



# Simple Living Leads To Spiritual Growth<sup>1</sup>

By Zita Maier, OSU taken from an 11/1990 talk by Mark Burch, author of *Stepping Lightly: Simplicity for People and the Planet*

- Simple life is chosen, not imposed.
- Voluntary simplicity is "a deliberate organization of life for a purpose."
- The simple lifestyle involves simplifying, reducing and streamlining.
- Simplicity means focusing on life-affirming values, such as time with family, rather than accumulating things. Fewer concerns about things allow people to have more energy to be good neighbors and community members. For example, community involvement takes time getting to know the issues. If everyone is totally involved in making money, there is no time left to "hang on to democracy."
- Simplicity also calls for practicing a healthy self-reliance, such as growing some of one's own food. Simple living means cultivating a connection with others and with nature. And it means living with mindfulness, so that one becomes more aware of the inner world and more attentive to the moment.
- Voluntary simplicity means practicing non-violence. We normally don't think of going to a shopping mall as an act of violence, but for everything we consume some form of crushing or killing is involved. We do need to consume to live, Burch said, but the more one consumes, the more violence takes place. Living simply means less violence.
- Finally, simple living means choosing a higher quality of life. Our consumer society has directly affected the quality of our water and air, and work is more hazardous. Instead, we should make choices in favor of wholesome food, and keep in mind that a clean brook has value too.
- Simple living is conducive to spiritual growth, Burch said. Aiming for a slower pace of life allows more room for the holy.
- Voluntary simplicity is not poverty, destitution, or deprivation, because poverty does not involve choice.
- A chosen simplicity of life is at the heart of every major religion in the world, Burch told an earlier gathering of Benedictines, Benedictine oblates, and members of other religious communities in the area. The Rule of Benedict can be read as a metaphor for the relationships in the world.
  - For example, the directive for monks to treat all the goods of the monastery as holy vessels is an invitation for all to treat things with care and respect.
  - Burch noted that one theme of the jubilee is restoring equity, moving us away from competition. A second theme calls for restoring the earth, giving it a rest and nurturing it. There has not been enough emphasis in the church on this second theme, he said.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Prairie Messenger* is a 20-page tabloid newspaper covering local, national and international religious news and current affairs. Three pages are regularly devoted to international news, most of which comes through our international news services. Four pages are devoted to Canadian and local news St. Peter's Community, RPO Box 40, Muenster SK S0K 2Y0, Canada; [www.stpeters.sk.ca/prairie\\_messenger/simplicity\\_11\\_29\\_00](http://www.stpeters.sk.ca/prairie_messenger/simplicity_11_29_00)

# ***COMMUNAL RESPONSE TO LIVE A SIMPLER LIFESTYLE***

adapted from the Marianist Novitiate Community

By the nature of our volunteer year, we are presented with an invitation to question the reasons and motives of our lifestyle so that it be simple, true, and valid after the example of. Modeling them means that our lifestyle choices are not complicated; without additions; not qualified; not showy or ornate; unpretentious, radical, pure, undressed, disentangled, from the norms of society.

We also strive to live a simple lifestyle because the goals of the XXXX program ask us to make a conscious resolution to do this. We choose to live simply as an act of faith performed for the sake of individual integrity and wholeness, and as an act of celebration and harvesting of the riches found in creation. Living simply, we strive to enhance the quality of our lives by emphasizing the creative spirit/energy in each of us. We also choose to live simply as a practice of sharing the world's goods among all people.

The immense burden on the earth's capacity presents a challenge to use our resources in a sustainable manner, assisting nature to heal the marks of our activities of farming, manufacturing, sheltering, and transportation.

As good stewards we do not exploit our earth or its goods, but seek a sustainable future. Moved by faith and love for others, we seek a simpler life that allows the earth's regenerative processes to keep pace with our use of air, water, soil, and minerals. Our sparing is a symbol that can help form attitudes of reverence for God's gifts and concern for the others on the earth and for generations to come.

