



C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE

RAISING ASLAN'S KIDS: DISCIPLING TOMORROW'S CHURCH TODAY BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY, THEN WORK YOURSELF OUT OF A JOB

AIMEE RIEGERT

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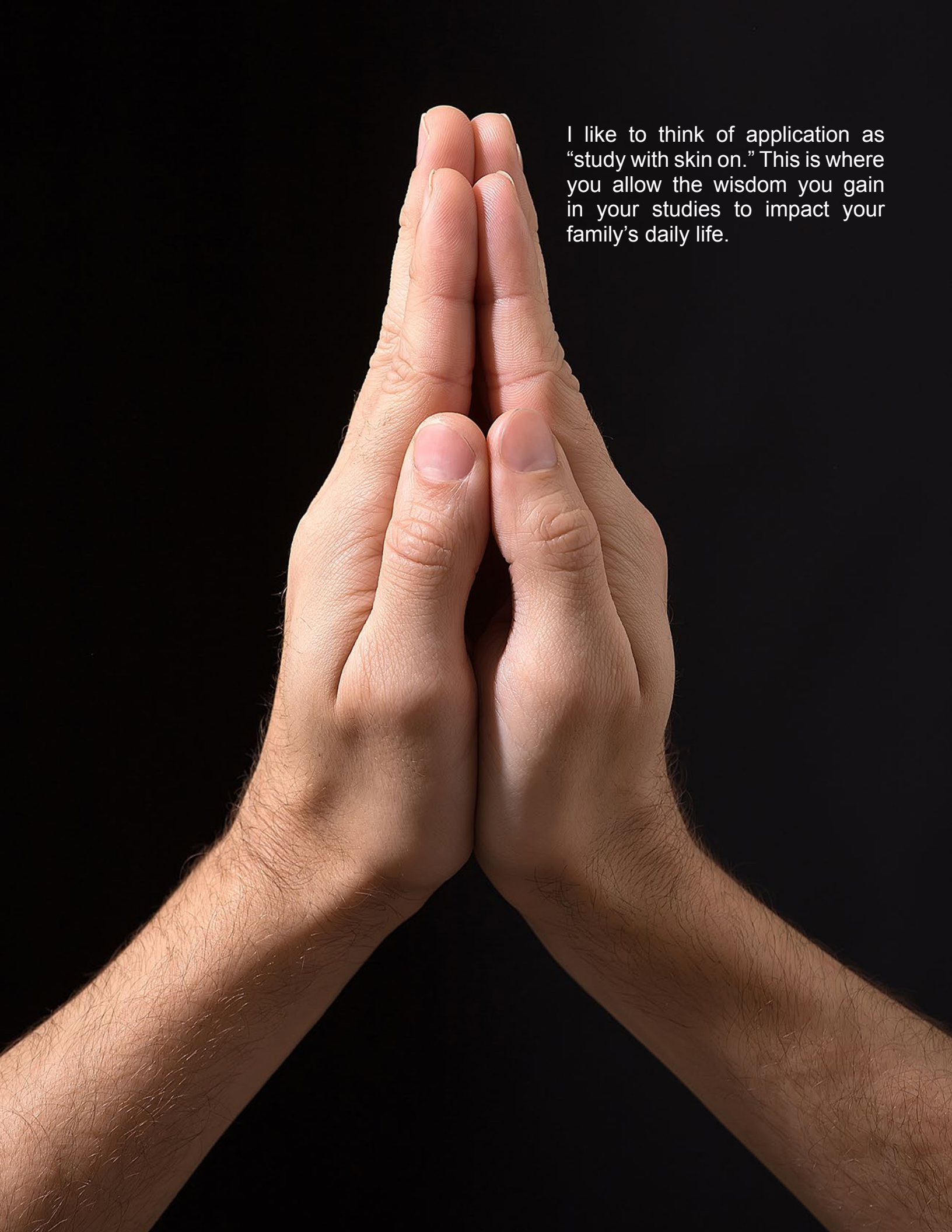
Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.¹

— Philippians 2:15–16.



fter twenty-six years of parenting, I still sometimes feel like a freshman; a new life season brings its learning curve, and sometimes it feels vertical. Kids seem to transition overnight from diapers to drivers' licenses; if I do not pay attention, I can find myself with an obsolete playbook, no subs, and the ball on my own five-yard line. But nothing surprises

God and as we raise our kids. He calls the plays. From Christian parents, grandparents, and guardians, God asks one thing: to disciple our children, modeling faith through our own lives.² Of course we cannot “produce” Christian kids (their salvation is Christ's work.), and no single formula works for every family, but there are some basic healthy habits that lay a strong foundation for fruitful daily life in a godly home.³ The *Aslan Academy Guidebook*,⁴ a family discipleship resource from the C.S. Lewis Institute, encourages four key steps in living out our faith: pray, study, apply, and step out.

