

3/16/20

Week 12: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh and Randy Robison

Sara Hagerty

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with my cohort Randy Robison.

I'm excited about this program. When this book came across my desk I thought, initially I just thought wow! What a beautiful cover and interesting title! It's something that might seem a little hard initially to grasp hold of but then I began to read it and I thought, wow! What a gift! Please help me welcome our guest, Sara Hagerty.

Randy: Great to have you back! Where have you been? You've been off raising seven children or something?

[Laughter]

Sheila: Your book is called *Adore*, which it's one of those things that when I first read the title I thought, well, I know we sing about that, oh come let us adore him, but I'm not quite sure how that breaks down into my everyday life. I wondered what was going on in your life to birth this book.

Sara: That's a great question. Long before I wrote the book, I lived it or at least lived parts of it. I was meeting with a friend for coffee and we were just sharing about our lives. This was about ten years ago. That was during a season of infertility for me. There was a lot of ache in my heart. My dad had died. I was feeling a lot of pain. And I think she was hearing in our conversation just about everyday life, not even about the really hard things, she was hearing cynicism and bitterness and just kind of a hardness. She said

to me, "Sara, have you considered just adoring God?"

I was like, "Sure!" Adoration. I thought of that old acronym A-C-T-S: Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. I had that as a new believer. That's my formula for prayer. "Of course, I've adored God."

She looked me in the eye and said, "No, I mean like actively adoring God?"

And she gave me a challenge that I took. I went home and I started looking at the Bible through the lens of the characteristics of God that I could adore. I started to actually use the language of the Bible to adore God with. And when I came to that language, I realized there is a huge distance between what God says about himself in his word and what I actually believe on a daily basis.

Sheila: You talk about that in the book. I can't remember the way you phrase it. The way you phrase it is so much better. It's like I barely know you.

Sara: That's a prayer and I still pray that prayer often now but it started then when I looked at the word and went, all these years I've been telling other people about it, I'm preaching it to my kids because I had children who I had adopted, that we had adopted, and so I was a mom and I'm preaching it to my kids but like in the quiet of my heart, when I really look at his word and I really bring the real emotions, the ones that we spend most of our day kind of hiding from, to that word, I can honestly say I barely know you.

That's what started adoration was me looking at the word and going, I really barely know you, God.

Sheila: That's profound for me because I think, when I think of my own spiritual journey, and there are certain things that I associate with God, certain characteristics, but in terms of me being silenced by the greatness of all of who God is, I totally get that. So where did you start?

Sara: Well, a great place to start is the Psalms. I started with a little book that just had the characteristics of God listed. I'm three characteristics in and realizing, I say these things, I might preach them to other people but like when I get to the quiet, I actually am not living like I believe this. I'm talking about the quiet, not of 6:30 a.m. when everything is perfect about your day and your kids haven't woken up yet. I mean the quiet of 3:00 in the afternoon when the car broke down and you still have to pay for the dishwasher that broke, and you've got a million things to do that you don't think you're going to get to. When I bring that, the emotions that I feel in that moment to his word, I go, Oh Lord! There is a whole lot here that I don't know.

Randy: Help me out just a little bit because this is still a bit of a lofty concept. So what does it mean? You go, okay, I've got this problem this afternoon and I'm tired and the kids are loud. But God, you're great. It's got to be so much more than just kind of this lip service kind of thing. What does it look like for you?

Sara: I think we are all familiar with the lip service and so in some ways we say adoration, we save it for Sundays or we save it for when we feel really good about ourselves because that's when we typically worship God is when we feel good, rather than going okay, I'm going to earmark a part of my day where I actually don't feel great about myself or I feel overwhelmed, where I feel fearful, where I feel like the task in front of me is too big for me, and I'm going to step outside of that moment and I'm going to open the Word of God, either to a characteristic of God that I know I'm wrestling with or just to a song. And I'm going to say in this moment, this is what your word says. And I'm going to have a dialogue where I go, an example would be, I feel super over... I have seven kids.

Sheila: Wow! There should be applause right there. Yes! Thank you.

Sara: Or something!

[Laughter]

So there's a lot of times where I feel overwhelmed. So I can either keep going in the inertia of that moment and keep tasking and trying to get on top of it or I can actually step outside of that moment whether it be in the laundry room or back in my bedroom and open God's word and go, okay, you said to Paul your power is made perfect in weakness. This is what my adoration looks like. I go God, I feel terribly weak and I hate feeling weak. And I want to do everything I can today to not feel weak. I want to task harder. I want to get my list done. I want my kids well-behaved. I want to be a good mom, but your word says that your power is made perfect in weakness. I don't feel that. I'm not sure I believe that, but I adore you God that your power overshadows my weakness. And it's that back and forth.