Our XXXX heritage deepens and supports these demands for living our community of goods in a simpler way and thereby helps achieve equitable use of resources. To these ends, we focus on the following areas:

## ***I. DIET & KITCHEN***

1. To speak to the dignity of work, the community will do its own cooking. Members of the community share the task of cooking meals.
2. To prevent an ever increasing escalation of needs, we will agree on a set amount of soft drinks, beer, and ice cream and other foods purchased each week.
3. As a means of expressing our union with the poor, we will:
  - a) have at least one meat-less meal each week
  - b) have a simple meal each week (eg. soup and sandwiches)
  - c) eliminate the following junk foods except on special occasions: potato chips, pretzels, fritos, purchased cookies, and other similar purchased foods
  - d) have desserts only on special occasions
  - e) have occasional "baking days" to prepare food for the poor
  - f) limit our communitarian use of liquor to special occasions
  - g) support food boycotts

## ***II. ENERGY AREA***

1. We will try to pool car trips when possible and avoid unnecessary food/shopping trips during the week (make do with what is in the house).
2. We save newspapers, plastics, metals, and glass for recycling.
3. We monitor our use of electricity (turn off unnecessary lights, appliances, etc.).
4. During cold weather, the heat in the house is kept at a temperature which is healthy but as low as possible to conserve energy. During the summer we use fans sparingly.

## ***III. COMMUNITY RECREATION***

We attempt to schedule community recreation days/evenings to provide community with simple and inexpensive ways of recreating together.

## ***IV. PERSONAL POSSESSIONS***

1. We attempt to use things until they wear out - repair of items is preferred to purchase of new items.
2. We periodically go through our personal belongings and evaluate our possessions. What we have not used and what we do not need is given to others, especially the poor who might be able to use it.

## ***V. COMMUNITY/HOUSE MAINTENANCE***

The community does its own maintenance (both mechanical and janitorial) and renovations from its personal resources. We use things until they wear out or would cost more to repair than to purchase brand new. We only call outside help when the proper skills are not found in the community itself.

# Thoughts on Simple Life

Former volunteer/missioner  
September 27, 1995

*What fears do I have about the simple life of the community?*

Simple life can mean many different things to different people - coming to some notion of consensus can be challenging (this can also be exciting) but my fear is getting bogged down in the "challenge". I'll also be honest that a fear I would have would be my ability to be non-critical of the final definition decided upon by the community; especially if it is very different from my own! How would we readjust that lived notion of simplicity once people leave or join us? Will our definition be a "standing definition" that doesn't change or will it be organic, growing and changing with the people involved?

Another fear I have is not being able to live up to the challenge of living simply - i.e. my having to give up certain creature comforts (that would probably be wise for me to lighten up on) but which I enjoy. Sometimes "simplicity" is hard work and sometimes I just don't care or I don't have the energy to do that work.

Living responsibly is an integrity issue - I worry that if I delve too deep into it I'll find that my "integrity" has been pretty minimal.

Living responsibly can also get overwhelming.

Then it gets down to some of the nitty gritty questions:

What does "sharing things in common" mean?

How are broken things repaired?

Would households have their own definitions; while the overall group meets certain standards?

Will simplicity involve sharing funds? What kind of financial commitment might this mean?

*What excites me about the simple life of the community?*

Working through any of the things I stated above are also what excites me about the notion of simple communal life. The challenge.

Probably the most important aspect for me would be the notion of support -- sometimes challenging, sometimes gentle -- the knowledge that we are all trying this together. Some members may be better at certain aspects of simplicity than at other aspects, but the sum is greater than the separate parts.

Probably the basic struggle for me is within: the part that is attracted to setting up a safe, secure "nice" life for myself, with some nice things and nice space; vs the part that wants to live a life of more integrity, responsibility in the world, using only what I need, heeding the ramifications of my decisions, sharing resources.

# **DO YOU REALLY NEED THAT?**

## ***The biggest incentive for living a simpler lifestyle is...***

"Live simply so others may simply live" • "to contribute to the equality of people by not using more than one's fair share of the earth's resources" • "Because of the poor" Simplifying gives life meaning and value • simplifying makes one feel less rushed • and simplifying allows one to live as Jesus lived • becoming less "thing"-centered frees people to focus on relationships Learning to put others first • learning to prioritize • learning to become less selfish • helping the environment • contributing to your own health by gaining a longer and better life

## ***The most difficult part about living a simpler lifestyle is...***

Living a simple lifestyle would be a piece of cake if it weren't for the people you had to deal with! The hardest part about slowing down is having to convince all the Nintendo-hooked, Gap-crazy, cellular-phone-toting fast trackers who are your family and friends.

