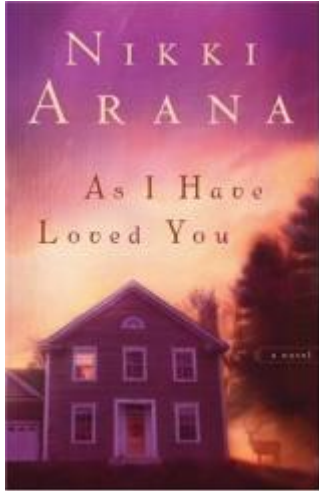


## As I Have Loved You

by Nikki Arana

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### About the Book

Can love bring together the fragmented pieces of Leigh's life?

Leigh Scott is a Christian, a widow, an author --- and a devoted single mother. Her only son, Jeff, is the light of her life. But now Jessica, a young woman with a troubled past, threatens to destroy everything Leigh and her son have worked for. Leigh cannot silently watch as her family disintegrates.

Accustomed to fighting for her son, Leigh resolves to do so again. But with all the other troubles in life, she doesn't know where to focus. Her father is battling cancer, her parents may lose their home, her book deadline is looming, and her first love suddenly reappears. Leigh struggles to keep her balance. In the midst of it all, she cries out for a special gift from God.

When Jessica's life takes a tragic turn, Leigh begins to understand the true gift that God has wanted to give her all along.

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### Discussion Guide

1. Jeff's disability set him apart in a negative way. When Jeff was not picked to play on the football team, it represented one more rejection in his young life. What happened that enabled Jeff to "endure the reproach of the world"? How does this foreshadow the life lesson learned by Leigh?
2. Do you think Leigh was an overprotective mother, or do you think she was justified in her extensive involvement in Jeff's life? Why or why not?
3. How was Leigh's perception of Jessica influenced by her concern for Jeff's future? Do you think Leigh would have felt the same way about her if she had met Jessica as part of a church's community outreach program?
4. When Jessica first sees Jeff, he's wearing a T-shirt. How was the cross on the shirt used to foreshadow one of the themes of the book? What is that theme?

5. Jessica manipulated Jeff into pursuing her. Was that an example of the enemy working in her life, or do you think God brought Jessica into Jeff's life with the knowledge that the young man's love would lead her to salvation?
6. The title of the book was drawn from Scripture: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12 NKJV) How did Leigh's failure to live out this commandment affect her relationships with her father, her brother, Jeff, and Jessica? Are there any parallels to this in your own life?
7. The author wrote that Leigh was absorbed with writing the book of God's heart, but she was blind to the heart of God. Do you agree or disagree, and why?
8. When Jessica asks Leigh to call her Renelle, Jeff confides to Leigh that Renelle heard God call her name. Do you think God speaks to us in such specific ways? What is the scriptural basis for your belief? Leigh was skeptical that God had spoken to Renelle. Do you think the meaning of the name Renelle was a coincidence?
9. What event caused Leigh to realize she never really knew her daughter-in-law, and how did God use that to change Leigh's heart?
10. What deep spiritual truth did Leigh learn about her relationship with God when she read Renelle's pain journal?
11. Why, in her final moments, was Renelle confused about who was giving her water? What did this scene reveal about the way Jeff had loved Renelle from the very beginning?
12. At the end of the book, Leigh reviews her prayer journal. What does she learn? Have you ever kept a prayer journal? If so, what does it reveal about your prayer life?
13. Give examples of scenes in the book that call the characters to obey Jesus's commandment to "Love one another as I have loved you." Discuss where the characters failed and where they succeeded. Think of similar examples in your own life.
14. John Higheagle comes to the realization that we must do more than forgive the people in our lives that have hurt us. What is this additional step that we must take to be fully reconciled to God?
15. Leigh always prayed with her own agenda in mind. How do you think she wants her prayer life to change when she says, "Let me be an empty vessel for you, Jesus"?

#### Author Bio

Author and speaker Nikki Arana has received numerous awards for her writing, including the American Christian Fiction Writers' Book of the Year award and Christianbook.com Top 20 Novel of the Year for *THE WINDS OF SONOMA*. Through her ministry, *A Voice for the Persecuted*, she inspires hearts toward evangelizing the Muslim community.

#### Critical Praise

"Nikki Arana is a true storyteller. She captures the reader's attention on page one and never lets it go. **As I Have Loved You** is a gripping, emotional read no that one should pass up."

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**Publication Date:** June 1, 2007  
**Genres:** Christian, Fiction  
**Paperback:** 368 pages  
**Publisher:** Revell  
**ISBN-10:** 0800731670  
**ISBN-13:** 9780800731670