
Some Concerns About The Ezzo Method of Parenting

This article is an updated version of one that appeared previously in "HELP for Growing Families", a now out of print newsletter previously published by Mary Pride. The earlier article was published with the title of "Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo: What is Wrong With Their Teaching on Parenting?"

Several years ago, I first became aware of Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo via their radio program. The title grabbed my attention — "Growing Kids God's Way". I expected solid teaching from the Word of God and instead heard a lot of talk about peripheral issues not even mentioned in Scripture. That prompted a rather unsatisfactory correspondence with the Ezzos, as well as an investigation of their teaching. I am most disturbed by what I have discovered thus far and feel compelled to bring it to the attention of parents who are seeking God's best for their families. This article is not meant to be an exhaustive treatise on what the Ezzos are teaching; I would urge parents to study what the Bible says about families and then to evaluate the Ezzos' materials in light of that study.¹

Before I outline my concerns, I think it is important that readers know my basic presuppositions regarding the Bible as a source of parenting instruction:

1. I hold the evangelical view of the Bible as the Word of God — inspired, inerrant, authoritative, etc. I believe the Bible contains all we need to know in order to find salvation, obey God, and live holy lives. It is complete.
2. The Bible contains God's plan for people everywhere — regardless of our race, gender, culture, place in history, economic level, or social status.
3. The Bible contains God's plan for the family. This plan can be implemented everywhere and anywhere, by anyone at any time in history. It is a truly cross-cultural plan. While various particulars may vary from family to family, there are unchangeable principles and commands that must not vary. These are **clearly stated** in Scripture.
4. If someone is to present a truly biblical plan for the family, he or she must differentiate between what God actually **said** and the teacher's own method of implementing God's plan. Anything described as a "biblical method" should contain only explanation and amplification of

¹ Contact rprewett@fix.net for a critique of the 3rd edition of "Preparation for Parenting".

Scripture — and, being biblical, it must be universally applicable.

5. Scripture should be interpreted in light of what God means to communicate to us, not in light of what meaning we might wring from a passage.

While I assume that the Ezzos would agree with me on my first point above, in practice they seem to disagree with my other four points. (For instance, “playpen time”, an important element of their behavioristic plan, presumes access to a playpen. This item might not be found in all cultures and times, and might not be affordable for all families. Another example: our disagreement on God’s message to us in Matthew 27:46 speaks to point #5. The Ezzos use this Scripture about the crucifixion as “proof” that we should allow our babies to cry it out. Yet another example: the Ezzos use “God is a God of order” as a fundamental Biblical principle underlying their infant feeding schedule.) Our major fundamental difference is perhaps how we ascribe degrees of authority to theological statements (or parenting advice that claims to be biblical). In this area, I follow a process taught to me by my father and succinctly described by Millard J. Erickson:

1. Direct statements of Scripture carry the most authority, followed by
2. Direct implications of Scripture
3. Probable implications of Scripture
4. Inductive conclusions from Scripture
5. Conclusions inferred from the general revelation
6. Outright speculation²

I would argue that Gary Ezzo seems to base his teaching on conclusions and outright speculation, and yet attempts to assign to his parenting philosophy the authoritative weight of direct statements of Scripture.

In my interpretation and study of the Bible, I have learned to adopt a methodology similar to that espoused by Charles Hodge, although we may disagree on some of the nonessential areas of doctrine.³ In addition, I would agree with most of what I understand to be Daniel P. Fuller’s analysis of various schools of biblical interpretation.⁴ I mention all this only so that those to whom theological matters are of great concern may know better how to interpret my concerns and conclusions.

My intention in writing is not to defend my parenting practices and the biblical

² Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 79-80

³ Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans, reprinted 1989) Vol. I, pg. 10-17. Especially relevant is Hodge’s statement on page 13: “...if the Bible asserts that Christ’s death was a satisfaction to justice, the theologian is not allowed to merge justice into benevolence in order to suit his theory of the atonement.” I might add that we also must not merge parenting analogies and discipline into the picture either, merely to suit our theories of either the atonement or the correct response to our babies’ cries. Hodge writes, “We must take the facts of the Bible as they are, and construct our system so as to embrace them in all their integrity.” I do not see how Gary has done so.