Simple living "goes against the grain" of the wider culture of consumerism. It feels weird when you have to keep explaining counter-cultural tendencies to friends and co-workers -some of which end up placing a harsh judgment on your decisions or represent a tempting kind of materialistic peer pressure.

Other obstacles: It's very tempting at the end of an exhausting work day to want to order a pizza and not rally to fix dinner • wanting a nice home • figuring out what's simple and what's excessive • realizing (with mounting frustration) that the more earth-friendly products and services cost more • "feeling the pinch of doing without"

## ***What's worked best in trying to live a simple, balanced life...***

Throw away catalogs before they make it into the house • budget time according to your values • asking "do I really need that?" • deciding to have only one - one car, one tv, one phone - when you could have more • hang out with like-minded folks • less TV • no TV • give away excess belongings • talk about what to buy and why • take your time • live according to a budget and don't spend beyond your means • make donations to charity a regular budget item • cut up your credit cards • learn about the poor • have regular contact with the poor • pray • plant a garden • use the public library • take time out to be alone • eat light • help others • ask for God's help • keep a global perspective on your standard of living and be disciplined about prayer and reading • take time for prayer, meditation, and friends • be open to God's presence and guidance in life • grow strong in faith - let God worry • keep similar company • don't hang out with people who golf, play tennis, and decorate their houses • discern wants and needs • walk instead of taking the car • realize the power of ads • be patient

## ***Some things that could be done without...***

Clothes (latest fashions, clothes and shows for all seasons) • Luxury foods (eating out alot, alot of red meat, junk foods) • Television (two or more TV sets, having any TV set, excessive television viewing, cable) • Cars (more than one car, a new car, fancy cars) • microwave • dry cleaning • Disney World • movies • dogs • fancy home • turning up the thermostat in winter • yearly vacations • camcorder • fancy parties • boats • VCR • latest computers • CD player • vacation home • car phone • gas grill • high-status jobs • extra activities • furniture

## ***The things that may be difficult to cut back...***

TV • junk food • good food • eating out • clothes/shoes • cars • books/magazines • gifts to friends/relatives • furniture • travel • tickets to sporting events/theater • labor-saving devices • music • work

## ***The most misunderstood aspect of simple living is...***

That doing without means you will be unhappy • there's actually a great amount of freedom that comes with cutting back • it's not a "hippie" or "new-age thing" • poverty is a virtue • it's too hard to do • it means giving up all of modern life or everything you like • it's only about spending less money • it's boring • cutting down on social activities makes you appear to be selfish with your time and friends

These were responses to a survey conducted by *Salt* magazine and were printed in the September 1994 issue in the form of an article. Claretian Publications

### ***Reflection Questions on Simple Life***

Describe your family's economic background when you were young.

How do you characterize yourself today?

How has your economic status helped or hindered you?

What experiences have you had with people living in poverty?

When and why might you be tempted to buy more, work more, or do more?

The biggest incentive for living a simpler lifestyle is...

The most difficult part about living a simpler lifestyle would be...

Some things that could be done without are...

The things that may be difficult to cut back are...

### ***Reflection Questions on Justice and the Kingdom of God***

When in your life have you taken a stand you believed in?

What do you do when your stance leads you away from what everyone else is doing in society? Or from an official Church stance?

How do you see your role as a member of the church in confronting real "life issues"?

When you hear of God's Kingdom, what does that mean to you?

When you hear of the Church, what does that mean to you?

What does the American Dream mean to you? What does it say about the purpose of life, success, and our needs?

As you understand it, what does the Kingdom of God say about the purpose of life, success, and our needs?

To what extent is your view of the American Dream the same as, or different from, what the Kingdom of God means to you?

### ***Personal Response***

In your own life has there been any hurt or handicap which has led you to experience God's special love for you?

How do these hurts open your eyes to the community and world around you?

What is easier for you: to minister to others, or to be ministered to? How do you feel when you are in need?

How do you feel when you know someone needs you? What do you do?

Having considered your stance on the struggle to further the Kingdom, What changes or adjustments do you want to make in your future practice?

As I see it now, the Kingdom comes when...

