Being a Friend for 30 years has given me support for my leading, but the basis of my leading comes from long ago. My parents were role models for fairness, compassion and faith. My college roommate in 1964 was a Quaker who taught me about putting belief into action. A trip to South Africa in 1990 made me re-think how I was to spend my time, money and energy in the future. Over the last 10 years, my husband Kim has been a role model for me by living lightly with ecological integrity. We challenge each other to practice together the Friends testimony on Simplicity.

Ten Reasons for Choosing a Simpler Life-Style

by Jrgen Lissner

TODAY’S GLOBAL REALITIES call for comfortable Christians to review their lifestyles. Guidelines for a simpler style of life cannot be laid down in universal rules; they must be developed by individuals and communities according to their own imagination and situation. The question of lifestyle changes has major importance in a world where justice has to be understood as eco-justice. The ecological peril has become the context in which justice as equitable distribution must be sought.

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Simpler living

1. As an act of faith performed for the sake of personal integrity and as an expression of a personal commitment to a more equitable distribution of the world's resources.

2. As an act of self-defense against the mind- and body-polluting effects of overconsumption.

3. As an act of withdrawal from the achievement-neurosis of our high-pressure, materialistic societies.

4. As an act of our solidarity with the majority of humankind, who have no choice about lifestyle.

5. As an act of sharing with others what has been given to us, or of returning what was usurped by us through unjust social and economic structures.

6. As an act of celebration of the riches found in creativity, spirituality, and community with others, rather than in mindless materialism.

7. As an act of provocation (ostentatious underconsumption) to arouse curiosity, leading to dialogue with others about affluence, alienation, poverty, and social injustice.

8. As an act of anticipation of the era when the self-confidence and assertiveness of the underprivileged force new power relationships and new patterns of resource allocation upon us.

9. As an act of advocacy of legislative changes in present patterns of production and consumption, in the direction of a new economic order.

10. As an exercise of purchasing power to redirect production away from the satisfaction of artificially created wants, toward the supplying of goods and services that meet genuine social needs.

The adoption of a simpler lifestyle is meaningful and justifiable for any or all of the above reasons alone, regardless of whether it benefits the underprivileged. Demands for "proof of effectiveness" in helping the poor simply bear witness to the myth that "they the poor" are the problem and "we the rich" have the solution.

Here is a list of things that have worked for me. You can try some:

- Embracing silence daily.
- Connecting with nature and the planet.
Staying home more and being less busy.

Driving less and advocating for better transportation options.

Being a non-consumer.

Spending mindfully and locally.

Giving stuff away—less to care for and insure.

Eating food in season, grown locally.

Unplugging the T.V.

Installing a clothesline.

Sharing tools and seeds.

Using less water.

Buying energy-efficient appliances.

Using non-toxic cleaning materials.

Exploring low-cost leisure, such as hikes and potluck meals.

Buying in bulk to minimize wasteful packaging.

Using compact fluorescent bulbs.

Fixing instead of replacing.

Examining all holiday practices to see if they are in line with my values.

Being grateful.

Getting support from others.

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Patterns and Attitudes of Simpler Living

By Susan Carlyle

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There is no right way to live more ecologically. Although there is no formula for defining a life of conscious simpler living, there is a general pattern of behaviors and attitudes that is often associated with this approach. Those choosing simpler living tend to:
- Invest time in partners, children, family, volunteering and civic affairs.

- Work on all of their potential: physical, emotional, mental, spiritual.

- Feel an intimate connection with the Earth.

- Have compassion for the world's poor and have concerns for social justice.

- Lower their level of personal consumption.

- Buy things that are durable, repairable, less polluting, and energy-efficient.

- Shift their diets from processed foods and meat.

- Reduce clutter and complexity by giving things away.

- Use consumption politically through boycotting.

- Recycle and reduce the need for material resources.

- Pursue right livelihoods.

- Develop skills for self-sufficiency.

- Prefer smaller dwellings and workplaces.

- Creatively adapt male-female roles.

- Appreciate silence and non-verbal communication.

- Participate in holistic health care.

- Involve themselves in compassionate causes.

- Adopt more efficient transportation modes.

- Better integrate their inner/outer lives.