⁴ D. P. Fuller, “History of Interpretation”, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1982. I too “insist on discovering the consciously intended meaning which the author or redactor of a text wanted to share with his readers.” Similarly disenchanted as was O. Cullman in his early years, I find troubling any attempts “to make the facts of Scripture fit a modern philosophical view.” This, I might add, includes every modern view, be it humanism, behaviorism, or any other philosophy not derived from Scripture.

foundation for them, nor to clear up Mr. Ezzo's misinterpretation of my philosophy nor even to counter his charge of exaggeration.⁵ Instead I wish to express concern over three major issues:

1. Mr. Ezzo's insistence on labeling his personal parenting philosophy as exclusively biblical;
2. his misuse of Scripture to support that claim; and
3. his ungracious response to those who would question him.

I am not the only one who has voiced the first two concerns. One woman wrote to her pastor:

...the Ezzos' thesis, in my opinion, is based on a serious misinterpretation or misrepresentation of a basic foundational truth to our whole rationale as Christians.

*...while the Ezzos are criticizing certain behavioristically-based child-rearing techniques, labeling them humanistic, they are, at the same time, promoting other behavioristically-based techniques, labeling them Biblical. A humanist's problem is not the behavioristic techniques he uses, whether that means either directly manipulating the child's environment (much like the Ezzos' approach), or the other extreme, "democratic" non-involvement. His problem is the basis on which he uses those techniques, i.e., in a universe without a Moral Absolute (that is, God), man, if properly conditioned, will become morally acceptable. The Ezzos' approach is exactly the same. The basis on which they use their own brand of behavioristic techniques is that in a universe **with** a Moral Absolute (that is, God), man, if properly conditioned, will become morally acceptable. Grace is not seen as a practicable or viable option in developing a parenting style...*

*The Ezzos stress the concept of "original sin", as well they should, that being foundational in a proper understanding of grace. Calvinism asserts that because of "original sin", every man is totally depraved and can do no good work **unless** he is assisted by God's grace. I assume your theological stance is Calvinistic, therefore, you must agree that although we don't live in a moral vacuum, nor would we want to, grace is essential in allowing each of us personal access to God...since relationship with God is our goal, moral conformity is not, nor in fact would it contribute in any way to that goal. ⁶*

I might add that holiness is an entirely different matter. It is interesting that while Gary seems to stress that our children should be "morally upright", that their behavior conform to our standards, and that we should desire to bring about a (in my mind totally unbiblical) state of "spiritual inertia" in our children, nowhere does he

⁵ One incident of what the Ezzos described as my "exaggeration" was merely an attempt to mimic what Francis Schaeffer termed "taking the roof off" by showing the absurdity of a conclusion logically derived from Mr. Ezzo's statements. Needless to say, I completely lack Dr. Schaeffer's wit and wisdom in this area. I offered apology and explanation in my response to Mr. Ezzos' first letter, which I know he received because it was followed up by a phone call from Cheryl Williams, on his staff. He has gone on to accuse me of "fabrications" and "distortions".

⁶ letter on file

stress the doctrine of sanctification or the pursuit of personal holiness.⁷

Perhaps readers might be interested in some of the testimony presented at Lake Avenue Congregational Church when the leadership reexamined and ultimately rejected the “Preparation for Parenting” course that was being taught there.

One father wrote: “...the spirit in which the Ezzos deliver their methodology is elitist and divisive. They insist that their way is the only way to raise children...NO WHERE do I see anything in the Bible which allows this sort of claim to exclusivity in child-raising...” He went on to comment ominously, “One of the first steps toward a cult is a unilateral claim on exclusivity.”⁸

Another couple wrote, “It is our opinion that the Ezzos are teaching their own personal parenting techniques, and labeling them as biblical truths...The real danger is that they are indoctrinating an entire age group of young Christian parents by calling their teaching biblical. Time and time again we came away from the Ezzos’ classes trying to figure out how they could ‘stretch’ biblical meanings of scripture verses to justify and accommodate their own techniques and opinions...we feel they are promoting a type of cult. Gary and Anne Marie personally taught the first seminar we attended. They emphatically stated...that we should not discuss anything we learned in class with outsiders...Gary and Anne Marie worked to make us feel as though we would be ‘Godly Parents’ by cutting a new path and that this path would be opposed by many people....The Ezzos teach that their parenting method is the only one that is truly God’s way”.⁹