# Lifestyle Resources (videos, curricula, books, links)

## Lifestyle Videos [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org)

**Title:** Affluenza

**Catalog #:** VEM 083 **Production:** VHS. 57 min. KCTS/Seattle and Oregon Public Broadcasting. 1997.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

*Affluenza* is a fascinating look at one of the greatest social maladies of our time: overconsumption and materialism. Hosted by National Public Radio's Scott Simon, it explores both the comical and sobering aspects of our consumerism and its enormous impact on families, communities and the environment. In response to this materialistic lifestyle, many people are opting out of the consumer culture. Some are turning to one of the fastest growing trends in our country, voluntary simplicity, which is just one of the many "cures" that are explored in *Affluenza*.

**Title:** Amish, The; A People of Preservation

**Catalog #:** VEM 057 **Production:** VHS. 54 minutes. Gateway Films, Vision Video

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

Authentic vignettes of Amish origins, farm life, childhood, school, worship, recreation, courtship, barn raising, horse transportation, and the impact of tourism.

**Title:** Break Forth Into Joy! Beyond a Consumer Lifestyle

**Catalog #:** VEM 078 **Production:** VHS. 15 min., w/ 3 additional 10-min. sections. Alternative. 1995.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

Adults, Senior High study guide.

So many of us are overwhelmed by daily demands and too many bills, not enough money, long work hours, not enough sleep, too many commitments, and not enough time for family, friends, and God. In our desperate search for "the good life," we seem to have forgotten what brings us joy and gives life meaning.

This video helps us take a critical look at our lifestyle choices and the shape our lives have taken. It helps us realize how our obsession with buying and owning effects the earth, other people, and the human spirit. By sharing feelings, thoughts and practical ideas from a variety of people who struggle with life in a consumer society, this video calls us toward a lifestyle that is more fulfilling and joyful.

**Title:** Brother Sun, Sister Moon

**Catalog #:** VEM 056 **Production:** VHS. 120 minutes. Paramount Pictures.

**Format:** Drama **Audience:** General

St. Francis of Assisi seeks communion with the natural world by renouncing his family riches to seek his own destiny unencumbered by material possessions.

**Title:** Circle of the Spirit: A Saga of Native Americans in the Catholic Church

**Catalog #:** VEM 054 **Production:** VHS. 60 minutes. United States Catholic Conference, 1990.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

Tell the story of the Coeur d'Alene tribe of Idaho and the Lummi tribe of Washington and their relationships to the Catholic Church.

**Title:** Creating Sustainable Communities: Nurturing the Spirit in the Places We Live

**Catalog #:** VEM 037 **Production:** VHS. Earth Ministry, 1995

**Format:** Lecture/Presentation **Audience:** Adults

Earth Ministry's Winter Gathering, January 14, 1995. Alan AtKisson, nationally recognized consultant, writer, and authority on matters of sustainable development; co-founder of Sustainable Seattle; former executive editor of *In Context: A Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture*.

Sheila Kelly, co-chair of the Sustainable Communities Working Group for the President's Council on Sustainable Development; Trustee of Sustainable Seattle; member of design team for the Whidbey Institute.

**Title:** Creations Caretakers

**Catalog #:** VEM 041

**Production:** VHS. 25 minutes. General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

A look at the loss of family farms in favor of larger corporate holdings dependent on chemicals, etc. It looks at both the human effect and the effect on the land.

**Title:** Diet for a New America and Your Health, Your Planet

**Catalog #:** VEM 058 **Production:** VHS.; 60 minutes. Produced by Ed Schuaman & Judy Prizinsky.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

Hosted by John Robbins, who discusses his theories on environmental and personal health consequences of a diet based on animal products.

**Title:** Exploring Voluntary Simplicity: Three Perspectives

**Catalog #:** VEM 070 **Production:** VHS. Earth Ministry, 1996.

**Format:** Lecture/presentation **Audience:** Adults

Earth Ministry Spring Gathering, June 7, 1996.

- Evy McDonald: "Your Money or Your Life: A Tool for Conscious Consumption in God's World." Evy talks about what is enough, how we know when we have enough, and how we can meet our true needs without compromising the ability of others, now and in the future, to meet their needs.
- Cecile Andrews: "Study Circles & Community Building." Cecile is one of the region's leading voices on how to lead a more meaningful, focused life within the context of community support. For years she has led workshops on and facilitated the growth of Voluntary Simplicity Study Circles. Study circles, which originated in Sweden, do not focus on a "topic," but on "transforming one's life." Cecile speaks about how to live more simply through the nurturing communities that study circles engender.
- Michael Schut: "Simplicity as Compassion: An Introduction to Earth Ministry's Simple Living Curriculum". Michael introduces Earth Ministry's new Simple Living Curriculum. It focuses on simplicity as a spirituality of compassion in the modern context of overconsumption, economic inequity, and God's call in our lives.

