

Season 8: Titus

Episode 1: Teatime Discipleship: A Conversation with Sally Clarkson

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Sarah: Welcome to season eight of Two Sisters and a cup of Tea. We're so excited to be back in your earbuds and we can't wait to dig into Titus together. We're starting the season a little differently and today's episode is more of a prelude to Titus as we chat with Sally Clarkson. Sally is a best selling author who split her time living between the mountains of Colorado and the rolling fields of England. Her newest release, Tea Time Discipleship, is published by Harvest House Publishers and is available at 10ofthose.com or wherever books are sold. We were so thankful for the opportunity to chat with Sally and glean her wisdom on tea drinking discipleship. Well, enough from me. Let's head over to the conversation.

Felicity: Welcome to two sisters in a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I'm in the States and this is my sister Sarah. She's in the UK.

Felicity: And this episode, we are delighted to have Sally Clarkson with us. Welcome, Sally.

Sally: I'm so happy to be with you today and I absolutely love your name.

Felicity: We know you as someone well, we know you for many reasons, you've written many books and you speak and all these things. But we know you as someone who moves from Colorado to Oxford frequently with a cup of tea in hand, welcoming people to come and sit with you and speak of the Lord together. And so we're really excited to be sitting with you today, tea in hand, to do exactly that thing. I'm sure there's a whole lot more that you can tell us about yourself, but where do we find you now? What does it look like to be Sally Clarkson at the moment?

Sally: Well, I'm almost 70 years old. I've been teaching Bible studies since I was 19, so that's a long time.

Felicity: Wow.

Sally: Yeah. I have moved 24 times since I've been married and nine times internationally, so I tend to have a lot of different scope for the things that I love in life. I have four children and three of them at the moment live in the UK. Actually, three of them at the moment live in Oxford. Wow. And my three grandchildren. And we are a family who loves books, tea, hiking, feasting. My children have been called Hobbits because we spend time around the table.

Felicity: That's great.

Sally: And I write books and I love just to talk to people and to teach them about the Lord. So that's a little bit about me. I've been married 42 years.

Sarah: Amazing. Wonderful. And, Sally, you're famous for wanting and loving a cup of tea at every opportunity. What is your favorite tea? What's your perfect cup of tea?

Sally: Anything in my life needs to be strong and big and bold. Maybe I don't have taste buds left, I don't know. But I do love Yorkshire gold. I squeeze it, stomp on it, hit it, stir it.

Felicity: Love that.

Sally: Yeah. So. I love Yorkshire gold. I don't even know where I fell in love with it, but it's been many years since we have we have an argument in our house, though, because my husband prefers Twinings, so we have both.

Felicity: We're big on Yorkshire, I have to say. I don't think I've ever had Yorkshire gold. There's a big differences there between the classic Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Gold.

Sally: Stronger stands up by itself.

Sarah: And what about a biscuit to go with it? Sally? An English biscuit? Would you go for one or would you just leave it just as a cup of tea?

Sally: Lately, I've been eating, like, shortbread one shortbread in the afternoon, and if I don't have shortbread, I can eat a sugar cookie, an American sugar cookie, but I just love to dunk a little bit, so it allows me to have a sweet without eating too much. So I love those.

Felicity: Sounds very delicious. You have just written a book which it could not be more fitting to what we are about as well. Tea Time Discipleship, it's called, and we have so enjoyed reading it and just seeing your heart through it. And really, you're inviting people to sit down and have a cup of tea with you, aren't you? And in that there being a purposeful conversation of the Lord as we're gathered around a cup of tea, is seeking to persuade other people into that. That is why did you write a book called Tea Time Discipleship?

Sally: Well, many years ago, after I had been in full time Christian work for a couple of years, I moved to work in communist countries where Christianity was supposedly illegal. But we could always meet with someone for a cup of tea or a cup of coffee, and we found that we could invite people into our home with a cup of tea or coffee, and it became a platform for opening friendships. If you have a cup of tea in hand, something sweet, a candle lit, a little music on and say, Tell me your story, how are you? And I would love to know more about you. It gave us an opening to the hearts of women as a way of passing on encouragement, as well as really being able to talk with them about our faith.

Sarah: Amazing.

Felicity: This book really does inspire in order to do that ourselves, I think I've been so encouraged to keep doing that thing of just sitting down with people and getting the word open. So thank you.

