capulet and Montague are only names and shouldn't be a defining factor of a person. She puts it this way: 'A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet.'

This same thing applies when you are talking about self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and living a Simple Life. They may have different names, but they are all still roses. The only difference between the three may only come down to the degree in which you apply it.

The most synonymous of the three are self-sufficiency and self-reliance. When you hear these mentioned, you think in terms of being able to house, clothe, feed, and provide for your family without any outside assistance.

Let's get real here for a moment. I don't care who you are, where you live, or how much land you have – no one can be 100% self-sufficient or self-reliant. There are simply things you cannot do or produce yourself, no matter how hard you try. One of the reasons for this is climate, with Nutmeg is a good example. This tree requires a hot, humid climate, with absolutely no dry spells. Cinnamon is the bark from a tropical tree and isn't grown in the US. And unless you are sitting on a salt mine, your only source of this seasoning and preservative is from the store.

Two other reasons are space and manpower. Even if you could grow and produce even 80% of the products you need, think of not only the amount of land you would need, but also the number of people required to produce and process it. We have sixty acres, and even if we used every square inch of it, I still wouldn't have room to grow enough wheat for the amount of flour I use, cane for all the sugar we go through plus all our meat, produce, herbs, fruit, and timber for lumber – much less the space for processing it and turning into a useable product. Let's not even talk about mining for salt.

When you read or listen to information on self-reliance or self-sufficiency, this is one of the unspoken caveats. However, depending on the size of your land, the number of people in your family, and your climate, there are many things you can do to achieve at least some degree of self-sufficiency.

Living a Simple Life is very similar. You can live a Simple Life, and still be self-sufficient. However, it may also be your choice to simply remove yourself from the busyness of life and focus more on following your dreams and pursuing your passions. For many of us who choose to live a Simple Life, that does include producing as much as we can to feed, house, and clothe our families.

All three terms are primarily based on a desire to retreat from the rat race as much as possible. It means we have at least some semblance of independence. The premise behind it is to grow, produce, make, and provide as many things as possible on your own, rather than depend on outside sources.

The degrees of all three lifestyles comes down to available space, skill levels, and desire. Where space is concerned, you may only be able to do a small balcony or patio garden in an apartment, where a suburban home with a sunny yard will allow you space to grow a bit more. Acreage, or a small farm, will allow you the room to grow enough to eat fresh, and process the remainder for year-round consumption.

In an apartment or small home, you may not have the space to raise chickens for meat and fresh eggs. A suburban home – depending on zoning laws – may grant you that ability. Acreage or a small farm will allow you to not only raise chickens, but depending on the size of your land, you can also have rabbits, goats, sheep, and possibly even cattle.

But just because you live in a small home or apartment doesn't mean you can't be to some degree self-sufficient from a food standpoint. You may not be able to grow all of your own food in your back yard, but you can work with others in a Community Garden. You may join a co-op that has gardening space as well as room to raise small animals.

Another commonality among self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and living a Simple Life is the ability to work at your own pace. If you are new to this type of lifestyle, you may want to start slow. To begin, you may start a vegetable garden. As you get comfortable tending to it, your next step may be increasing the size, or even adding an herb garden.

But it isn't all about fresh food and livestock. There are other elements to being self-sufficient, self-reliant, or living a Simple Life. There is also cooking and baking. Taking care of your home and family. Creating by hand – whether it is with knitting needles and a sewing machine, or a forge and a table saw.

Living this type of lifestyle is about direction. You are the captain of your own ship and get to set your course. A huge benefit of this is if you don't like where you are headed, you get to change course. You may still have to sail through high winds and wild storms, but that is part of life in general. Just because you are self-sufficient, self-reliant, or living a Simple Life, doesn't mean you are exempt from rough sailing.

These lifestyles are also about having the ability to slow down, relax, and find a sense of accomplishment and contentment with your way of life. The beauty of it is you get to choose the direction you want to go, set your own pace, and determine the degree of how much you do. It is all about following YOUR dreams and pursuing YOUR passions – not someone else's.

When I was brainstorming this podcast with the Country Boy, he spoke of a mental image of someone working long hours in an office from 40 to 60 hours a week. If they had downtime on the weekends, this person was so tired, 'all they want to do is sit around in their jammies and watch tv.'

Unfortunately for the Country Boy, he knows that concept all too well. At one point, he worked for a company that required 60 to 70 hours per week. By the time Saturday rolled around, he was exhausted. And that was only what little time he managed to be home on the weekend.

I have to confess, I shuddered at the memory. We were still living in the city at the time, but it was still a tough lesson. However, I now know I needed to learn it in order to better appreciate the Simple Life we live now. Yes, he still has to work off farm to provide an income. But his hours aren't nearly as long.

But at the same time, we are diligently working toward our goal for the farm to provide enough income for him to stay home. It is our biggest dream, and one we aren't willing to give up on.

In a way, you can call it 'growing roses'. In order to grow abundantly, all rose bushes need pruning from time to time. Most of them have thorns that leave us bleeding just a bit. But regardless of their names, size, colors, or number of petals, all of them are still beautiful, and a rich source of joy.

It doesn't matter what you call it. Self-sufficiency, self-reliance, or living a Simple Life. All of them are still a beautiful rose and will bring joy to our days. It still means we get to be the captain of our own ship and choose which direction we will sail.

And when we do make landfall, we will be able to see the blooms of our labor – with so many types, colors, sizes, and shapes, we won't care what their different names are. We'll just call them 'roses', then settle in to relax and enjoy the beauty before us.

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 43.

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