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a prayer-like gesture, with fingers pointing upwards. The hands are positioned centrally against a solid black background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the details of the fingers. The overall composition is simple and focused on the hands.

I like to think of application as “study with skin on.” This is where you allow the wisdom you gain in your studies to impact your family’s daily life.



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Pray

Prayer is the crucial starting point for any spiritual endeavor, always. Why? Because when we promote heaven on earth, we contend with much, much more than most of us can see.⁵ We need the Holy Spirit to cleanse our home's atmosphere of spiritual rubbish, and, especially in the area of heart change, we are powerless to succeed on our own.⁶ We need Jesus to engage, and we expose ourselves *directly* to His influence through praise and prayer. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis sheds light on the kind of transformation God intends for us when we trust Jesus Christ for salvation:

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace.⁷

Study

Jump into your Bible, listen to a biblical presentation via podcast, crack open a good Christian book, or enjoy a Christian video. Your Father is excited to tell you about Himself, His love for you, and the amazing world He designed.⁸ Stimulate your family's imagination with dynamic, informed interaction with the Bible and a lively sense of curiosity. Your kids should catch you regularly



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in the act of reading and studying the Scriptures and other good resources. “Guess what Jesus showed me today” can be a regular conversation starter in your home, and you do not need a Ph.D. to be blessed.

God also uses Scripture to communicate with us on a more personal level. On one of those days when I could barely manage to shower, let alone sit down to read, I cried to God, “O Lord, I want to linger with You, but I only have five short minutes.” I sensed His humor as He reminded me of the five little loaves He used to feed thousands.⁹ “Just give Me those five and trust Me,” I felt Him say. Another time I was feeling weary and unappreciated; He encouraged me with a beautiful portrait of the tender place in His heart for little children and those who care for them. Isaiah 40 rings with God’s majesty. The entire chapter reads like a list of Greatest Hits of the Old Testament, but two verses in particular hit home that day:

See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. (Isa. 40:10–11)

Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

Apply

I like to think of application as “study with skin on.” This is where you allow the wisdom you gain in your studies to impact your family’s daily life. You might spend more time reading aloud from fun or thought-provoking books. Perhaps you will prioritize family mealtimes and take the opportunity to share thoughts on the day. On a broader scale, Hebrews 10:25 encourages believers to meet



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together to encourage one another. Other Christian couples and families, especially with friendly older kids, were a great inspiration and encouragement to us. Pray and ask God for opportunities to connect with local families who are also intentionally discipling their kids. Maybe start your own group.

On the other hand, as life gets busier, remember to protect your special family time. Our pastor once preached, "Relationships happen in the margins of life." That certainly proved true in our family.

When the kids were little, they would eagerly share their thoughts and questions — no filter:

- "Mommy, what does *&%\$ mean?" (Classic.)
- "Oh, I saw that movie at Ashley's house. Those men were wearing such weird pants." (Yikes!)
- "Hey, guess what my friend, Jake, built!" (Wham! The reproductive system in LEGO.)
- "Mom, I need help with the computer! I tried to close that yucky window, but more of them just popped up." (Ouch.)

Eventually, as they got older, some mysterious gag rule took over; shrugs and "Nothing." came into vogue. I had no idea, until I directly asked them; what a combat zone the hallways at school were for my kids. It is imperative that you build margin into your schedule to spend time with your kids and learn about their daily lives. Opt to drive instead of having them take the school bus. Take them to dinner. For our family, it resulted in a habit of closeness that we missed when it was absent. I guess we would get "homesick" for each other. Perhaps that is what Proverbs 22:6 is all about: to raise a child in the habit of closeness to God and His people, and he will not want to stray far from that love.



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Move Out

Children need to know that their contributions make a difference, and family life is where the rubber meets the road: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20). Practically speaking, our family is a “life lab,” where experiments in forgiveness, patience, selflessness, communication, logistics, and more teach us practical lessons on how to live as Christians in the broader society. Participate in a community service project, bring a meal to a neighbor, babysit for a young couple, or serve at your church.

Taking your family mission outside your four walls is a great way to bond your family together and model Jesus’s love for your kids. Moreover, your children will experience firsthand what it feels like to be used by God to bless others. I cannot think of a better motivator to choose Jesus.

