

In the fall of 2005 we sent an e-mail through our homeschooling e-mail loop advertising a *Let the Children Come Along the Toddler Way* class that was beginning soon. We had been announcing classes through this e-mail loop for years, and many group members were GFI alumni. Many were dear friends. We got this response from one mom in the group, who did not contact us privately first, but sent the note below to the whole group:

*"If you are thinking of attending this class and don't know anything about this method, please read a few of the links at this site.*

*Click here: [www.ezzo.info](http://www.ezzo.info) GKGW--Growing Kids God's Way concerns*

*I do not want to get into a debate about parenting. I'm sure those of you who truly believe in punitive child rearing cannot be convinced of its harm anymore than those of us who fall on the grace-based side of child rearing could be convinced of its value. This message is not for those whose minds are already made up.*

*This message is for those who might be on the fence about parenting and may be struggling with the issues outlined in the previous email. There is another way to discipline children in a biblical way other than the method espoused by the Ezzos. Yes, grace-based discipline does take more effort than simply punishing children. And while I'm sure the Ezzo's method of training does get results, grace-based discipline not only gets results, but also fosters a close, loving relationship with our children.*

*For an excellent grace-based discipline book Click here: Amazon.com: Books: Heartfelt Discipline: The Gentle Art of Training and Guiding Your Child. Anyone who is interested in reading it is welcome to have my copy."*

We were saddened to read this note, as no hint of negative rhetoric regarding the Ezzos had ever crossed our group's e-mail loop before, and parents had welcomed our class announcements, forwarding them to friends and many taking the classes themselves. We responded privately to this young mom by e-mail, asking a few questions. Through a series of e-mails, we learned the following:

1. She had only one 3 year old son.
2. She had never personally read ANY of the Ezzos books or attended a class.
3. She did not know anyone who had personally used the Ezzos materials.
4. She had formed her entire opinion of the Ezzos and their teaching from what she had heard from others, and from a brief flip through a Babywise book in a bookstore.

We gently shared that we believed she had been seriously misled about what the Ezzos actually teach, and that we would be happy to dialogue with her if she had specific concerns that we could answer. We also informed her (as a courtesy), that we would at some point need to respond to her publicly on the loop. We encouraged her not to pass out the ezzo.info site information again, as it was full of inaccurate information. Not only had she not read the books, she had not made any attempt to verify that any of that information was true, and just passed it along like people blindly pass along Urban Legend e-mails.

Before we had finished dialoguing privately with this mom, many of the GFI alumni on the loop had responded to her comments; some privately to us, some perhaps privately to her, and some publicly on the loop. Here are a few representative remarks from alumni:

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*"I'm one of the few dinosaurs on this list <wink> and I used the Ezzo's child training methods when my children were young. My oldest will be 22 in a few months and we have always experienced a very close and loving relationship which continues to grow. He has stated more than once his appreciation for being raised in a family that lives by God's Word.*

*He has seen first hand the fruits of not being brought up doing things God's way in the lives of others and has grown to appreciate even more how blessed he is to be part of a family committed to the Lord. He has plans to raise his children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, if and when that time comes.*

*Obviously, for us the Ezzo's way not only produced results and a close, loving relationship with out children, it produced fruit that remains. It doesn't get any better than that as far as I'm concerned. Be well and be blessed."*

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*"Our family has studied and taught several different parenting courses. We love the 4 Growing Kids God's Way courses we have been involved in. It teaches how to discipline your child through many ways, including grace from a Biblical perspective. I highly recommend the class. Just like homeschooling can have controversy around it so can all the ways of raising children. Exploring more than one option and combining parts of various approaches has its benefits. Tonight we had a family meeting and my husband used a communication technique we learned at a recent marriage retreat. When all is said and done - parenting is a life long, full time job and I have many days that I wonder who read my application and thought I was qualified."*

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In stark contrast to the critical and judgmental attitude often seen from attachment parents when they talk about the Ezzos and the GFI ministry, the ministry alumni in this dialogue really showed restraint and grace in their responses. No one attacked her choice in parenting style, no one voiced any negative opinions about her method of parenting, and no one publicly ridiculed her for her remarks. Once she admitted on the loop that she had only perused a *Babywise* book in a bookstore and was not personally familiar with the teaching, even those who were not alumni could see the absurdity of that, and it was pointed out to her (in a nice way).

