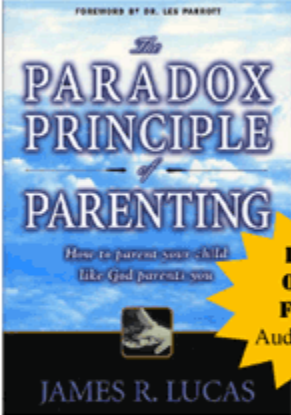


*The Paradox Principle of Parenting:  
How to Parent Your Child like God Parents You*

**Book and Discussion Guide**

By James R. Lucas & Tyndale House Publishers

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**  
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www.ChristianBookGuides.com



FOREWORD BY DR. LES MARSH

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**FOCUS ON THE FAMILY**  
Audio Journal

JAMES R. LUCAS

Apprentice the Master Parent  
And Learn the Mind of God on

**PARENTING**

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**Chapter 1: Master-Parenting and the Paradox Principle**

- 1.1. If you were “shooting for the stars,” what would you want your children to be like when they are 18? 25? 35?
- 1.2. Who have you used as a model for your parenting, and how has that worked out (good and bad)?
- 1.3. As you think about your parenting, what things are you are doing that you’re glad God isn’t doing with you?
- 1.4 We want our children to be our friends, but is there anything in the parent-child relationship that works against this great idea?
- 1.5 If we think of God as the Master Parent and ourselves as the apprentices, what does this mean for us as parents?
- 1.6 We say in the book that “every home is perfectly designed to produce the results it is now getting.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- 1.7 Answer this question: “How does God parent me?” Can we do the same? In what ways?
- 1.8 As you scan the titles of chapters 3–10, what really jumps out at you? Why? Do you see yourself falling into one side or the other of these parenting paradoxes?

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**Chapter 2: Inadequate Alternatives to Master-Parenting**

2.1 How is parenting different from a profession? Is it harder or easier?

2.2 Looking at the inadequate alternatives on pages 16–19, which one do you find yourself falling into regularly? Why is it so appealing?

2.3 Looking at each of the ten alternatives, is there anything good that can be sifted out and used by a master parent?

2.4 If everyone in the group ranked these inadequate alternatives from 1 (the one that is most typical of their own parenting style) to 10 (the one that is least typical of their own parenting style), and then averaged the rankings, which are the “big three?” Why are these the most common traps for your group?

2.5 If you were to compare your rankings with your partner, how do you think they would differ? Does this give any direction on how you might balance each other out?

2.6 What can we do to avoid falling into the trap of each alternative? (You could assign one to each person or to several people if the group has more than ten members.)

2.7 If you have more than one child, do you find each one pulling you toward a different inadequate alternative? In what ways do we need to adjust our approach to customize our master-parenting response to each child?

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**Chapter 3: Master Parents Have High Expectations and Have High Tolerance**

3.1 Does God have high expectations for you? What are they?

3.2 What expectations do you have for your children? Are they high enough? Are they too high? Are they the right expectations?

3.3 Are you afraid to set high expectations for your children? If so, why?

3.4 How tolerant has God been toward you? (Be as specific as you can.)

3.5 What are some ways in which you have shown high tolerance toward your children?

3.6 Are you afraid to show high tolerance toward your children? If so, why?

3.7 How can we create high expectations that have a “safety net”?

3.8 How do we avoid having our high expectations turn into performance-based love?

3.9 How can we show high tolerance that doesn't excuse sin or bad behavior?

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3.10 What should we do if showing high tolerance seems to encourage our children to take advantage of us?

3.11 How would you describe a parent who has high expectations and high tolerance?

**Chapter 4: Master Parents Dispense Justice and Dispense Mercy**

4.1 What is the “justice-mercy swing”? How do we stay off that swing? What happens if we stay on just one side of the swing?

4.2 What is justice? Is it different than judgment?

4.3 Since God “cannot tolerate the slightest sin” (Psalm 5:4, NLT) with his children, what does this mean for us as parents with our own children?

4.4 How are discipline and punishment different? What are the goals of each? How do they relate to justice?

4.5 How does God’s practice of letting us “reap what we sow” (see Galatians 6:7) relate to master parenting?

4.6 If we forgive our children when there is no repentance (or fake repentance), what message does that send to them? What are the conditions for repentance?

4.7 Discussing some current examples from your own experience, how could the “rebuke-compliance-restitution-punishment” approach (pp. 48–52) be applied?

