

FOREWORD BY LAUREN CHANDLER

SARA HAGERTY



ADORE



A SIMPLE PRACTICE FOR
EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE
MIDDLE MINUTES OF YOUR DAY

We need women like Sara Hagerty, and we need more books like *Adore*—ushering us into the throne room of grace, in the middle of the mundane and the maintenance. This is a book not to miss. If you heed its encouragement, it will change your life.

—JESS CONNOLLY, AUTHOR, *YOU ARE THE GIRL FOR THE JOB*

Sara Hagerty's *Adore* is a beautiful invitation into the simple but vital practice of drawing near to God. I love Sara's heart in continually pointing us to the real and lasting treasure of daily and even minute-by-minute communion with God. This is where *real* life happens as we allow His Word and His presence to meet us every day, right where we are!

—CHRISTY NOCKELS, SINGER, SONGWRITER,
THE GLORIOUS IN THE MUNDANE PODCAST

The nearness and tenderness of God will be so real to you as you read this book. Sara builds words in such a way it feels like God is so near as you read them.

—JENNIE ALLEN, AUTHOR, *GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD*;
FOUNDER AND VISIONARY, IF:GATHERING

This book is a must-read, and one that I will go back to again and again. As Sara shares her heart and stories, you feel so known and understood and drawn to the Savior's feet to worship Him there, in the midst of the storm and unknown and hard. This book was such a timely tool for me to adore Him in the midst of my own heartache.

—ALYSSA BETHKE, AUTHOR, *LOVE THAT LASTS*

If you desire to have authentic intimacy with God and to understand how to cultivate peace and joy amid a demanding life, you must read this book. Sara has written a book after my own heart's values—finding God to be the source of light, beauty, truth, love that we need every day.

—SALLY CLARKSON, AUTHOR, BLOGGER,
PODCASTER; SALLYCLARKSON.COM

The longing of Sara's heart is for God and His with-us presence. Her writing reveals glimpses into their holy relationship. Adoration is not a prayer technique but a response of our hearts to His unending invitation to be with Him every moment of every day. I pray this book becomes contagious! Nothing is more important.

—BARBARA RAINEY, CREATOR AND FOUNDER, EVER
THINE HOME; COFOUNDER, FAMILY LIFE

Sara's words pour out like pure water, line after line, page after page, satiating a part of my heart I didn't know was suffering from thirst. Sara has an incredible way of drawing you into her story at the same time drawing you into a place where your heart tenderly acknowledges your need for God even in the smallest of moments throughout the day. Sara doesn't leave us there, as she also reveals the impact of His engaging presence as we look to Him and experience being known. *Adore* is more than a book, it is a pitcher of refreshment for the soul, healing balm for the heart, and a picture of God's enduring love for each and every one of us.

—JENNIFER SMITH, AUTHOR, *THE UNVEILED
WIFE AND MARRIAGE AFTER GOD*

Sara Hagerty's voice of wisdom has long been one of my favorites, because of her consistency in pointing her readers toward the Word of God and the one who breathed it. In *Adore*, Sara beckons us to look for God where we might least expect Him, in the mundane middle of our days and our lives. Her words turn my gaze to Jesus, who calls me to know His heart for me in new ways. Sara takes God's Word and makes it real, using her own experiences to show us how to apply His truth to our lives and how to open wide the doors for a new kind of relationship with our Father. In a world full of easy escapes, *Adore* is a needed reminder to center our lives around Jesus. If you, like me, need a fresh vision of God's goodness in the midst of your ordinary, this book is for you. Come, feel His gaze on you! See how He loves you!

—KATIE DAVIS MAJORS, AUTHOR, *KISSES
FROM KATIE AND DARING TO HOPE*

Other Books by Sara Hagerty

*Every Bitter Thing Is Sweet: Tasting the
Goodness of God in All Things*

*Unseen: The Gift of Being Hidden in a
World That Loves to Be Noticed*

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Adore

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*To my mom, Karen Welter.
You adored Him long before I understood it.
Thank you for this inheritance.*

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FOREWORD

The contents of my purse were scattered across the sanctuary floor, right where the people of our church receive prayer after the Word is preached and sung on a Sunday morning. I don't know why I did it, aside from the still, small voice saying, "Pour out your purse here." I was alone. It was a Tuesday morning.