Yet a third letter says, “Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo state that their parenting techniques are truly and unequivocally ‘God’s Way’ for rearing children. Not only this, but they make it quite clear that other parenting styles, especially opposing ones, are not biblical and are not ‘God’s Way’...Once young couples are initially committed to the Ezzo program(s)...they are specifically told not to discuss what they will be learning with outsiders, nor to be concerned with their opposition or conflicting viewpoints. Gary Ezzo claims these viewpoints are societal and cultural in nature and that they have no biblical basis. These kind of cultic overtones are very alarming to me.”¹⁰ These three letters were from parents who had been through the “Prep” course and included honors graduates of both colleges and graduate schools, a university professor, and leaders within the church.

One might argue that these letter are now quite dated and that newer editions of the Ezzos’ materials have laid all these concerns to rest. The Ezzos have even gone on record stating that they are not claiming that their infant management methods are exclusively Biblical. However, many parents are still using the earlier editions; they have never been recalled, nor have these parents received word of retractions. Also, many of the same concerns are still being raised by parents, pastors, midwives, doctors, and lactation professionals today. One need only to encounter discussion of the Ezzos on America Online or on the Internet to discover that many parents are

⁷ Later editions of “Growing Kids God’s Way” have attempted to make up for some of this lack; however, I still believe that they fall short in this area.

⁸ letter on file

⁹ letter on file

¹⁰ letter on file

still voicing the same objections to the Ezzo Method and how it is being presented.

Readers might also be interested in knowing how some professionals in the field of lactation are responding to the “Preparation for Parenting” course. One wrote to a pastor:

You may be aware that there is great controversy within Evangelical churches as to the validity of the program in general. Recently Lake Avenue Congregational in Pasadena voted on accepting it. In case you are unfamiliar with that church, it's a large conservative, Evangelical body located within blocks of Fuller Seminary. The night that this program was presented, they voted it down, based on strong objections brought by professors from the School of Theology, School of World Missions, and School of Psychology. Additionally, a 17 year veteran pediatric nurse practitioner, who is a world renowned authority on breastfeeding, among other things, stood and said, "Please be aware that if you implement this, you WILL in the future be sued when a baby is injured or dies. I've personally recently seen four Failure to Thrive babies in my practice that were a direct result of the teaching in the 'Preparation for Parenting' portion of the program."

I have a particular interest in Failure- to- thrive, as I've developed a specialty in working with these babies. They are literally dehydrating and malnourished and often wind up in hospitals. This is caused by inadequate breastmilk intake, which happens for a variety of reasons. Though Mrs. Ezzo has an RN, the fact is that nursing schools do not train students in management of the breastfeeding mother and infant. The information that the Ezzos [teach] about feeding schedules is absolutely incorrect...Let me restate that this is NOT a matter of opinion but of FACT and the results are turning out to be devastating to the families of the babies who have more sensitive systems and no reserve to deal with these inadequately prescribed "schedules" ...You might also wish to know that at this conference I attended...approximately 100 health care providers were strongly warned about this program and how badly babies and families are suffering...It had enough of an impact that hours later it was still THE topic of disturbing discussion...¹¹

Within a year of hearing the Ezzos for the first time on the radio, I had learned of at least a dozen babies in Southern California that had been diagnosed “failure to thrive” as a result of their parents’ implementation of the Ezzo method. At least one baby reportedly required hospitalization and was expected to live only hours, but survived. Another lost 25% of body weight within two weeks of birth. What bothered the professionals involved were the evasive answers they are being given by some of these parents as to how often the baby nursed, whether the baby was nursing at night, etc. Only when the parents realized how serious their babes’ conditions were did they become completely forthright. A few offered the alarming information that they had been told in their “Prep” classes not to discuss their feeding methods with “outsiders”. Further, they had been warned to expect opposition from medical professionals who had been trained in “humanistic” institutions. As a result, some professionals are now beginning to routinely ask if parents have taken any

¹¹ letter on file; the writer is a lactation professional as well as the wife of a pastor

parenting classes or seminars; so far parents seem willing to admit if they have taken the “Prep” course. I am appalled that Gary and Anne Marie would appear to encourage parents to be evasive with their pediatricians and other health care providers. Whose best interests do the Ezzos have at heart — theirs or the babies?¹²