Sally: I loved it. It was really fun for me to finally have somebody want to write this or publish this book. I've been reading a lot of articles about how in the past couple of years, with the pandemic and everything else, that there are more suicides amongst women our age, mothers, and there are also more women on drugs now, since the pandemic. But they feel isolated, they feel lonely, they feel alone in what they're doing. And it's kind of a perfect way to reach a hand out to someone else and say, you aren't alone. I care for you. And so that's also been a part of me thinking, how can I write something and have a beautiful book with lots of pictures and recipes and prayers and so on, that can give them the stories that would cause them to be willing just to ask just one person for a cup of tea?

Sarah: Really inspiring, really wonderful and really fascinating to see that over different countries, as you say, was it 24 times you said you'd moved? So just different. Even if it's not internationally, different cultures within a country is enough, isn't it, to kind of what is it like to do that in different cultures in different seasons?

Sally: And every person that you meet almost longs for someone to know them, to love them, to encourage them, and yet we don't oftentimes communicate that to each other. We just hold it in. I've learned over the years that people love to be known, and it's really fun for me to ask about them and their stories.

Sarah: That's wonderful. What are some kind of questions that you would start off to help oil that conversation, to get to know people?

Sally: Well, I literally say to most people, tell me about your story. What is your background? Where did you grow up? And then they start and then they give you hints about things that are interesting to them. You ask them more questions, and it gives you an opportunity to share your story. Oh, I understand, and I grew up, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But I think it's just showing interest for their context. How are you feeling about life? What was it like being alone during the pandemic in California or whatever? Just learning to really kind of see into their hearts, try to really say, what are they like? What makes them tick? What are the issues in their life right now? How might I encourage them? And I kind of made it a goal a few years ago to try to leave every person in general I don't do it all the time, but with a sense of God's love, if they've been with me, that they would feel that they have worth and that they're precious in some way.

Felicity: Wow, what a purpose. I think that's and so real, that's so truly of Christ. I think that's really striking a grid.

Sally: That a lens, kind of, with which to see people. And when they irritate you, you move from the irritation to the lens. No, I remember my lens.

Felicity: How long have you been walking with the Lord? What does it look like for you to be you've? Clearly so many different seasons and places of life. So how long have you been walking with the Lord? How has that journey been for you before you've been feeding into others, but for you personally?

Sally: Well, I grew up going to church, and when I was a teenager. I thought, if somebody really knew the God who threw the stars into place, wouldn't their lives be different? And I really kind of pushed against all the things I'd ever heard. I thought they should be more excellent, more loving, more happy in their lives. And so I went through a time of deep questioning, questioning everything. I remember I was in my first year in university, and I was praying. I didn't tell anyone this, but I prayed that if there was a God, that he would let me know Him. And soon after that, this very shy woman, I lived on the 10th floor of a dormitory, and she came knocking at my door, and she said, we're taking student surveys today. And so the survey, of course, led to then she wanted to share a booklet with me about Christ. And I thought that she was an angel that God had sent to me because she was so sweet, and she was answering my questions that I really had. I believe that God sent her. And she said, you just didn't look like the type. I thought, what does that mean? She said, well, you didn't look needy. And I thought, isn't that funny? But for me, it was like sunshine in my heart. I had always thought, if anybody really knew me, would they ever love me? And she was talking about God's love for me. And then I was always very driven. I wanted to know what my purpose in life would be. And she answered both those questions, and of course, somebody followed me up. But it was as a young university student that I caught a vision for realizing that, like me, probably other people longed to understand what it looks like to be loved unconditionally and to have a way forward in all the discouraging points in life. And so it started there. And the person who met with me after I became a believer said, now you need to go gather some friends and tell them what I'm teaching you. And I was so young and naive. I did what she said. So it started way back then.

Sarah: That's so wonderful and so wonderful to hear that one to one interaction that you needed in that moment for someone to sit down and answer those questions with you personally, even though you can have been in church for a number of years, to see the power of that kind of one to one interaction. That's so beautiful and wonderful and so encouraging, isn't it? Wow. Are you still in contact? Are you still in contact with her?

Sally: No. I heard that she became a missionary to South America. Wow. And we kind of lost contact. We never became close friends because she kind of encouraged me into a student group where there was another woman who spent time with me. But, yeah, she was just a very faithful, quiet person who felt like she was supposed to talk to different people about the Lord and his love. So it was surprising for me.