Sheila: But the way that that intersects with just the daily-ness because I love your subtitle, a simple practice for experiencing God in the middle minutes of your day. Because I think that's... I love when you talk about the Psalms. To me, God gave the Psalms to the people of God to pray back to God. Like whatever you're feeling, if you're feeling shame or anger or fear or... you'll find yourself in the Psalms.

Sara: That's right! You don't have to put your emotions aside. Yet I think as Christians, we so often live like the radical life in God is when I do X, Y, Z. Fly across an ocean to adopt orphans or serve the poor in my community. When radical, honestly, for me, radical is when I choose at 3:00 in the afternoon to pray. Paul invites us to pray without ceasing. And I think sometimes we think it's a hard discipline. But if you look at the Psalms those Psalmists were a hot mess! They brought their emotions to God and their whole conversation with God was, "I'm a mess. You're amazing. I don't get it. I'm a mess. You're amazing." That back and forth.

Sheila: I love... That's one of my biggest beliefs, to process your pain in the presence of God. Because I used to hide my pain from the presence of God but when I bring it into the presence of God suddenly it finds its place. And it's like God is so much bigger than

what's going on.

Sara: That's exactly right. I say in the book the phrase that came to me as I was adoring was the word *heals*. I think sometimes we study the word to get knowledge or to teach or to gain principles for really good living, but the truth is that word, if I come with my emotions, it can heal the deepest, most broken parts of me. If I bring them to him, if I bring them out into the light and the Psalmist did that.

Sheila: One of the things I love is the second half, or almost two thirds of the book, you help us because you list out the attributes of God. That must have been quite a study for you.

Sara: Well, what's interesting is I actually did a survey and asked people "What's the side of God that you wrestle with the most?" And those 30 that I list in there were the ones that came back most frequently. I probably would have listed those myself, really, because I think that we have a universal kind of human ache that shows up in those 30 attributes.

Randy: Hit a couple of those for us.

Sara: Well, God is restorer. I have living brokenness in my home as four of my children were adopted and they have trauma in their history.

Sheila: You didn't get them as babies, did you?

Sara: No, we didn't. We adopted older. So they have real pain in their history and every day I'm faced with, do I really believe, God that you are a restorer? Well, it wasn't just me. So many people came back saying, "I don't know if I really believe that God restores."

God is healer. God is tender, which is really interesting, right? If we get quiet so many

times, if we get quiet, we acknowledge, I don't know if I really think you're tender to me. I think you're kind of wanting to coach me back into a better way of living, not tender and kind with my failures.

Sheila: It's interesting, the moment I experienced the tenderness of God most was my very first night in a psychiatric hospital when I had run out of words to pray and literally, I just said, "God, I'm done!"

And I felt as if I heard him say, "I know and I'm here." And it was so profoundly tender. It came with this message of you don't have to be okay. It's all right. I'm here.

Sara: Yeah! And that right there is the beauty of adoration. If we come like that to him and to his word, that changed you.

Sheila: Totally! It totally changed me.

Sara: And yet so many times I think we come into worship and adoration when we've got our Sunday best on.

Randy: Yeah. You refer to it as "the grit of life." Of coming during the grit. How did that kind of adjust your view of God and of yourself when you decided, you know what? Even in the worst of my days, in the difficult circumstances, I'm going to choose to acknowledge you, Lord and kind of give you some lip service but yet in a right way. How did that start to change the way you viewed God and viewed yourself?

Sara: Honestly, I think it is very similar to your story about experiencing the tenderness of God. When I started to just give myself permission to like instead of gripe texting a friend, or like frantically getting on my task list to pause and sit before God and go, I don't really like my life right now. I feel like you've given me too much to handle. I don't feel like I'm being a good mom.

And bringing that part of myself to him and then looking at his word and going, you're actually really tender with me here. Your word... We act as if he is so different than what's in his word!

So I look at Psalm 23 and it says, even though the walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. And it goes on to say, your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. So I go, you know what? Right now dealing with four histories that feel really broken and really lost, it feels like the valley of the shadow of death. But your word is telling me your goodness and mercy are following me? I start to shift. Even if it is just one minute at a time. One Thursday afternoon in one minute, instead of gripe texting somebody, I'm experiencing the tenderness of God? That's one more minute than it was the day before.

Sheila: One of the things I've started to do, which might sound a little weird to people but when I'm in that place where I'm just kind of tired or worn out, kind of at the end of myself, I take this little chair that's in the dining room and I put it in the middle of the room and I just go sit down. It's like, here I am. I'm just here again. And there is just something about being quiet and being so aware of being in the presence of God that is so... Sometimes I think, God must say to Jesus, oh she's back *again*!