4.8 Do we always receive punishment from God when we do wrong? Does he treat us as our sins deserve? If not, how should that affect our punishment of our children?

4.9 Is it ever all right to let our children “get away” with anything? Why or why not? Is there a difference between sin and childish immaturity? Between sin and human frailty?

4.10 How does God use mercy to build his relationship with us? How can we do that with our own children?

4.11 Is it appropriate to show our children mercy even when they don’t deserve it? What would that look like in practice?

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4.12 Since God is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love” (Psalm 103:8, NIV) with us, how does that direct us to treat our children?

**Chapter 5: Master Parents Teach through Values and Teach through Results**

5.1 In thinking about what we want our children to learn, when does it make the most sense for them to learn it through our teaching? Through results?

5.2 Looking at the “content values” (pp. 73–75), what are some examples of what you have taught (or could teach) in each of these seven critical areas?

5.3 Looking at the “times and ways” (pp. 76–77), what are some examples of what you could do, using each of these five ways?

5.4 What is “good repetition”? “Bad repetition”?

5.5 What are some clues to how we can balance our advocacy of a value and our inquiry to see if our teaching is sinking in?

5.6 Why are “quantity” and “timing” important to our teaching of values?

5.7 When teaching through values, how can we best engage our children’s hearts so that the values will really “belong” to them?

5.8 Why does God teach us so much through the results of our actions? What does that mean to our master parenting?

5.9 Can we learn through good results as well as bad? How can we use the role of good results to amplify our teaching on values?

5.10 What do we mean when we talk about results being equal to the values we practice in kind, degree, and certainty?

5.11 How should we as master parents use the discipline of results to make disciples of our children?

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5.12 How should we react as parents when our children are being taught in the “school of hard knocks”?

5.13 How can we use the principle of “watching-measuring-listening” to help us know when to teach through values and when to teach through results?

**Chapter 6: Master Parents Exercise Authority and Share Power**

6.1 What is authority? How did we get it? How should we use it?

6.2 What is obedience? What does it include? What does it not include?

6.3 How does God exercise his authority with us? How should that impact the way we exercise authority with our children?

6.4 Does God make all of our decisions for us and make us think a certain way? If not, what does that mean for us in our master parenting?

6.5 What are the best reasons to exercise authority? The worst?

6.6 What are the limitations or deficiencies of “control,” “management,” and “empowerment”?

6.7 What is the connection between authority and freedom?

6.8 Why should we share power with our children?

6.9 How does God share power with us? What does this mean for us in our parenting?

6.10 What should we do to develop a strong sense of responsibility and accountability in our children?

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6.11 What are the requirements of effective power-sharing with our children?

6.12 How do we know when we have shared too much power with our children? Too little?

**Chapter 7: Master Parents Insist on ‘The Way’ and Insist on Freedom**

7.1 What is “The Way”? Why is it important? Can we require our children to follow it? To choose it?

7.2 How does God combine his insistence on “The Way” with the freedom he allows us? How can we model this with our children?

7.3 What are some practical examples of what we can do to lay out “The Way” in the areas of vision, mission, values, responsibility, and trust (pp. 132–134)?

7.4 How is “The Way” different from rules and regulations?

7.5 How can we be sure that the “boundary lines” we set for our children fall for them “in pleasant places”?

7.6 Can you give examples of how you could apply the “delegation plan” (pp. 146–147)?

7.7 What is the connection between commitment to “The Way” and a person’s freedom to choose it?

7.8 How should God’s principle “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” impact our master-parenting?

7.9 Is freedom a good thing or a bad thing? Why? How do we make it a good thing and keep it from becoming a bad thing?

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7.10 What is the “freedom to fail?” Does God grant this to us? How should we approach this with our children?

7.11 Does insisting on freedom mean taking a “hands-off” approach with our children? Why or why not?

**Chapter 8: Master Parents Protect Their Kids’ Innocence and Expose Their Kids to Reality**

8.1 What are the dangers your children face that bring you the greatest concern? What have you tried to do to protect them from these dangers?

8.2 What is “innocence”? Is it being ignorant or unaware of evil?

8.3 What is the value of innocence? Can our children get it back if they’ve lost or damaged it?

8.4 What are the applications and limitations of the examples of protecting innocence given on pp. 156–158?

8.5 Do we have to protect our children even in Christian or church circles? Why? From what (or whom)?

8.6 Can we protect our children too much? How? What are the likely effects of this?

8.7 Is God unclear about the reality we are facing and living? What should we do to face reality in our own lives and in our parenting? Is protecting innocence different than shielding from reality?