**Title:** Food, Earth, and Care of the Soul

**Catalog #:** VEM 075 **Production:** VHS. 2 tapes. Earth Ministry, 1996.

**Format:** Lecture/presentation **Audience:** Adults

Earth Ministry's Fall Gathering, October 19, 1996.

- Carla Berkedal: "The Spirituality of Food."
- Carla, Earth Ministry's Founding Director, speaks on food as nurturer of body and soul.
- Carol Sue Hunting: "Food, Faith, and 'EarthSaving'."
- Carol Sue, Chair of EarthSave Seattle, talks about the work and mission of EarthSave, sharing some of her own story as it relates to her faith and food choices.
- Martha Goodlett: "Supporting Sustainable Agriculture."
- Martha, Coordinator of P-Patch's Cultivating Communities Project, relates her experiences as a local, organic farmer and describes the community supported agriculture (CSA) project she coordinates in the Rainier Vista Housing Complex (a partnership project involving Earth Ministry and P-Patch).
- Michael Schut: "Food for Life."
- Michael, Earth Ministry's Associate Director, describes Earth Ministry's involvement in the Rainier Vista Cultivating Communities Project, highlights its connection to social and environmental justice, and previews the then up-coming Food for Life Shopper's Guide (now entitled "Food, Faith & Sustainability.").

**Title:** Having Enough in a Have More World; Lifestyles For a Living Planet

**Catalog #:** VEM 005 **Production:** VHS. 1 Hr., 45 min. Earth Ministry, 1992.

**Format:** Lecture/presentation **Audience:** Adults

April 1992 Earth Ministry / St. Mark's Ecology-Spirituality group meeting.

Speaker Vicki Robin, New Road Map Foundation, challenges us to reduce consumption and define what is enough for each of us.



**Title:** How Much is Enough?

**Catalog #:** VEM 052 **Production:** VHS. 2 tapes: VEM 052-1: 100 minutes; VEM 052-2: 85 minutes. Earth Ministry, 1993

**Format:** Lecture/presentation **Audience:** Adults

Earth Ministry Fall Gathering, September 25, 1993.

- VEM 052-1: Alan Durning of Worldwatch Institute speaks on the effects of our excessive consumption on the world environment.
- VEM 052-2: A panel composed of members of various congregations discusses experiences in forming environmental groups in their churches.

**Title:** Hutterites, The; To Care and Not to Care

**Catalog #:** VEM 039 **Production:** VHS. 58 min. Gateway Films, Vision Video, 1984.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

The Hutterites are a society in which faithfulness to Christ's teaching is more important than self-advancement or worldly comforts. They live strict communal lives based on the teachings of the Bible, while farming over a million acres in Canada and the United States using the most advanced farm equipment.

**Title:** Reducing Energy Costs in Religious Buildings

**Catalog #:** VEM 042 **Production:** VHS. 27 minutes. Interfaith Coalition on Energy (ICE), Philadelphia, PA.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** Adults

Addresses methods to reduce energy costs in churches and parochial schools.

**Title:** Together in the Garden

**Catalog #:** VEM 014 **Production:** VHS. 20 min. World Council of Churches, 1991.

**Format:** Documentary **Audience:** General

A pre- Earth Summit look at what the church's role should be in relation to global survival. This video provides church groups with a challenging message concerning their responsibility for the future. Voices and experiences from around the world are shared to give direction for how Christians can heal the earth, build justice, and sustain life for the future.

Questions considered include, What is the role and voice of the churches? How do we see the contributions of Christians throughout the world to this challenge of global survival? Can the church offer its vision and commitment to the justice, peace, and the integrity of creation?

**Title:** Visions of Justice

**Catalog #:** VEM 081 **Production:** VHS. 1996.

**Format:** Lecture/presentation **Audience:** Adults

A portion of the Vision of Justice conference held November 1, 1996, at St. Mark's Cathedral, Seattle. The conference focused on peace, racism, the environment and economic justice as issues within the Episcopal Church. This is a video of the keynote address, by Tom Athanasiou, author of *Divided Planet: The Ecology of Rich and Poor*.