[Laughter]

Randy: I think he says, "She's *back* again!"

Sheila: I think that's true. I think he says, "You came! You came!" Have you seen this message impact the lives of other women, Sara?

Sara: Just recently I had a woman who approached me and said, "You know I have seven kids and my oldest was killed last year in a car accident." She said, "What's gotten me through this year is adoration. I've used the adorations that you..."

I put them up on Instagram and "I've been using those each day when all I want to do is numb out and not get out of bed. And that adoration has been getting me through." I just think the word heals. What could be worse than that? I don't know.

Sheila: No, nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Randy: I'm curious just as you guys were talking about, especially, I wonder if when you started to express adoration towards God, if that maybe helped open the door in your spirit to realize how much he adores you.

Sara: Wow! Yes! You said it. Like the way that God's heart is expressed towards his people in the word is so different than how most of us Christians think he is thinking about us.

Randy: Right! Jesus repeatedly referred to God as Father. There is that paternal thing. And you, as a mother of seven, you know that heart for your children that you have, and the ones that have a broken past, how much you want to see them restored. And yet, one of the big issues is does God really want to restore me? If we could understand how much he adores us, then we would understand his true nature so much better. I can see how that adoration expressed towards him in those daily moments would begin to open our eyes to that truth.

Sara: It just does. It gets us in the place of saying, I barely know you, God. If I go to the word and say I barely know you, it opens me up to receive that there might be a side of him I don't know.

Sheila: I love when you mentioned Psalm 23, and that the shepherd in Jerusalem and Israel always goes ahead of the sheep and then they have a couple of dogs that follow behind to get the stragglers. I love the fact that the way the Psalmist wrote that is we're going to be dogged by goodness and mercy for the rest of our days! That that's what God has sent to back us up when we walk through the darkest place, the goodness and mercy

are going to dog us all through our days. How has this message impacted your children?

Sara: We, as I said, I have seven and four have been adopted, or were adopted and they are wrestling very overtly with who God is in their story. In some senses it's almost easier for them to wrestle because they have a real reason to wrestle. Whereas some of the rest of us who may have cleaner stories, cleaner histories might not recognize that we have the same internal struggle.

And so watching them, being able to enable them to go to the word in the same way that I am, I'm watching them feel like it is okay to honestly wrestle through their adoration. That it is not this spiritual discipline that they just need to do but they actually kind of...

I remember one of my daughters one night was really wrestling with -- like feeling a lot of shame. A lot of God doesn't like me. She messed up on something that was probably relatively minor and feeling this immense shame. And we went to Psalm 18, "He delivered me because he delighted in me."

And she likes to paint. So she's like painting and journaling out that verse. And I'm watching her countenance as I'm kind of saying to her, "He likes it when you ride your bike in the snow. He likes it when you're dancing in the kitchen and nobody knows. He likes it when you sing in the shower." Those sorts of things. I'm watching her countenance change and shame fall away. So in some ways adoration is just as much the anecdote to shame for them as it is for me.

Sheila: But what a gift, Sara you are to your children to be able to model an authentic faith where they don't feel like they have to suppress what's true for them.

Sara: I hope so. They see me mess up a lot.

Sheila: That's good too. I think that's good because once they've got their own faith, their strong faith, you're their sister as much as you are their mom. And you walk out this

journey with them.

Randy: Let me ask a question. This is a little off topic but because you've adopted, what is your mother's heart? What do you hope to see out of those children as they grow up?

Sara: Oh man! I would love for them to grow and know how loved they are by God. I'm not -- a secondary thought is what they might do for his kingdom. My daily prayer is that they would know how loved they are and pursued by God that they are.

Sheila: It is the best prayer you could ever pray for your children.

Randy: Can you see how that's God's heart for all of us?

Sara: That's so true!

Sheila: This is an amazing book. I really think it is a book that you should get for yourself. I think you should get one for your adult children. I think you should get one for your mother, for your Great Aunt Cynthia.

[Laughter]

It's a book that would really make a difference in our lives.

You know here at *LIFE*, our heart is to make a difference in this world. We have seen so many children in different countries who struggle to believe that God is good, who struggle to believe that God hears their prayers, and we want to be an answer to their prayer.

So I was recently in Southeast Asia and met some young girls where it was unthinkable, unspeakable what they had gone through. But to be able to tell somebody who has walked in such a dark place that there is a God who loves them, that they are not a

number to him, that they have a name and they have a purpose and they have a future. I promised them that I would come home and tell you their stories. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Announcer: The bonds of family are among the most powerful in human kind. In areas stricken by poverty young children willingly seek jobs to support their households.

