

T E A T I M E
DISCIPLESHIP

FOR MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS



SALLY
CLARKSON



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To my children—

*Sarah, Joy, and Keelia, Clay, Joel, Nathan,
you are my most delightful teatime companions.
Your lives have added so much beauty to mine, your words inspire,
your antics delight, your faith enlarges my own view of God.
Let's have a million more cups and transform our world together.*

To my lovely granddaughters—

*Lilian and Luci, I hope to share many inspiring
and delightful teatimes in our years together.*

*Special thanks to Keelia Clarkson, my beloved daughter-in-law,
for her excellent help in crafting some of our family stories
and traditions into life-giving words.*

And to Jacqui, my dear tea angel.

*By wisdom a house is built,
and through understanding it is established;
through knowledge its rooms are filled
with rare and beautiful treasures.*

PROVERBS 24:3-4





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Tasting the Fruit of Discipleship {Intro}

Students are not greater than their teacher.

But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher.

LUKE 6:40 NLT

Early one morning, I brewed my tea, lit a candle, turned on a favorite playlist, and sat to breathe in some peace before my day began. As usual, I had piles on my heart and mind and needed to center myself to prepare for a busy day. Before I work or settle in for a quiet moment with my tea, I turn off all digital notifications except those coming from my kids. So when I heard the ping announcing a new email, I opened it right away.

Dear Mama,

I was thinking about you today. It seems every place I go, all the places I have lived, I hear your voice speaking to me. The hundreds of books we read out loud remind me of the heroines I want to become. The countless morning devotions speak to me through verses we discussed and memorized. The intimate talks on the front porch reserved just for me and you over a snack remind me that I am loved and cared for. Basically, you are a part of my being every day, and the messages you took time to share guide me wherever I go. I just didn't know if I had ever thanked you for taking the time. Mama, I appreciate all you did to shape great souls inside of us, and I love you so very much. That's all. Just wanted you to know.

Love,

A Clarkson child

Of course, this note brought happy tears to my eyes and delighted my mother-heart. So often we sow into our children through love, teaching, serving, and giving our time endlessly, yet we aren't always sure if the seeds we planted are ever going to grow and bear fruit.

I read the note a second time, and a rush of memories flooded my mind—memories of the many women who showed me the value of discipleship and how to disciple other women and my children. This child of mine would not have had an example or experience for which to thank me had I not received those examples and experience in *my* journey.

That’s why this book is in your hands. I want to continue the legacy by sharing with you how parenting discipleship unfolded in my life and providing simple and meaningful discipling moments for you to share with your daughter. If you know me at all, you will not be one bit surprised that I have chosen teatime as the backdrop for these special times. Life is just sweeter when a hot pot of tea and a lovely talk of faith are shared between two hearts. Though I wrote this book with mothers and daughters in mind, I have mentored my wonderful boys similarly—time stolen to be alone with tea and treats and talks. We followed the example of Tolkien and Lewis. So know that teatime is a great place to shape the hearts of our beloved boys as well.

Modeling our faith becomes mentoring a heart when we consistently pour into our child by talking openly, listening intently, praying together, and steeping in Scripture side by side. Whether you’ve been discipling others for years or this is your invitation to serve God in this way, you’ll find there is nothing more meaningful or fruitful than discipling your kids and seeing what God does when your story and your child’s story are explored in God’s big, beautiful story.



How joyful are those who fear the LORD—all who follow his ways!

You will enjoy the fruit of your labor...

Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees
as they sit around your table.

That is the LORD’s blessing for those who fear him.

Psalm 128:1-4 NLT





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When God Calls You

*My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.*

JOHN 10:27

Bone-chilling fog wafted through the mysterious, ancient cobblestone streets as I made my way to school each morning in Kraków, Poland. Mists wrapped around the gray stone walls of the aged city, whispering of the hidden secrets of kings and queens who resided there through hundreds of years.

Living there during the Communist occupation meant we could not buy much food. Meat was scarce, and fresh fruit and vegetables were rare and brought into small, open-air markets only in season. But always we could find beautifully carved wooden boxes of every size, shape, and style.

Hoping that someday I would have my own cottage to fill with beauty and color, I would scan the hundreds of choices to find a distinctly crafted box that might someday find a place in my imagined future home. I was particularly drawn to the treasure chests that had keys to lock away precious letters, secrets, journals, or jewels.