There came a time when I felt I needed more than parenting advice; I needed to learn leadership. I started reading the kind of material the Marine Corps and Fortune 500 companies use, and I learned that a good leader must be a visionary. Scripture agrees. Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish: But he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (KJV). Forest Gump put it this way: “If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably not wind up there.” As difficult as it might be today to imagine our little ones as adults, we need to remember that the purpose of what we do at home is to prepare them to leave well. You and I are literally working ourselves out of a job. We must keep in mind that one day we will be out of the picture, and they will be answerable to God alone. Their future is the future of the church and, right now, God is allowing us great influence over it. What a blessing! Catch the vision and let it inspire you as you





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pray, study, apply that wisdom, and step out together into a hurting world. Imagine spending the later years of your life in fellowship with the next generation of believers, your grown children, your best friends, as they carry the gospel into their society. Preparing our children to follow Jesus in this fallen world is certainly an uphill climb, but God tells us simply to take it one step at a time. And the view at the summit is awesome. ■

NOTES

- ¹ New American Standard Bible. All subsequent Scripture references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.
- ² Deut. 6:4–7: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
- ³ Phil. 4:19: “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”
- ⁴ This Guidebook can be viewed for free on the C.S. Lewis Institute website and is also available in hard copy for purchase. See <http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/AslanAcademy>.
- ⁵ Eph. 6:12: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”
- ⁶ John 14:6: “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”
- ⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952; reprt., San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 205.
- ⁸ Heb. 4:12: “For the word of God is alive and active.”
- ⁹ Matt. 14:13–21.



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The maternal instinct ... is a Gift-love, but one that needs to give; therefore needs to be needed. But the proper aim of giving is to put the recipient in a state where he no longer needs our gift. We feed children in order that they may soon be able to feed themselves; we teach them in order that they may soon not need our teaching. Thus a heavy task is laid upon this Gift-love. It must work towards its own abdication. We must aim at making ourselves superfluous. The hour when we can say “They need me no longer” should be our reward. But the instinct, simply in its own nature, has no power to fulfil this law. The instinct desires the good of its object, but not simply; only the good it can itself give. A much higher love — a love which desires the good of the object as such, from whatever source that good comes — must step in and help or tame the instinct before it can make the abdication.

— *C.S. Lewis*



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1

Aimee Riegert observes that God asks Christian parents, grandparents and guardians to “disciple our children, modeling faith through our own lives.” If you are raising children, in what ways are you discipling them? How are you modeling faith through your life?



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In her article, Riegert references the Aslan Academy Parents Guidebook, a family discipleship resource from the C.S. Lewis Institute. The Aslan Academy is designed to help parents teach and equip their children to become effective disciples of Jesus. If you are raising children, are you using this resource? Would you like to learn more about it? (For more information see <http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/AslanAcademy>.)



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Aimee grew up in Dallas, TX, where she earned bachelor's degrees in mathematics and foreign language studies from Southern Methodist University. She married Paul, a U.S. Marine, in 1990 and together they have raised and homeschooled five lively children in duty stations ranging from Florida to Rhode Island and DC to Japan. In addition to supporting various national security efforts in Northern Virginia, she has worked as an itinerant high school math teacher and drama coach, and has served in women's ministries, praise teams, on the adult support team for Young Life and as a "mentor mom" for MOPS International ministries, as well as English instructor in several ESL programs in Japan. She has a passion for blessing young people and encouraging all who care for them. She is a graduate of the C.S. Lewis Institute Year One Fellows Program and is now serving as the Program Coordinator of the Aslan Academy for CSLI in Washington, DC.



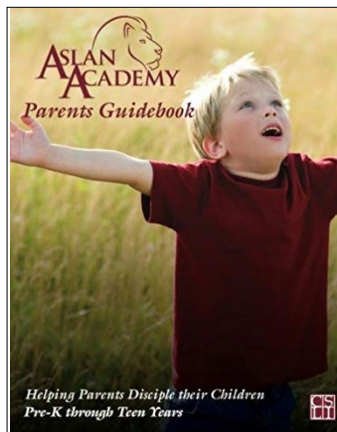
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RECOMMENDED READING



The C.S. Lewis Institute, *Aslan Academy Parents Guidebook: Helping Parents Disciple Their Children Pre-K through Teen Years*

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The Aslan Academy is designed to help parents teach, lead and equip their children to love and follow Jesus. With overview articles, Bible Studies, activities and a curated group of the best books on each topic, the Aslan Academy will guide parents on this discipleship journey. When it comes to discipling our kids, churches can help. Youth groups can help. But God has given parents the primary role of discipling their kids. The Aslan Academy program covers these important topics:

- Reviewing the fundamentals of faith
- Understanding and encouraging heart change
- Developing character and faith that lasts
- Teaching the Bible to your children
- Introducing Spiritual Disciplines to your children
- Helping children understand and explain their faith
- Practical suggestions for family and individual activities



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RECOMMENDED READING

- Monthly updates through the Dawn Treader News, with further resources to equip and challenge parents and children
 - Information on the **Aslan Academy Gatherings**, designed to build a community of parents within a church body who will commit to proactively discipling their children. These regular gatherings are a place to share ideas, exchange resources, pray for families and to encourage each other.

Note: This book may be read for free on the C.S. Lewis Institute website (see <http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/AslanAcademy>) or purchased in hard copy at Amazon.