An hour before this, I had been so angry. Angry as I yanked clothes on my toddler. Angry as I prodded my other two children into the minivan, running late to school again. Angry as I recounted an argument my husband and I had the night before. Angry at the person who cost me thirty precious seconds as they looked at their phone when the light turned green. More than all that, I was angry that I felt forgotten and unseen by God.

Why does everything have to be so hard for me? And why am I so angry all the time?

A friend called to catch up. The tremor in my voice told on me. She prodded and I unloaded, but the weight refused to lift. She suggested I read the beginning of 1 Samuel and ask the Lord what He might have for me there. I pointed my minivan toward the church, my mind set on finding relief

before Him. I know He isn't bound to a location. He can be found at the kitchen sink or in the car while I run errands. But my heart longed for a quiet place, and I happened to have time for it.

The pages of my Bible practically fell open to Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel and her response to Eli, the high priest, when he accused her of being drunk at the doorpost of the temple of the Lord: "But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD'" (1 Sam. 1:15 ESV).

As I read those words, a dam broke. I let it all out—the disappointment and the anger, and the shame I felt as a result of those. My purse was a picture of the pouring out. I needed help seeing what it could look like to pour my heart out to the Lord—all the mess and all the gold. And I needed to see that the Lord would not reject me in that place. Instead, He would receive me so that I could do what my heart longed for: adore Him.

I didn't know that's what I was doing until I read Sara's words in this book. Through *Adore*, I have discovered a friend from afar who graciously invites me into her grit to behold and adore the God of the middle minutes. Her vulnerability helps me feel less alone in the struggle, and the grace she has found in communion with an unwavering God gives me hope for a life of adoration through the momentous and the mundane. Come, friend, and let us adore Him.

—LAUREN CHANDLER



CHAPTER 1

MY GRIT MEETS HIS BEAUTY

Finding God Where We
Least Expect Him

For Christ plays in ten thousand places.

—GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS,
“AS KINGFISHERS CATCH FIRE”

Life is a total of minutes spent.
Attaching a bandaid to a child’s wound.
Turning off the outdoor lights before bed.
Lugging the overloaded grocery bag to the kitchen counter.
Sending a text message.
Sifting through a stack of mail that’s full of advertisements.
Powering off the computer.
Applying mascara.
At fifteen, when I gave “my whole life” to Jesus, I didn’t consider that living the radical life for God would one day

call forth minute-by-minute faithfulness of me. I gathered my fifteen years like a stack of files and foisted them on the one who'd been watchful, in exchange for a notepad we would fill with our adventures together.

At fifteen, surrendering my whole life and my whole heart meant the big picture, not the minutiae. After all, I could remember only four or maybe five of those fifteen years.

I imagined that Christianity was lived in broad strokes—as a highlight reel.

Minutes were what happened in between.



The house was quiet, exhaling after the tussles of the day.

I settled into my chair and heard the ominous creak of an upstairs bedroom door, the one that needed a shot of WD-40 that we never found the time to apply. Her feet were light and slipped on the stairs. I knew who it was before I saw her.

She said, “Mommy, every time I have a really happy day, I get really afraid afterward.” She was ten, and she was thirty, afraid of the dark and self-aware enough to know the pattern of her fear.

We adopted our four oldest children from Africa, at various ages, though none still wore diapers when we held them for the first time. In two years, we multiplied from Nate and me to us plus four. As each child came into our fold, we had one thing in common: the ache of a life that felt out of time. They'd lost the innocence of childhood before they lost their first tooth, and Nate and I grew gray hair as we waited (not by choice) to grow our family.

In one sentence my daughter touched humanity's flitting response to joy: we don't know what to do with it. And our response to Him: we don't know what to do with His nearness, which reaches closer than our skin.

She didn't know about my wrestling with fear. After twelve years with an empty womb, I birthed a baby who threatened to incite more fear in his living than I experienced in the decade of wondering whether I would ever heal enough to carry him. After he was born, I asked in celebratory wonder, "Did this happen? Did I really birth this child?" Yet in the next breath, I feared that this would be the day that he might not wake up.

It was just like what I had done with her during the months after we'd adopted her. I'd stare at her vibrancy across the room, still unable to grasp that she was mine, only to fear losing her.

"Too good to be true" is humanity's response to God's gifts and to the God who doesn't just hold the files of our lives but also writes them. And studies them.

What I told my little girl that night was no different from what I'd barely grasped myself: adore Him here.

"The joy of the LORD is my strength," I told her, quoting Nehemiah 8:10, adding, "Don't focus on what you're afraid of, but look at God."

