

# Simple Gifts

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"**Simple Gifts**" is an 1848 Shaker song by Elder Joseph Brackett.

It has endured many inaccurate descriptions. Though often classified as an anonymous Shaker hymn or as a work song, it is better classified as a dance song.

## The composer

Elder Joseph Brackett was born in Cumberland, Maine, on May 6, 1797. He first joined the Shakers at Gorham, Maine, when his father's farm helped to form the nucleus of a new Shaker settlement. In 1819, Joseph moved with the other Shakers to Poland Hill, Maine.

He later served as first minister of Maine Shaker societies, as well as Church Elder at New Gloucester, Maine, now known as Sabbathday Lake, the last remaining Shaker community.

Elder Joseph Brackett died on July 4, 1882.

## The lyrics

"Simple Gifts" was written by Elder Joseph while he was at the Shaker community in Alfred, Maine in 1848. These are the lyrics to his one-verse song:

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,  
      'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
      'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.  
When true simplicity is gain'd,  
      To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,  
To turn, turn will be our delight,  
      Till by turning, turning we come round right.

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## The melody

A manuscript of Mary Hazzard of the New Lebanon, N.Y. Shaker community records this original version of the

### Simple Gifts

*Joseph Brackett, Jr., 1848*