Years later, when my home became a reality and little feet pattered around, my treasure chests became favorite relics in my home. Often, I would hide a verse scribbled on a piece of colored paper, some gold-covered chocolate coins, a tiny ring or bracelet, a knight in shining armor, or a small puzzle inside these boxes for my children to discover. Glee and intrigue would fill their hopeful little eyes as they opened the chest to see what was inside.

During a quiet time one morning, my eyes lighted upon one of my little chests, and the Holy Spirit impressed me to look at the hearts of my children as treasure chests. Filling their hearts with truth, beauty, love, great thoughts, books, ideas, adventures,

memories, traditions, wisdom, music, art, lessons, and all the good things I could imagine became a purposeful goal. I wanted to fill them with such an abundance of relics of eternal value that they would draw beauty, strength, guidance, assurance, courage, and love from those deposits for the rest of their lives. God was clearly calling me to disciple my children. And just as my digital settings make sure I always hear messages from my kids, my spiritual settings make sure I always hear and answer a call from God. I was excited and committed.

I realized, though, that I could not give to them what I did not myself possess. If I wanted the souls of my children to be rich, then my soul needed to be rich because it was my soul they would draw from. And so the idea of intentionality began to engage the imagination of my heart. Whatever I filled my mind with, whatever I learned and embraced, flowed into the well of knowledge and refreshment I would draw from and pass on to them daily as I lived my moments in their presence. For example, investing time every morning with the Lord was of utmost importance because what I learned in those moments shaped the passion I passed to my family each morning over breakfast.

First, There Is a Foundation

I have been blessed by excellent women sprinkled along my life path who have invested deeply in my emotional and spiritual health. I never could have written books, had a national and local ministry, finished the course as an intentional mother in my home, and stayed faithful to my marriage without the help, support, comfort, and strength I received from other women. Differing in age, personality, educational background, and life experience, they each added a grace to the treasure chest of wisdom stowed inside my heart. Each has helped me to flourish when otherwise I would have floundered.

I began to grow from and appreciate this kind of intentional mentoring as a young woman, and even more so as I started a family. Discipling became a poignant focus of relationship I wanted to pass on to all my children. That day when I envisioned each of my children as a treasure chest to fill with the treasures of God's truth and the gems of God's grace, I became excited about parenting in a new way. Influence is best cultivated

through love and friendship, so I prayed to deepen my sympathy for what was going on in their hearts at different ages, to understand their personalities, to affirm their intrinsic worth to me and to God and to others, and to encourage them daily.

My pursuit as a mother and discipler was to become the most mature and wise women I could be in my own life, and then, from that place, be an excellent woman reflecting my love for God. I knew it would be challenging for my daughters to find women with biblical ideals, so I wanted to be this example in front of my girls. I'm sure you carry the same concern and desire for your daughter. In response to this burden on my heart, I sought to grow in integrity and graciousness so my girls would have a model for the rest of their lives.

I'll admit that my imperfection and immaturity were evident along the journey, yet I gave all my heart and faith and effort to the hands of Jesus and kept going one day after another toward my goals. This, dear mom, is what you can do too. You don't need a teaching degree. You don't need a master of divinity. You don't need a ribbon of honor for oratory achievements. All you need as your foundation to begin is a heart for Jesus and for your child—that is how you answer the call to discipleship.

A Legacy of Love

When we set in motion traditions formed by faith and values in action, a legacy of love that begins with Jesus is strengthened in our homes. The day our children notice that we aren't just praying at the dinner table, but in every circumstance, is a moment they tuck away as a guide to and evidence of living a faithful life. Later, when times become difficult for the growing child or when tensions rise at home, those memories remain, and the lessons experienced through intentional discipling and from our example of living a sincere faith are there as a foundation.

Don't ever believe your child isn't noticing how you live and how you interact with them as well as others. They see it all. They make note of our priorities and how we invest our time and resources. And when they realize they are one of those top priorities and you are choosing to pour into them with time, prayer, teaching, and connection, they get a glimpse of God's love and care for them. Parenting through the lens of

mentoring and discipleship will inspire, train, and stretch us and our children to live into our God-given potential.

When we are given the gift to add to and continue a legacy of God's love shared between women and between generations, we are transformed. I am a different person because of the faithfulness, encouragement, and inspiration I gave to and received from my friends, and now my daughters.



I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.

2 Timothy 1:5 NLT



For Such a Time as This

Why is it more important than ever to be accountable to our girls? To give them an identity as beautiful women who can think, create, and love as they nurture education, family, and marriage in their homes? It is because the belief in the fullness of biblical femininity has been lost in a sea of the extremes of femininity that are put forth.