After my original article was published, the letters, email, and phone calls began pouring in. My email alone gave sad reports from six correspondents with first-hand knowledge of failure-to-thrive babies. One lactation consultant had seen several cases that she believed strongly were a direct result of the parents’ implementation of “Prep”. A mother, who had taught Prep, described her own “hot dog baby” and her need to adapt the program for the sake of her child’s health. She also mentioned the problems with low milk supply and early weaning that she saw all too often among “Prep” families.¹³ Others described failure-to-thrive babies in their own families, among friends, and within their churches--all among families implementing the Ezzo Method.¹⁴ I learned of even more cases via “snail mail” and phone calls. Parents told me of their “horribly skinny” and exhausted babies who thrived once the Ezzo Method was severely modified or abandoned entirely.

Alarmed by these reports, I began asking parents if they were willing to go public with their stories. I was puzzled at the almost universal response. “Oh no, we couldn’t do that. We don’t want to get blasted. No, we simply can’t speak out. Please don’t use our names.” I was surprised. These parents seemed more than reluctant--some of them actually admitted they were afraid. Of what? A typical response: “We just don’t want to get blasted. We’ve seen what happens.”

Other parents expressed concerns about divisiveness within families and churches. Some families had actually felt compelled to leave their churches because of constant criticism over their “refusal” to adopt the Ezzo Method. I learned of grandparents who were alarmed at how their grandchildren were being raised--and were criticized strongly for voicing their feelings. In more than one church, GFI advocates clamored for the Sunday School teachers to be replaced by those who had taken the Ezzos’ classes. Another church reportedly required attendance at GFI classes as a prerequisite for church leadership. Certainly these sort of actions are not insisted upon by the Ezzos¹⁵; however, they are undeniably a “fruit” of their method. A magazine publisher described the torrent of angry letters she received after publishing an article about breastfeeding voicing disagreement with what she had discreetly referred to as “a couple from California”. She said that, in her years of publishing, she had never received such “unkind and insensitive” letters. Their very tone brought to her mind Luke 6:40. (“...but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”) The letters, she wrote me, only served to convince her that this teaching was of more cause for concern than she had previously thought.

¹²I have since been informed that this prohibition against discussing “Prep” with outsiders is an attempt to prevent overbearing proselytizing by zealous Ezzo advocates, not an attempt at secrecy.

¹³She and her husband stated they had addressed their concerns to Mr. Ezzo but found his response “poor”.

¹⁴To be fair, I must admit that many “Prep” parents do not have babies in trouble and that there are many failure-to-thrive babies whose parents are not implementing “Prep”. However, this does not eliminate the experiences of parents who thought they were doing things “God’s Way” only to discover that this was causing their babies to suffer.

¹⁵I did not find, in my study of their written materials, statements advocating these measures.

I was told that one county in Southern California had considered declaring this to be a public health issue. When I went public with this statement¹⁶, Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo countered with the following statement in a letter they publicly circulated about me: “From failure-to-thrive babies to counties putting out warnings against our teaching, we regret to have to say it but, Rebecca Prewett for the most part, fabricated the truth claims of her letter.” In a later rebuttal titled “Growing Kids God's Way(Why it's Right (A response to the Prewett/Pride evaluation of the Ezzos' teaching on parenting.)” [sic] and made publicly available on CompuServe, the “ministry partners and administrative staff of Growing Families International” stated, “This story was fabricated. We called the county health services in question when the original rumor surfaced only to find out the story was started by a La Leche League mother.”

I was quite surprised to hear this and, wondering if I had been the victim of some clever and diabolical hoax involving an elaborate impersonation, attempted to uncover the truth of the matter. My original source in the county health department was no longer there, but another contact was. She confirmed that the county had never issued a warning about the Ezzos’ teachings. (Note: I never stated that any warnings were issued, as this was never my understanding.) She also confirmed that my former contact had had grave concerns about the Ezzos’ parenting program and that there had been discussion of these concerns within the department. In fact, she had a “huge file” on this very matter. I pressed her for an accurate statement of what really happened and she replied that the Ezzos’ program had been a concern but that the county never took action. “The department did look into it. If we found widespread problems with parents carefully using ‘Prep’, we would investigate and do something about it.”