With each of our seven children—Lily, Hope, Eden, and Caleb, who came to us through adoption, and years later Bo, Virginia, and Charlotte, whom I held in my womb—fear haunted me. Three teenagers, a child in the in-between years, a five-year-old, a toddler, and a babe—all gave opportunity for fear. Fear is ignited in more than one life stage.

How many times had I shut the door to her room behind

me and unthinkingly given over to fear the one-minute walk to the kitchen? Dishes to do and phone calls to make and other children's needs to meet, forgetting what I didn't want to notice in the first place.

The unrecorded minutes for most of us are pregnant. We scrapbook our banner days—the weddings and births, first days of kindergarten and college—gliding over the significance of all that lies in between the annual family vacations. One middle minute can hold fears and insecurities and mind wanderings. No wonder we long for a highlight reel, for those banner days. But in the middle minutes, we discover who we are and what we carry.

We don't know what to do with the minutes in between, occupied by fear or boredom or aching—all the things we like to ignore and feel safe from when they are out of range. We overlook them, and we dismiss them. We develop eyes for the next big thing as an escape. All the while we miss the tender invitation, right there, in those minutes.

Giving our lives to God wasn't merely a broad-strokes yes for the shining times when His power is tangible.

He made us to fall in love during the middle minutes.



I met my friend Michelle for tea and told her pieces of my life about which there hadn't been time to share in passing conversations in the hallway. I was stretched with two children, yet unaware that the year ahead would include an adoption of two more. I loved the long-awaited early motherhood days, and yet I begrudged the loss of my time. The low-hanging cloud was my barrenness, still after nine years of marriage.

She saw what I hid, even from myself: cynicism and skepticism and a stalwart approach to my subtle and everyday ache. I gritted my teeth and endured, but she had another suggestion: fall in love.

“Have you tried adoration?” she asked.

Of course. Hadn’t we all? ACTS, right? Just like supplication and thanksgiving and confession, adoration was somewhere in there. Like breathing, I was sure I had done it. Sometime.

She explained. This isn’t a discipline; it’s a simple way to talk to God. It’s like everyday conversation with a friend. It’s an engagement that can turn the hardened parts of the heart toward His Word and His person, expecting that He might soften them.

Adoration is choosing from God’s Word a part of His character and His nature to meditate on, particularly one with which we wrestle. Adoration reaches beyond our thirty-minute, sanitized quiet time. It can come from our base questions and fears, our honest grappling.

But admitting the need to adore leads to a more significant hurdle: the need to wrestle.



Summer nights hold wonder for me after that summer following my first yes to Him. The light off our back porch filled in the shadows made by the moon’s light as I spent night after night on the backyard swing poring over the pages of my Bible.

Those teenage nights didn’t end at curfew; that’s when they got started.

His Word felt alive, both in me and to me.

Every night was new. He was new, always. Parts of Him I didn't know made nighttime whispers, inviting me to explore them.

This was my version of summer love.

Not too long after, I made a type-A decision to highlight every verse I read in His Word in the hope that I might one day have that Bible all painted. My heart shifted as I filled those pages with floescence. I inched away from the freshness of a conversation with one I was fascinated to know—but barely knew—toward a routine as regular as brushing my teeth each day.

I approached my time with God as if it were less of an adventure and more of a task.

So how does one fall in love when the book is dusty or the God-man inside it reads like a historical figure or represents one more goal to meet?

Enter adoration.

Adoration is finding a pulse behind the Word and then saying that Word back to Him in our dialect. Adoration is asking Him to wrap His fingers around our dull hearts and to slowly revive them. It's admitting, *I barely know You, God.*

There are 1,440 minutes in a day. How many of them have I spent replaying old thoughts, reliving conversations, fretting over what was never mine to hold, and then at the end of it all, wondering where He was? How many of those minutes have I lived independent of Him, waiting for the next big moment of faith?

Adoration invites God into the grit of my life that irritates and exposes, the grit about which He already knows. Adoration is meeting God in the invisible, unaccounted-for minutes I ignore.

Adoration is falling in love, at odd times and in unexpected places.

Applying mascara.

Taking out the trash.

Pressing a bandaid against an obstinate wound.

Turning out the lights at night.

All the thoughts I have in those “insignificant” moments are ones He hears and knows. They tell my story even more than that highlight reel does, and He sees it all and desires to engage with me there.

