

February 9, 2000

[Name]

[Address]

Dear [Name],

I recently received your letter of January 26, 2000. Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns with the curriculum of Growing Families International to me. I believe that you are writing with wholesome intent. Thank you.

Our pastoral staff and I are aware of the issues which you raised. These are not new issues. Rather than expending time, money and effort to defend themselves, Growing Families International has chosen to publish responses to their critics on their web page (<http://www.gfi.org>). I have enclosed one of those responses for your reading. It is a comparison of the American Academy of Pediatrics' teaching on parenting newborns and Preparation for Parenting. As an example, you can see from reviewing the comparison, Preparation for Parenting does not promise that babies will sleep through the night in eight weeks (cf. page 3 of 9) nor does it teach parents to let their babies cry during the night. Rather, Preparation for Parenting encourages parents to continue the sleep/wake cycles and systematic feeding cycles begun in the nurseries of most hospitals. Preparation for Parenting teaches Parent Directed Feeding (P.D.F.) in which parents, utilizing common sense, help their babies onto a schedule for feeding, wake-time, sleeping. It is endorsed by pediatricians, lactation experts, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

In my reading, teaching, and continual review of the Growing Families International curriculum, I do not find their material to be "rigid, controlling or exclusive." Quite the contrary, the Ezzos have flexed to adapt their curriculum to the best research in the field, provided that research is compatible with Biblical principles. With each new revision, they have labored diligently to update their material. What I appreciate about the Ezzos is their refusal to compromise Biblical values for the sake of political correctness. They do not back down from the Biblical principles and Biblical worldview which underlies their curriculum.

Much of the criticism against Growing Families International is directed at Preparation for Parenting and is made by people who have an agenda (i.e. La Leche League members) or have never read the Preparation for Parenting material or taken the course. Most critics have relied on the findings of others, most notably Hank Hanegraaff and the Christian Research Journal. Regarding Mr. Hanegraaff, I have not found him or his publication to be particularly credible or accurate in what he says or writes. He never publishes counter-point positions to his own and refuses to engage in either debate, mediation, or arbitration with the Christian organizations he has attacked. He makes pronouncements ex cathedra and that should trouble every thinking Christian.

[Name], I have some concern when you utilize terms like "aberrations from classic Christian/Augustinian orthodoxy" and "subtle, semi-Pelagian tendencies" to describe the Ezzos teaching. As a pastor and a theologian nothing could be further from the truth. Gary Ezzo stands solidly within the sphere of biblical orthodoxy believing that salvation is sola fides (only by faith), sola scriptura (only the Bible), sola gratia (only by grace). His writings do not indicate that he believes in salvation from a semi-pelagian position of faith plus anything. Nowhere have I found

that he believes in "some kind of divine-human cooperation in redemption, with parents replacing the Holy Spirit in their child's life." [Name], be very careful in attacking a fellow believer based upon the inaccuracies of others. As I read Gary Ezzo's material, I find him quite balanced theologically. I know his educational pedigree: that he graduated with a Master of Arts degree from Talbot Theological Seminary in California, one of the finest evangelical seminaries in the nation, and he served on the staff of Grace Community Church, Panorama City, CA, a church pastored by Dr. John MacArthur, for nearly eleven years as the pastor to families.

[Church Name] has had a long-standing policy of adapting curriculum to meet the unique needs of our church family. We have done this with the Growing Families International curriculum as well. We have supplemented Growing Kids God's Way with teaching in areas which we felt were not addressed such as the practicalities of leading family devotions and practical steps to take in problem-solving. We have likewise adapted Preparation for Parenting to fit the needs of our couples expecting newborns. [Church Name] has no reputation for or good will toward approaches that are "rigid, controlling or exclusive."

Because we have no vested interest in Growing Families International, we are always looking for material which will better equip our parents and families. Should better material come along, I am open to reviewing it. To date I have found nothing more biblical or practical. Until I do, we will continue to use Growing Families International material with great confidence. No approach formulated by man is perfect, but the benefits which we are seeing in the lives of families are undeniable and affirm our decision to continue using it.

Finally, I am a concerned that you are making the criticism of Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo and G.F.I. a "cause celebre" by sending this form letter to every EFCA church in the country. That is not a biblical approach to resolving differences between believers. Matthew 18: 15-17 is the biblical pattern for resolving sin issues between believers. Have you gone to Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo before circulating this letter? Have you expressed your concerns to them and given them the chance to respond? If you have not, then that is the starting place for any type of censorship of them or their material. Please do not circulate this letter or any other criticism of the Ezzos until you have followed the biblical teaching on conflict resolution. You are heading down a dangerous path and may well be violating Romans 16: 17, "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. "

Thank you for your concern,

[Name]

Pastor, Family and Community Ministries

*encl. The A.A.P. and Preparation for Parenting recommendations and comparisons
cc. GKGW leadership*

(Note: Letter used by permission of author; names, addresses and identifying information were removed, and minor editorial changes were made for clarity. Original letter on file.)