## Curricula

***Simpler Living, Compassionate Life***™ and ***Food, Faith and Sustainability***: Earth Ministry has produced two books which can also be used as curricula for churches or small groups. Both curricula are self-directed (leaderless) and can be used in an adult or college-age education forum, Sunday school hour, or for an evening study/support group. These resources help individuals and groups become aware of the connections between the Christian faith, daily life-style choices and their impact on the natural world, all within a community-building context. [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org)

***Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective***, Michael Schut, Editor. Living the Good News (1999). A collection of essays from more than 20 respected authors in the area of voluntary simplicity, this expanded version of our successful *Simplicity as Compassion* provides an excellent anthology for individual study. With the inclusion of curriculum material, it also functions as a four, six, eight, or twelve week study guide for groups. [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org) Price: \$14.95 plus \$3 for shipping.

***Food, Faith and Sustainability: Environmental, Spiritual, Community, and Social Justice Implications of the Gift of Daily Bread.*** This book/curriculum focuses on the enjoyment of food, on our food choices as a dimension of Christian spirituality, on the ways in which eating connects us to the land and to each other, and on the responsibilities of eating as they relate to the economic, environmental and cultural implications of our daily food choices. It will encourage movement from passive consumerism to mindful participation in all the systems involved in bringing food from farmer to table. The book includes an extensive resource guide on where to shop (both locally and nationally) for more earth-friendly food and provides ideas on how to support local, sustainable agriculture. In addition, it includes a five-session curricular group learning experience which guides participants through the following:

- Developing Community
- Food as Sacrament
- Cogs in the Industrial Food Economy
- Global Markets to Backyard Gardens
- Life is a Journey: Don't Forget to Eat

Suggested donation: \$10.00 (\$13.00 if shipped)

Available from Earth Ministry [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org)

Available from **Environmental Justice Resources, National Council of Churches**, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, Indiana 46515-0968. Or call 1-800-762-0968.

- ***It's a Gift to be Simple: Embracing the Freedom of Living with Less-EJ9920***, \$9.00. A primer on how to change your lifestyle and enrich your spirit. Includes a six week Scripture reflection on simplicity. By DeGrote Sorensen, Barbara and David Allen Sorensen. Augsburg, 1992
- ***Trek: Venture into a World of Enough-EJ9915***, \$5.00. By David Schrock-Shenk and Julie Kaufman. Mennonite Central Committee, 21 South 12th Street, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501. (717-859-1951) A 28 day exploration of the values underlying over consumption and simplicity.

From **Northwest Earth Institute**, 921 SW Morrison, Suite 532, Portland, OR 97205. (503)227-2807. E-mail: [nwei@teleport.com](mailto:nwei@teleport.com).

- ***Discussion Course on Voluntary Simplicity*** (1997). For use in workplaces, homes and churches, this eight week course is designed for 8-12 participants meeting for 1-1.5 hour session each week.

## Books

- Brower, Michael and Leon, Warren, ***The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists.*** Three Rivers Press (1999). This book helps us find a workable place between the general knowledge that over-consumption in the U.S. is a problem and the overwhelming detail in all the possible solutions we encounter. " This book identifies the 4 Most Significant Consumer-Related Environmental Problems, the 7 Most Damaging Spending Categories, 11 Priority Actions, and 7 Rules for Responsible Consumption. Learn what you can do to have a truly significant impact on our world from the people who are at the forefront of scientific research." (Quoted from back cover of the book)
- Andrews, Cecile, ***The Circle of Simplicity.*** Harper and Row (1997). This work by Seattle's guru of simple living shares her wisdom and humor from years of facilitating simple living study circles. Cecile is a gem: down to earth, witty, insightful.
- Berry, Wendell, ***The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture.*** Sierra Club Books (1977). Berry, a poet, essayist and farmer in his native Kentucky, writes of our relationship and use of the land which sustains us with a profound awareness that "farming cannot be considered separately from the larger culture." Berry is bound to make you think, and his writings on agriculture are relevant to us all, as we consider how it is that we receive our food and how that has affected American culture.