>> My family owes people a lot of money due to sicknesses that we've had. So I asked for help from a friend to look for a job. It was going to be a good job serving food. But when I got there I was trapped and forced to have sex with men. This first happened when I was 13 years old. I'm 15 now.

Announcer: After being tricked and kidnapped at the age of 13, Savanshanda was raped for a month to break her psychologically. Her captors also beat her and threatened her if she tried to escape, and their methods were effective. Sitting here with Savanshanda today, we asked her why she did not escape at this moment. And this was her answer.

>> My biggest fear is not just for me. If I disobey, they will harm my younger sister, too.

Sheila: What we're dealing with here, it is a very intentional evil. I cannot unsee or unhear the voices of these little girls. Southeast Asia is so organized with their sex trafficking. It has become a multi-million-dollar business if not a billion dollar business. So we have to be so intentional to say, no! We're going to stop this.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: She's such a precious little girl. I spent the whole afternoon with her, and she was just like my little sister. She was just a child. Can you imagine at 13 thinking I have to endure this because if I don't endure it, they're going to go after my sister? The whole

reason she ended up in this place was her dad got sick and they didn't have any money for doctors. So they had to borrow money from a money lender. And then he ups the price and ups the price and they can't pay it back. And so that's how she ended up... she ended up in a place like that because she cares for her family.

And as far as I'm concerned, as long as we, the body of Christ are on the earth at this time, this cannot happen on our watch. We can't just turn away and say, "You know that's terrible. I'm so sorry! But I've got my own life." We have been given the privilege in Jesus' name to make a difference in the lives of others.

So many of these young girls are broken, their spirits broken by the time they're 13, 14, 15. But the amazing thing is we have partners on the ground. This is what I love about James and Betty. James is never gone into a country and thought, I'm going to go in and make a big deal. He looks to see, who God is using in this country? And then he gets underneath, and he underwrites. We have partners on the ground right now and they're saying, "Can you help us? We need you to help us."

The amazing thing at the moment, we have a \$250,000 matching gift. Now usually for us to be able to get into villages and teach children or to kick down the doors and rescue a child or to take them to our House of Destiny, it usually costs about \$128. But because of that matching gift, if you can even give \$64 that will now help in the process of reach, rescuing or restoring one girl. Randy, we can change the face of Southeast Asia.

Randy: And not just there. It is such a bigger problem and we're addressing it thanks to you. And you know, Sheila, as a father of daughters, when I see that kind of thing, I've got to admit, my reaction is I want to curse the darkness. But we are to light a candle and we can be that candle. We can be that light in the darkness. That's what we're here for.

I've had people ask me, "Why doesn't God do anything about that?" I'm like, he is! He has put his people here and said, "Be that light." So that's what we want you to do.

\$1280, Sheila, with the matching gift will help reach, rescue, and restore 20 children -- 20 little girls like that one you sat there and held. And I can hardly even talk about it like you without breaking down because it is so -- I cannot imagine how God feels. As one of his, I want to be able to look at the Lord one day and say, God, I didn't everything I could. And that's why I'm asking you to do what you can. So please go to the phone or go online. Let's rescue these kids.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is a darkness where a world of innocence is lost and abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of children with no one and nowhere to turn for help. With bodies broken and hopes crushed, these young victims are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

Today you can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue, and restore these young ones to the life God designed for them to live. With a generous \$250,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help *two* children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you this beautiful "Freedom" bracelet handcrafted by survivors of human trafficking who want to say thank you for helping those still trapped. Wear it as a wonderful reminder to pray for the outreach.

With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive the "Freedom" tote. This quality canvas tote bag is made by trafficked survivors who are now learning a new trade and includes spiritual life resources such as books, devotionals, CD's, or DVD's.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our beautiful new bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength." Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

Randy: What you're seeing behind me right now are some villagers who are learning how to not be lured into sex trafficking. We know for a fact that some girls have some disappeared from this area and have not been heard of again. It is critical that we reach into areas like this and educate them so that they will know what to look for. So when the sex traffickers come back to this area, no more will be taken.

We're doing all that we can to reach into places like this, to rescue the girls that have been taken and to restore their lives, and to restore their families, and restore their villages. I hope you'll go to the phone right now, go online, do what you can. The Rescue Life program is making a huge impact in areas that really need the love of God. Do what you can. Thank you so much!

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much! For any gift at all, we're going to send you a bracelet made by one of these girls so you can wear it and remember them. Also, you can ask for Sara Hagerty's book, *Adore*. Again, I just cannot recommend it highly enough.

Randy: It's wonderful! Would you thank Sara for being with us here on *LIFE Today*? Sara, thank you for pouring your heart out and for just being a light. This is so good.

And thank all of you. Please do what you can; go online or go to the phones. Let's be that light.
And we will see you next time here on *LIFE Today*.