Felicity: I wonder whether she was surprised. Well, she sounds like she was surprised, but I wonder how many of us and our listeners kind of feel like we would be a surprising person to sit down with someone else and do what you're saying. You've clearly given over your life to discipling others in this way. And I wonder it's easy for us to think, I just don't think that's me. I'm not Sally Clarkson. Really? I love the way you're talking about her as quite a quiet but faithful individual, not the kind of crazy extrovert that you might think would be knocking on doors for those of us who are thinking, I don't even know how we would get how I would get started. What would you say to someone who's thinking, this sounds like a really good idea, but I don't know, how do I get going on doing this?

Sally: Well, you might be asking me a practical question, but for me it was the more I loved God, the more I thought he says, Go into the world and make disciples. Thinking of a cup of tea, he says, if you give even one cup of water, you've given it unto me. And so I always felt like God, through the Holy Spirit would if we're walking with Him, listening to His Word, he will prompt us to do what the Holy Spirit would do. I would say if you can just practice, get better at it, anytime you strengthen a muscle, it takes practice and pushing and stretching to strengthen it. And I think that the more I developed compassion for people and love for people, the more it pushed me to be friendly. The starting point is just being friendly. Hi, how are you? That's the cutest dog I've ever seen. When you're out on the road walking or taking, if you make something and just take a little plate next door or sit out on your bench outside where everybody is and just say, oh, I brought some cookies for you today, or some biscuits, it's just a matter of seeing yourself as a light. The light can't be hidden, Jesus said, and just seeing how might I enlighten people's lives today? Or give them a blessing? And then through that you learn to develop conversation. I think we're all a bit timid, and not all

of us, perhaps, but it's just a matter of caring more about pleasing the heart of Christ than it is about not doing anything so.

Felicity: True and wise and challenging as well. But I love the starting point there, and the end point really being, what is the Lord calling us to do? And how by his grace he is at work in us and through us. So you're speaking there and like quite a lot about just simply making connections and and welcoming people into conversation and that kind of thing. And in your experience of of church life? So so the kind of one anothering, of Christians believers speaking to one another in this way and discipling one another, have you got any wisdom on that? A culture of discipleship in this kind of way? The one to one kind of is it different or is it just the same kind of thing?

Sally: I think it's built on a lot of the same principles. I've had a couple of different Bible studies in Oxford the past couple of years. One of the ways I started, I always use food as an introduction, but I put out literally on Facebook when I got to Oxford and I said, is there anyone interested in getting together for a Bible study or just to be friends and study the Bible? And it's ended up being this is our third year together and it's about 22 women. Of course, in Oxford, everybody keeps moving away because they graduate or their husbands graduate, but I always had something to drink, something to eat, had a nice environment. And really when we started there, we weren't allowed to gather. It was during the pandemic. So we brought the women into our we have a tiny little garage and we took everything out of it and put up folding chairs. And so we had a fun Bible study and tea drinking time in our garage and had everybody go around and tell a little bit about themselves. And now they've all become friends, their children have become friends. And it all just started from an invitation. Over the years, we've had people from seven different countries and a lot of people from the UK, a lot of people from the States. I think people just it's different for everyone. There's no one way that it happens, but I think, again, it's asking questions. How are you? Let's read a chapter of this book together. So I read a few paragraphs of a book out loud. What does that mean to you? Do you think it's true? And so, again, inviting them to share their lives, and sometimes they're very quiet and sometimes they're not, but it's just become a really sweet group of women in fellowship and we don't want to miss because we love those friendships.

Sarah: That's so beautiful. And it's just powerful, isn't it? The relationship that is fostered by a simple cup of tea, but also then going deeper and choosing to go deeper in conversation. It is a really powerful thing, isn't it? So we're just starting a series in Titus this season and we've been well, me and Felicity is we've been starting to talk about it, just thinking about actually the gospel being central to all of church life. It's not just the church leaders, but it's actually that it is those everyday relationships kind of rubbing alongside one another and letting the gospel impact how you then love and serve one another in the small conversations, as well as the big life moments. And that kind of basis of what you're doing there then enables that to happen, doesn't it? Because people are more naturally talking in that way and able to kind of speak the gospel in love to one another. Because there's a basis already there, isn't there?

Sally: There's a commonality. We've all come here, we'll get to know each other, and then they open up more and more and more. Yeah, they find more in common. Oh, your child is seven years old, or, oh, you work too many hours a week. I do too. It just becomes a common conversation.

Felicity: Okay, so we are excited to be getting into Titus soon, as Sarah's been talking about, especially in relation to about one anothering and the gospel transforming things. That's what we're excited about. As you think about studying Titus, can you think why people should join us in doing that? Like, why would Titus be a great thing for people to come and come along with us on the journey?