- Burch, Mark A. (1995) *Simplicity: Notes Stories and Exercises for Developing Unimaginable Wealth*. Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers. A short essay on various meanings of simplicity and different reasons why people might wish to live more simply. The second half offers exercises designed to help readers make the psychological and emotional transition from consumptive to simpler lifestyles.
- Cobb, John B., Jr., *Sustainability, Economics, Ecology and Justice*. Maryknoll (1992). This book, a collection of essays written over about a ten-year period, is a more approachable treatment of the economic and environmental linkages than *For the Common Good*.
- Cobb, John B., Jr., *Sustaining the Common Good: A Christian Perspective on the Global Economy*. Pilgrim (1994). A selection of essays which address in a less technical form much of the same material that Cobb and Daly address in *For the Common Good*. If you want a shorter, more accessible work, this would be a good choice.
- Cobb, John B., Jr., and Herman Daly, *For the Common Good*. Beacon (1989). A landmark work by an eminent theologian (Cobb) and an equally eminent economist (Daly). This book examines how our economy works, how it affects our environment, and offers a model for redirecting it toward enhancing both human community and the natural environment. Warning: heavy plowing.
- Dacyszyn, Amy (1993) *The Tightwad Gazette: Promoting Thrift As A Viable Alternative Lifestyle*. New York, N.Y.: Villard Books. Amy Dacyszyn presents a compendium of practical tips on how to recycle, reuse, reclaim and recover all sorts of items to sustain a frugal lifestyle. The book is more about thrift than simplicity, but is still very useful.
- Dominguez, Joe and Robin, Vicki, (1992) *Your Money or Your Life: Transforming your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence*, PA: Penguin. ISBN 0-780140-167153, US\$12 paper. This "must read" book has introduced many to voluntary simplicity and financial integrity. There is a matching audiotape series.
- Durning, Alan Thein, *This Place on Earth: Home and the Practice of Permanence*. Sasquatch Books (1996). Durning, a competent researcher, is also a gifted writer, writing with wisdom and warmth. This work focuses on the Pacific Northwest. Following a wonderful personal and historical introduction, Durning weaves both his individual journey with well-documented research, aiming to identify elements of a culturally and environmentally sustainable urban lifestyle.
- Durning, Alan Thein, *The Car and the City*. Northwest Environment Watch (April 1996). Durning explores the many dimensions and choices for urban transportation, exposing some commonly held myths in the process.
- Durning, Alan Thein, *How Much Is Enough: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*. Norton (1992). A thorough-going examination of consumerism in American culture.
- Durning, Alan Thein and John C. Ryan, *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*. Northwest Environmental Watch (January 1997). A series of eye-opening examinations about ordinary items of our modern life - coffee, newspaper, shoes, hamburger, computers - uncovering the extent of their environmental footprint in an age of global economy.
- Elgin, Duane, *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life That is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*. William Morrow (1981). A central work for understanding the current popularity of the simple living movement in American culture.
- Foster, Richard, *Freedom of Simplicity*. Harper & Row (1981). An important statement of the relationship between Christianity and simplicity.