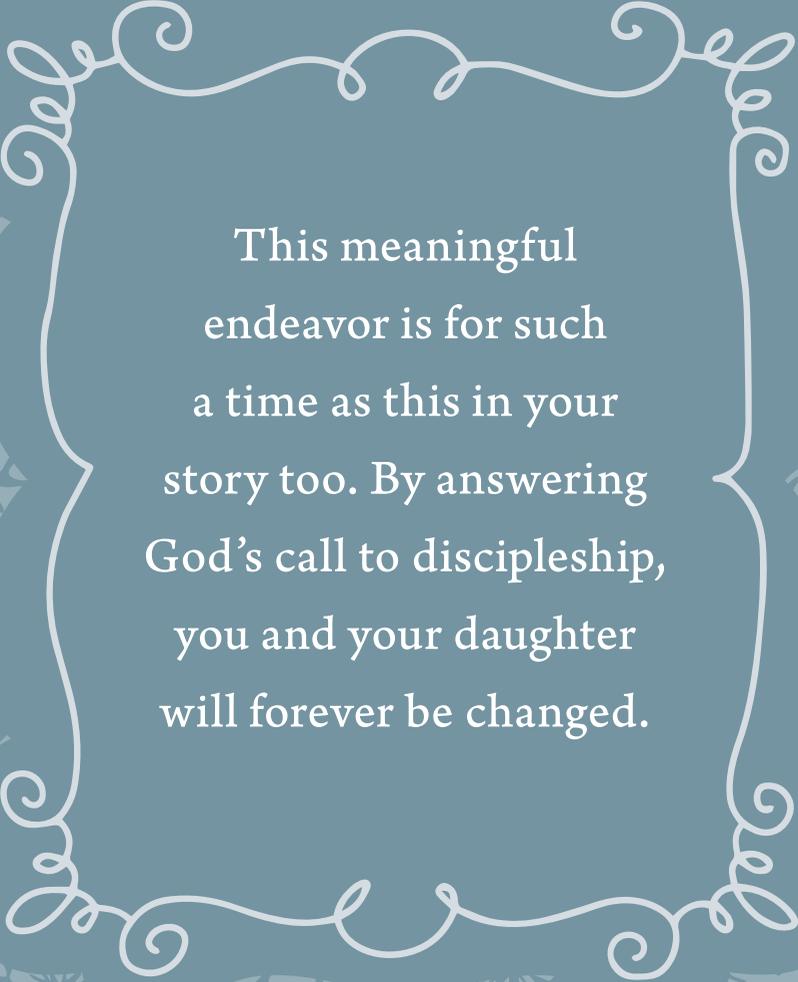
In this time in history, there is more competition than ever for the soul and brain space of all of us. With smartphones and social media, we are bombarded with messages from a secular culture that challenge our biblical convictions and teach a contrasting morality, a relative set of values. Add to that, the church seems to be filled with leaders and believers who have diminished their stories with compromises of every kind.



Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14





This meaningful
endeavor is for such
a time as this in your
story too. By answering
God's call to discipleship,
you and your daughter
will forever be changed.

It is more important than ever for our children to deeply feel our love and experience great joy and friendship with us so they will continue wanting our input and influence in their lives. Parents are created by God to come alongside to champion, help, and encourage their children to live into their God-designed destinies.

Every step toward deepening your relationship with your daughter and her relationship with the Lord is needed for such a time as this—not only in terms of history, but for this season in your daughter’s life. And I imagine this meaningful endeavor is for such a time as this in your story too. By answering God’s call to discipleship, you and your daughter will forever be changed.

Expressing your love for your daughter and the condition of her heart will do much to encourage her. And sharing these times over tea adds a ritual of sweet connection that won’t be lost if things aren’t perfect. You should know up front that things won’t be perfect. And they will be lovely and rewarding just the same. Even *that* is a life and faith lesson for your young daughter.

The most significant influence comes through an atmosphere of unconditional love, through pleasant experiences shared, through trust and conversations. It’s because of the commitments we cultivate over time and the willingness to be vulnerable and authentic that we bring about support and encouragement, communication and connection, respect and understanding—all the blessings true friendships have in common.