She finally acquiesced, "You know what? You're absolutely right. I'll read the books."

All of this public dialogue on the e-mail loop took about three days to complete, during which time we were trying to compose a public response which would speak to the issues, but not attack the individual. What we finally sent out was the following:

*Thank you everyone for your thoughtful responses. At this point, I plead for unity and closure here! ☺ My guess is that as Christian homeschoolers we are not so very far from agreement with one another on most areas of parenting....but whether we are or not, this loop is not the proper venue for debates on the subject. Parenting, as one man has said, is one of the most prideful areas of your life. So when someone questions your parenting philosophy, it can literally make the hair on your neck stand up! ☺ We highly recommend steering clear of these topics on the loop in the future.*

*J\_\_\_\_\_ and I have been communicating privately, and we will hopefully continue that dialogue. It is certainly acceptable for J\_\_\_\_\_ to offer other parenting resources for the group to consider. Others also mentioned some wonderful parenting books that we have enjoyed and used in our family. In all the years that we have been sending class announcements through the loop, we trust that we were not stepping on toes or giving the impression that we believe this is the only right way to parent. We know families who have never heard of GKGW who, with Bible in hand are doing a beautiful job with their children! So when we send these announcements*

*through, please take them for what they are—an opportunity among many others for Christian parents to grow in their understanding of biblical parenting principles.*

*Having said that, however, for the sake of those who are not familiar with Growing Kids God's Way, the Toddler class, or the Ezzos' ministry; some public clarification is needed to rightly respond to J\_\_\_\_\_ 's initial comments and words of warning. Based upon our own experience over the past 10 years of leading these classes, teaching leadership workshops at the national level and applying the principles in our own family (with 5 children, ages 15 to 1); the principles taught in Growing Kids God's Way and other GFI classes are full of grace, absent of legalism, and full of practical wisdom and ideas for applying biblical principles to parenting. Those who claim the contrary, in our experience have never personally been through the material, or have sought to prove already held biases in their review of it.*

*Grace-based parenting need not imply lack of discipline. Biblical discipline of any kind administered in love is not punitive, it is life-giving. GKGW is not about punishing children, but about loving, encouraging, and training them to God's standard of holiness. There are 17 chapters in the GKGW workbook. Only one addresses what you would normally think of as "discipline." The rest is on building relationships, imparting moral truths, encouraging children, learning to set age appropriate boundaries, and so forth. Our goal as parents is to mold, shape and guide our child's heart, and GKGW gave us the tools to begin to do that. As one mom who responded privately to me put it, "I never thought of GKGW's way as being punitive and our choice to use it as being anything but grace driven. Grace looks down the road and doesn't want to raise a rebel. Somehow the point has been missed that the goal is the training of the child's heart." Amen.*

*In the introductions to most of their curricula, the Ezzos themselves encourage parents to seek out other methods of parenting and decide which will work best for their own families. Observe the fruit of various parenting philosophies in the families that practice them, and that will help you to make your decision. For the Christian parent, getting to the heart of the child—not getting good behavior—should be our goal, whichever method is used. The good behavior ultimately will come as we reach our child's heart.*

*As you can tell from the e-mail responses to this topic, there are many families (over 30 that we know about) in H\_\_\_\_\_ that have used the Ezzos' material. There may be many others who disagree with them. As long as those parents who disagree have formed their opinions based upon what the Ezzos ACTUALLY teach, and not what others may SAY that they teach, that is wonderful and we applaud their diligence in researching and making that decision.*

*As to the Internet critics of the Ezzos, please ask us (off loop) if you have any concerns or questions at all. We can respond privately to anyone who has questions. We have the advantage of knowing Mr. and Mrs. Ezzo personally, and they have been kind enough over the years to graciously answer ALL of our questions about the critics...so please feel free to ask away. We will not be offended. Sadly, you don't have to look too far to find negative information about just about every prominent Christian figure. I hope you don't believe everything you read.*  
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*May the matter be laid to rest on the loop, and we will be happy to privately take any questions that you may have. Thank you all for your public and private responses...the thoughtfulness and graciousness you have shown while addressing this subject shows great maturity, and makes us glad to be a part of H\_\_\_\_\_!*

This response effectively ended the dialogue on the loop. However, the damage was done, and it is likely that some of that may be irreparable. Only heaven knows what impact such stray words spoken in ignorance may have on eternity.