- Kabat-Zin, Jon (1994) *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness, Meditation...* New York, NY: Hyperion Books. If you have only one book on meditation practice, this should be it. Kabat-Zin introduces mindfulness meditation in very clear, contemporary language, along with a variety of meditation exercises to help deepen practice and open new capacities of awareness. Simple, practical, accessible.
- Long, Charles (1993) *How To Survive Without a Salary*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Warwick Publishing Group. This book contains scores of innovative suggestions on assembling a living from part-time, short-term, intermittent employment augmented with barter, scavenging, bargaining and bargain-hunting and voluntary simplicity. More about self-reliance and maintaining personal autonomy and freedom than about simplicity per se, the book still includes a wealth of practical ideas on self-reliant living.
- Luhrs, Janet (1997) *The Simple Living Guide*. New York, NY: Broadway Books. A compendium on simple living which is nevertheless a light read. Covers topics including time, money, travel, inner simplicity, work, simple pleasures and romance, virtues, families, holidays, cooking and nutrition, health and exercise, housing, clutter and gardening.
- McBride, Tracey (1997) *Frugal Luxuries: Simple Pleasures to Enhance Your Life and Comfort Your Soul*. New York, NY: Bantam Books. A beautiful book with a woman's touch and sensitivity to the sensuous delights of simple living with mindfulness and gratitude. Includes many suggestions on how to fill our lives with a sense of luxury on very slender means.
- Miller, Timothy (1995) *How To Want What You Have*. New York, NY: Avon Books. Miller brings the insights of cognitive psychology to understanding our insatiable appetites for "more" together with a program for managing them and learning to find contentment.
- Nearing, Scott and Helen *Living The Good Life*. This book helped launch the "back to the land" movement of the 1970s with the personal account of the Nearings who left the city, and returned to rural homesteading to discover a simple and satisfying life.
- Robbins, John, *Diet for a New America*. Stillpoint (1987). One of the very best introductions to the complex interrelationships between our food choices, the economy, the treatment of animals, human health and the health of the land. Passionate, informative, readable.
- Shi, David, *The Simple Life*. Oxford (1985). A wonderful intellectual history of the thinking on simple living within American culture from colonial times to the present. From the Puritans to Duane Elgin, it's all there.
- Schumacher, E.F., *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. Harper and Row (1973). The best known classic for a more humane and environmentally sensitive economy.
- Thoreau, Henry David (1989) *Walden and Other Writings*. New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books. Thoreau's classic account of two years living by Walden Pond in 19th Century New England. It is loaded with insightful critique of the vain strivings of ordinary mortals after "peace through possessions" and an unparalleled anthem to simple, self-reliant living.

## Links

[Center for a New American Dream](http://www.newdream.org) [www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org)

The Center for a New American Dream is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to reducing resource consumption and improving the quality of life in North America. Their mission is to help individuals, communities, and private businesses foster new consumption patterns and sustainable practices which will ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

Context Institute [www.context.org](http://www.context.org)

Context Institute explores how human-society can become sustainable (i.e. able to meet the needs of the present without diminishing the prospects for the future), and serves as a catalyst for voluntary change toward a more humane and sustainable culture. They are one of a handful of organizations that have focused on sustainability as a central theme for more than a decade, and are now internationally recognized as an authority in this area.

Global Action Plan for the Earth [www.globalactionplan.org](http://www.globalactionplan.org)

Global Action Plan for the Earth (GAP) has developed a strategy (Ecoteams) that addresses this need (household consumption). Over the past five years it has created and honed an effective behavior change methodology that empowers individuals to live environmentally sustainable lifestyles -- the Household EcoTeam Program. The approach is simple yet strategic. Five or six households -- an EcoTeam -- meet regularly to support each other in following a step-by-step workbook with the help of a trained volunteer coach. Choosing from a series of practical actions, they reduce waste, use less water and energy, buy "eco-wise" products, and teach others what they have discovered.

National Religious Partnership for the Environment [www.nrpe.org](http://www.nrpe.org)

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is a federation of major American faith communities: the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, and the Evangelical Environmental Network. The Partnership's home page includes a description of NRPE's history, mission, and member groups, with links to constituent faith communities. With a commitment "to be ourselves, together," each of our faith groups is implementing distinctive programs on behalf of a common mission: We act in faith to cherish and protect God's creation. Our goal is to integrate commitment to global sustainability and environmental justice permanently into all aspects of religious life. (from NRPE site)

Northwest Environment Watch (NEW) [www.northwestwatch.org](http://www.northwestwatch.org)

Northwest Environment Watch (NEW) is an independent, not-for-profit research and publishing organization. NEW's mission is to foster a sustainable economy and way of life in the Pacific Northwest, defined as the watersheds of rivers flowing into the Pacific through the largest rainforest outside the tropics. Supported by memberships and private contributions, NEW publishes action-oriented books.

The Simple Living Network [www.slnet.com](http://www.slnet.com)

Tools for those who are serious about learning to live a more conscious, simple, healthy and earth-friendly lifestyle.

Union of Concerned Scientists [www.uscusa.org](http://www.uscusa.org)

Among other things, this site provides information about some of the environmentally best and worst vehicles.

[www.simpleliving.net](http://www.simpleliving.net)

Alternatives for Simple Living at [www.SimpleLiving.org](http://www.SimpleLiving.org)  
has some free downloadable/copiable resources,  
particularly the "to Celebrate" catalogue - gives  
alternative ideas for Holiday Celebration. Good stuff!  
ORDER a hardcopy of the catalogue by calling 800-821-6153