Your desire for a deeper friendship with your daughter will be evident in your commitment to spend time with her when the focus isn’t on homework or household chores or negotiating technology time. Speaking of which, let’s not forget that we are the most connected generation technologically and the most isolated from our neighbors. It requires more effort and forethought—and sometimes plain courage and boldness—to reach out to others in person. Women in this era have either forgotten the intrinsic potential they have as women sharing in friendship, faith, and community, or they are too distracted, overwhelmed, and busy to access the glory and beauty of their femininity and how it blooms more fully in the context of loving relationships. Many are afraid or reticent to embrace the delight and joy of discipleship as a regular and valued part of their experiences.

I think one reason there is hesitation is because we don't experience this fellowship cultivated the way some have in past decades. We need only to look back a generation to be reminded that companionship, deep connection, and kinship among women has been a rich reality throughout all cultures and centuries. No matter the challenging and complicated historical chapters of life they have found themselves in, women appreciated their God-given heritage and story. They understood the legacy of love, wisdom, and skill they could live into by seeing it played out before them organically, day in and day out, with neighbors and relatives—a community of women who lived close by.

Restoring Heart-to-Heart Connection

Discipleship on the home front will help to restore the rhythm and ritual of connecting heart-to-heart. As you model the cultivation of female friendships that provide emotional affirmation and faith encouragement, may your heart's imagination be captivated by the impact you will have on your daughter. What you share now in these intentional times stays with your daughter as she matures, makes tough decisions, moves away, has other mentors, creates her own circle of friends, and becomes a life-giver for others. You will help her today *and* also build up her amazing story to be lived as a woman made in God's image to share His light with the world.

When I embraced the call, I knew I needed to make plans or the busyness of life would take over my good intentions. I started with too many objectives, making mentoring far harder than it needed to be. But over time I narrowed down my goals. I decided I wanted to gather verses of God's truth and wisdom to place inside their hearts so they could draw from them all their days no matter where life and God took them. I also knew I wanted a simple way to draw them close and to make our shared talks personal, beautiful, and impactful.

This is why I cultivated a teatime discipleship experience as a foundation. I met with my children individually over tea and over many years to invest these treasures in their hearts. These intimate friendship times were the space where I was able to build in them a sense of the truths that they could build their lives around.

Truth, beauty, and wisdom must be intentionally passed down. Rich souls do not exist by accident. Pouring into your child requires a commitment to what you most want your daughter to hide inside her heart and soul and how you can encourage that to happen. If you pause with concern you won't do this right, let me assure you that you *will* do it right because you're embarking on a new journey with a desire to show your daughter the love of Jesus. Perfection is not a requirement. I wouldn't be able to speak to this if not for my own daughters and how they received this one-on-one mentoring even when I stumbled. And my girls eventually made discipleship with other women, friends, communities, and their own families a pursuit and passion. It's a sight that brings joy to a mother's heart.



There are many treasures to be found and shared and shared again as you and your daughter become a part of this legacy circle of fellowship and discipleship between women. It will change your relationship, outlook, understanding of God, and your purpose. And, I do believe, it will change the world.



Come along inside...

We'll see if tea and buns can make the world a better place.

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*



INTENTIONAL COMMITMENTS

One quiet morning, I journaled five commitments I would make to become a loving, effective discipler to my children and pour into them the riches of great stories, Scripture's wisdom, and life-giving words.

①

I will welcome my children to come to me anytime as a trusted friend, mentor, and helper. I will say yes to their desire to talk even when inconvenient. I'll avoid frustration by laying aside expectations to control life and commit to showing the love of Jesus.

②

I will create a safe place where they can say anything, ask any question, and know I will keep their confidences, hold their trust, and understand their failures. I want to be someone they count on.

③

I will prepare ahead for each discipleship time. I understand I cannot pass on what I have not first personally invested in. I will study my Bible so my children will draw out of my heart the faith riches I store there.

④

I will be a conductor of life-giving moments of beauty, feasting, and living companionship. With candles, music, and treats, I will nurture an atmosphere of pleasure, fun, rest, and celebration to create growth.

⑤

I will focus on my hope for my children that they will receive a legacy of God's Word, wisdom for life, and training in character. I want them to leave home with foundations of biblical truth and virtue holding them and supporting them.

YOUR COMMITMENTS

Spend time with a cup of tea and this planning page. Prayerfully complete the five commitments.

①

How I will strive to be an available presence to my child even when it's inconvenient...

②

How I will become a safe, supportive discipler and establish trust with my daughter...

③

How I will prepare for discipleship times and deepen my faith to better share God's love...

④

Ways I might cultivate creativity, beauty, treats, and joy for our times together...

⑤

What is my great hope for her and her future? How I will focus on what I pour into my daughter's heart...