Sally: I think it's amazing to me that God could have reached the world in any way he wanted to, but that he chose to do it through people. He chose to befriend his disciples. And then after he showed them what to do, he served them fish on the lakefront, he walked and taught them, he touched their children, their families. And I think that Titus is a good picture of especially for women. To women. I've realized that as a young mom or as a young woman, young married woman, I just wanted there to be somebody who showed me how just to live life. And I had this friend, and she had also lived overseas, and she loved

tea, and she's probably had 1000 women in her home over the years. But she lights a candle and she would have her tea out and her something wonderful, and then she would create a group. And just I needed to watch someone. By watching her be friendly and loving and watching how she cooked and how she set her tables and how she treated children, it gave me a living picture of what things I could do. I had kind of heard some concepts in my mind, but when I saw it in her home, I could emulate it. I could go back home and say, I can do that. I can serve people, ask questions, have great food. I can do that because I've seen her do it. And so I love Titus because it's kind of that way the older women teach the younger women. But I think a lot of it is in real life, you're welcome in my home. You're welcome into my life. How can I help you? And I loved that she was willing to pass on wisdom and love and examples and all the things that she did. I think that's what this is all about. The one another aims.

Sarah: Definitely. It strikes me, sorry that with your books that you have sought to then do that in a much wider way, that you have sought to kind of pass on so much of your wisdom and kind of Godly beautiful ideas to others. Is it strange then, not knowing the impact? You know some of the impact, but you'll never know all of the impact that your books are having.

Sally: It actually surprises me when I hear people say that it's totally changed their lives.

Sarah: I think good.

Sally: Surprising.

Felicity: That's it that's the power of the gospel. That is it that is transformative. But it's not really about Sally Clarkson. It's about what you're sharing and who you're pointing to. And I think that's so evident in the way that you speak and the way that you go about your purposeful business. Very thankful.

Sally: I think lately I've been kind of amazed at how many people say the same things to me. And I think, oh, my goodness, there's so many people out there longing for what we have, the sunshine that we have in our hearts, in a sense. So that is definitely something that has occurred to me over the past years, when people keep coming back to me and saying, just the stories and what you shared is something I've never heard. And we just make assumptions that people have heard everything that we've heard, which isn't true.

Felicity: Yeah. And how valuable that is when it comes person like from an actual person, not just kind of taught, but actually, as you say, modeled and shown. And when you welcome someone into your life and they see that your life is transformed by that truth, well, that.

Sarah: Is the heart of Titus, isn't it, that we'll be getting on to this season. But actually it's the good news that enables you to live that good life that then people watching on go, oh, right, you are living for something different here. And it's attractive like that's his kind of aim, isn't it?

Felicity: Yeah. Bring it on. Let's get into Titus. Sally, I wonder whether you might pray for us and our listeners in relation to what we've been talking about as we end.

Sally: Dear Heavenly Father, I just thank you so much for this wonderful podcast, for these sisters who care so much to share all that they know, the love of God. And I pray, Father, that if anyone is listening to us today with a longing in their heart to know you, that you would help them to understand what we've been talking about. I pray, Father, that if anyone is discouraged, you will cause them to know that you see them, that you care for them, that you sympathize with their needs, and that you will encourage them, Lord. And I do pray that your Holy Spirit would stir in their hearts and minds to cause them to want to reach out just one little cup to someone else and be of encouragement and love and goodness to them. In this week thank you, Lord. We love you so much. In Jesus name, amen.

Felicity: Amen.

Sarah: Sally, thank you so much for joining us. It's just been wonderful, wonderful to chat to you. Wish we were doing it in person with our actual cups of teas and biscuits. Maybe one day.

Sally: My tea always gets cold when I make a cup of tea during the podcast.

Sarah: Yeah, this is fairly cold now, but that's all right.

Sally: You've been such encouragements to me. I really appreciate it.

Felicity: Thank you. Vice versa. And we will be back, sadly not with Sally. But we'll be back next week as we get into Titus together. So do come along with us for the ride. We're looking forward to it and we will see you then.

Sarah: What a gift of a conversation. This episode has been sponsored by Harvest House Publishers, the publisher of Sally's latest book, tea Time Discipleship. It's available at [ten of those.com](http://tenofthose.com) or wherever books are sold, and well worth picking up a copy. We'll see you next time for episode two, our.