When I adore, He slips off my watch, which demarcates the successful, efficient minutes, and He says, *Find My eyes for you, right here in the grit of your life.*

The minute-long walk across the threshold of my bedroom to the rowdy bunch outside is thick with invitation. I fill my mind with Him in that one minute. The wait at the doctor’s office, the drive to the gym, the hours spent cutting vegetables and folding laundry and cleaning toilet bowls are all moments for adoration. He says, *Come, as you are, and I will show you who I am. Right here.*

To fall in love with Him, we need to see Him, to know what His eyes look like. His Word is our best informant, but it can feel like it’s far from our days. We struggle to believe it.

I barely know You, God.

We want to tell the world what we know, yet the minutes of fear and insecurity and boredom and even downright nastiness can bring us to a place of confessional reprieve: *In the deep recesses of my heart, I don’t really believe what Your Word says about You, God. Help my unbelief.*

Adoration exposes the grit of our lives to His engaging eyes, so that we see He receives us in our grit.



Everyone has one or more reasons to believe God is not good. Most hide them, unknowingly, until we can't anymore.

Some reasons may be like mine: body not working as it should, womb that remains empty.

Or parents die young, cancer claims a child. Money runs out, best friends find others. Marriages struggle behind drawn shades. Children don't always comply. Careers end abruptly, businesses fail. We aren't invited to serve a second term on the committee we love. Life is full of "not yet's" and "didn't quite work out's" and circumstances that don't shine on a CV.

We hide our questions about God behind Christianese, right answers, and smiling masks. It's not hiding; it's a culture of existing that we have learned and now live.

Most of our questions surface in those hidden minutes.

I gripe my way down the stairs after a long day with loud littles, wondering if He is going to come through.

I spend twenty minutes scrolling through a screen before realizing that I'm looking for a way out of my insecurity as I face the enemy's accusations.

While doing laundry, I replay a conversation with a friend for the fifth time, still unsure how to navigate this conflict, still plagued by what I said and what I left unsaid.

I walk to the mailbox, silently ranting about a particular child's failings, unaware that my fear of what those failings might grow into is the cause of the rant. And I realize that I've never talked to Him about this fear.

Adoration is for the minutes that need a win, that need

His eye, His breath, His thoughts. Adoration is where I can come, raw and bruised, tepid and full of questions, and expect His response. All the minutes I've given to fears, insecurities, and inner woes I can now offer to Him for His interpretation.

Adoration takes my eyes off what I'm not and puts them on who He is at the very moment I decide I'm distasteful.

Adoration, beginning with one single minute, is where my grit meets His beauty. It's where the still rough and hardened places of my everyday living meet His person.

We all share the universal ache of wanting a wildly alive life in God and the challenge of reconciling it with hours spent doing the laundry, caring for a sick parent, and filing our taxes. Adoration infuses God into those middle minutes of paperwork and commutes and chopping onions for dinner. It invites the wild God into family rooms and kitchens, our interior spaces otherwise untouched by the divine. You can't receive God's tender, animated eyes on you in the drudgery and not revive. Adoration resuscitates the minutes we ignore and enables us to see God, within our reach, at 3:00 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon.

Turn the page and consider what a few more minutes this week—given to looking up and recognizing that He is looking in—might do for your craving for Him.

Some might call this a micro practice, prayer in minimalism. Adoration is a slight shift in the minutes of the day that can move a life. Yours. And mine. In the pages ahead, I want to do more than hand you a map. I want to hold your hand and tell you my story so that when you begin practicing adoration, you will feel not only equipped but also emboldened.

The next five chapters prepare you for adoration, and the

thirty that follow those focus on the characteristics of God with which to adore Him. Read them over thirty days, thirty weeks, thirty months—whatever suits you best.

Shall we go together?



CHAPTER 2

THE POWER OF A MIDDLE MINUTE

Relearning What Is Radical

*One's mind runs back up the sunbeam to
the sun.*

—C. S. LEWIS, *LETTERS TO MALCOLM*,
CHIEFLY ON PRAYER

It was one of those days that turned into night and became morning without much respite. My sleeplessness was not because of a sick baby or a fearful toddler. I blame my mind.

The night before, I'd sat in a circle of women, our Bibles spread on our laps as we scribbled notes onto well-worn pages, studying Him together over hot tea and decaf. By most standards, these were the *safest* of friends, and I chose to let them see a little more of me. Some might even call it oversharing. But depth of friendship requires that someone takes the first step.

Later, I wasn't as confident as I had imagined. My mind shamed me. "Too vulnerable, too premature," it said to me.