- False godly worldly distractions to our spiritual life:
  - wealth
  - status
  - power
  - recognition
  - property
  - toys
  - lust
  - pride
  - vanity
  - technology
  - sex
  - drugs
  - rock n roll
  - efficiency
  - speed
  - knowledge
  - work
  - simplicity
  - possessions
  - collectibles
  - fashion
  - food
  - obsessions
  - addictions
  - popularity
  - prestige
  - career
  - novelty
  - excitement
  - danger
  - heroes
  - celebrities
  - alcohol
  - fear
  - safety
  - notoriety
  - comfort
  - fame
  - money
Questions for reflection

- Do any of my interests, important though they may appear, unduly absorb time and energy and interfere with my growth in grace and my service to God?

- Do I make a place in my daily life for inward retirement and communion with the Divine Spirit? Does my daily schedule need review and revision at this time? To what extent am I trying to make changes?

- Do I choose those activities that will strengthen me physically, mentally, and spiritually and avoid those which are harmful to me and to others?

- Am I careful to wait upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all my ways? Have I learned to distinguish inspiration from impulse?

Illustrative activities

An examination of needs vs. wants

We have needs that are essential to our basic health and survival. We also have needs that help us reach our full human potential. Then we have wants. Make a list of those essential, survival needs. Make a second list of the needs for full human potential. Then begin a list of wants. Ask the following questions of the wants:

- How will I feel when I get it?

- What are its costs in terms of time and finances?

- Is there a greener alternative?
General queries

How do these needs and wants affect the environment? My relationship to others? My spiritual life?

Consumption audit

This is an exercise that can be done by individuals or by groups. It is a method of looking at our use of resources. It looks at where the resources come from, how they are used, and then how they are disposed of. All the products and services we use have costs other than dollars. It is a sort of before, during, and after look at the things that we use in all phases of our lives. The form can be used to examine an individual household or a meetinghouse, or a school or workplace. This is a free form form. Use the blank spaces to make notes, enter dollar amounts, kilowatt-hours, miles driven, miles per gallon, quantities, etc. Add more forms as needed.

Consumption Audit

| Item | Before: Where and how was it made? | How much energy was used? | How did it get to you? | What are the alternatives? | During: What is your daily usage? | Monthly? Yearly? Can you get by with less? | What are the effects of its use? | After: Where and how is it disposed of? | How much energy is used? | What are the effects on future generations? | Food and drink—Produce | Meat | Fish | Processed food | Beverages | Packaging | Paper products—Stationery | Toilet paper & towels | Periodicals & books | Junk mail | Diapers | Copy & computer Ongoing—Cleaning products | Lawn & garden | Other | Personal—Clothing & shoes | Cosmetics | Other | Energy & utilities—Water | Electricity | Propane/natural gas | Gasoline—home | Gasoline—auto | Other | Appliances/furnishings—Kitchen | Laundry room | Garage/workshop | Recreational | Other | Transport & travel—Automobile | Local transit | Airplane | Steps that I can take to move toward simpler living

Steps that I can take to move toward simpler living


Prayer

Help me to trust in you and to seek your kingdom first. Help me seek the ways that I might respond to your call in my life.
Help me to know that enough is enough and balance is best.
Help me to not fear change.
Grant me stillness, turn me from frantic striving, and calm me

If you seek perfection [wholeness], go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven.

Matthew 19:21

I saw that a humble man with the blessing of Providence might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving, but that in common with the increase of wealth, the desire of wealth increased. There was a care on my mind to so pass my time that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.

John Woolman, A Plea for the Poor, 1743

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.

George Fox

I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns.

Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion

What On Earth Are We Doing?

What on Earth are we doing today for tomorrow?
Where on Earth are we going if we dont find a better way?
Every little thing we do really makes a difference.
What on Earth are we doing for tomorrow, today?

We have the power to claim the future.
We have the knowledge to change our path.
We have love enough to move us
To a vision that can last.

What on Earth are we doing today for tomorrow?
Where on Earth are we going if we dont find a better way?
Every little thing we do really makes a difference.
What on Earth are we doing for tomorrow, today?
Today is only a fleeting moment
It will be gone in the blink of an eye.
But tomorrow goes on forever
As do the footprints of you and I.

What on Earth are we doing today for tomorrow?
Where on Earth are we going if we dont find a better way?
Every little thing we do really makes a difference.
What on Earth are we doing for tomorrow, today?
What on Earth are we doing for tomorrow, today?

—by Joyce Johnson Rouse
From the CD "Love Large"
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