8.8 What are some examples you can think of to illustrate the “ABCs” of street smarts (p. 165)?

8.9 Do you agree with the eight practical ways to expose your children to reality (pp. 166–167)? Why or why not? Can you give some examples of how these could work out in your own family?

8.10 How can we get our children to be both “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16, NIV)?

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8.11 How do we find the balance in our family of the paradoxical principles of “in regard to evil be infants” (1 Corinthians 14:20) and “then we will no longer be infants” (Ephesians 4:14)?

**Chapter 9: Master Parents Keep Their Distance and Connect at the Soul**

9.1 How would you define the needed balance between separation and togetherness?

9.2 How important is it that our children respect us? How can we achieve getting their respect of our person, our position, and our power? What do we do that makes it harder for them to respect us?

9.3 What are the negative effects of our desire to be liked by our children? How can they use rejection to get us to toe their line? Emotional blackmail? Anger? Misusing our care?

9.4 What roles do “benign neglect” and not keeping records have in keeping our distance as parents?

9.5 How important is built-in “space” and defined boundaries in our relationship with our children? In our children’s relationship with us?

9.6 What are the effects of misusing our children as counselors, sounding boards, or shoulders to cry on?

9.7 What is “good” distance? “Bad” distance?

9.8 How close do you want to be to your children?

9.9 What are some clues that would show we are not connected closely to our children? What are the clues that would indicate we are disconnected?

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9.10 What are the best ways you've found to connect with your children? What things have you tried that just haven't worked? Why?

**Chapter 10: Master Parents Know that Love Is Conditional and Love Is Unfailing**

10.1 Why does the idea that "love is conditional" seem startling?

10.2 How is God's love for us "conditional"? How should we model this with our own children?

10.3 What are the key conditions we have to meet in order to fully access the benefits of God's unfailing love?

10.4 Does God love us without any expectation that we will obey him or love him back? What is the likely effect on our children of "giving without expectation of return"?

10.5 What is your reaction to the four conditional statements on pp. 206–208? What does this mean for your parenting?

10.6 How can we build the "conditions necessary for real love" (pp. 209–211) into our parenting?

10.7 If you were to pick one of the elements of unfailing love given on pp. 213–214, which one would be most meaningful in your relationship with God? How could you apply that to your parenting?

10.8 What is the "going first" principle? How does it apply to master parenting?

10.9 What is the difference between "unconditional love" and "unfailing love"? What is the difference between "unconditional love" (unbiblical) and "conditional love" (biblical)?

10.10 How can we incorporate the psalmist's conditions for unfailing love (pp. 217–218) into our conditions for unfailing love with our own children?

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10.11 What does obedience have to do with love? How do we tie the two together in our master parenting?

**Chapter 11: Parenting Your Child like God Parents You, Part I**

11.1 How can the Paradox Principles help us deal with:

Arguments and disagreements with our children?

The problem of peer pressure?

The challenge of sibling rivalry?

Less-than-acceptable relationship between school and schoolwork?

Resistance to our beliefs and values?

11.2 In reviewing the eight parenting paradoxes, which is the one that is speaking the loudest to your situation right now? Why? How do you intend to build this into your master parenting?

11.3 In looking back over your notes, what were your “ah-ha” moments (the ideas or principles or applications or phrases that jumped out at you and grabbed your attention)?

11.4 How has this study changed your view of God as your Father? Your view of parenting?

**Chapter 11: Parenting Your Child like God Parents You, Part II**

11.5 How can the Paradox Principles help us deal with:

Bad taste in music, movies, and television programs?

An absence of gratitude or appreciation?

Laziness?

Selfishness and self-centeredness?

Sexual concerns and issues?

11.6 What has been the biggest challenge to you in this study? Why? How have you dealt with it?

11.7 What has been the biggest parenting breakthrough for you in this study? What does this mean to you? How will you incorporate this into your master parenting?

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11.8 Would you take a few minutes to jot down your commitments to yourself and your children with regard to the practice of master parenting, and then share them with your group?

If this study has been meaningful and useful for you in becoming a master parent, we would love to hear from you about how it has enhanced your relationship with your children.

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