My contact further stated that the Ezzos had refused to return her calls.

Like many Christians who have encountered problems with the Ezzo Method within a professional setting, she shared a growing sense of frustration: How does this reflect on the Body of Christ and on what the Bible really does teach? (Local medical professionals, after seeing what one described as a “whole slew” of babies who were not thriving on the Ezzo Method, began sarcastically referring to it as “God’s Feeding Plan”. This report grieved me deeply.) How are we to counter those who would claim that, given these sometimes tragic results, “biblical parenting” must be abusive at worst, misinformed at best? Why is it that Mr. Ezzo feels his “parent-controlled feeding plan” (now renamed “parent-directed feeding”) is “God’s Way” and thus, by implication, the best or only way?

Then there is my third concern: Gary Ezzo’s ungracious response to those who would question him. Many who have attempted to dialogue with Mr. Ezzo feel that he has not demonstrated what most believe to be some of the character traits and qualifications of ministers (see Hebrews 5:2, Titus 2:1,7, James 3:1,17-18, I Corinthians 4:12, Malachi 2:7, II Tim 3:16 among others). He has not demonstrated compassion, humility, meekness, or wisdom. I could not hold him up as a good example of sound teaching or of how one should respond to questions or criticism. In fact, I feel he has violated II Tim 2:24-26: “And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them

¹⁶in the earlier version of this article, published in “HELP for Growing Families”

repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” (I assume Gary sees me as being taken captive in this manner; his letters gave that impression, although he never stated so directly.) I write this accusation with trembling. It is a serious thing to say that a minister has violated Scripture. I am reminded of I Timothy 5:19, 20: “Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.” (I attempted to bring other “witnesses” with me by quoting them earlier in this article regarding my first concerns.)

It is interesting that Gary feels compelled to resort to *ad hominem* arguments. (He has done this in his letters to me, his letters to others, his written statements about me, his public statements about others, and his rebuttal to a *Christianity Today* article.) Thus, according to his letters, I am basing my parenting on the “primitivistic marsupial mother approach”; I “tend to exaggerate”; I’m merely a “young mother in the process”. And those were only the earlier, milder accusations! Mr. Ezzo also came to some conclusions that those who know me find laughable...but also inaccurate and mean-spirited.¹⁷ Even of more concern to me is his accusation of a fellow believer, the reporter who wrote the *CT* article: “It is one thing to print a slanted position due to the lack of factual information. It is another thing to have all the facts and then to deliberately spin a story with the intent to mislead the public.”¹⁸

However, it is not his statements about me that concern me. I could write them off as merely a personality clash; perhaps we just got off on the wrong foot with one another. Maybe I’m just a bit too sensitive...however, I have not been the only target of this sort of behavior.

He offended an entire group of women on America Online, in a discussion folder titled “Growing Families International”. The following posts were “cut and pasted” from that discussion and, with the exception of my posts, appear exactly as they did online, typos and all¹⁹ :

Subj: White Flag, White Flag #1 95-07-08 16:45:25 EDT
From: GnAM²⁰

Ladies, (and the few gentlemen crazy enough to join this conversations.) <g>²¹

Wow, talk about women and emotions. (I read all the responses.) I feel like I walked into the hen house during egg laying. Nice network you ladies have. <g>

¹⁷See my article “In Response”.

¹⁸“The Brave New Baby Response Sheet”, circulated with a letter to “Class Leaders and Friends of GFI” by Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo.

¹⁹I did not copy my posts from the folder online, since I had composed them offline and thus already had them on my hard disk.

²⁰GnAM = “Gary and Anne Marie”

²¹Computerese for “grin”

I'm am waving the white flag. Don't shoot. Let me first say hello to Lisa M. and Rebecca Prewett.²² We consider you gifts from God, and major contributors to the success of our ministry. I'm sorry Rebecca I didn't get a chance to meet you in person when we were up visiting classes in Santa Maria. But it was nice to see Nancy again and to meet Lisa.

Remember Lisa, our lunch invitation is still open when you get down to the Valley.

But on with business. Although, this going back and forth is fun, and probably more relaxing than a bad round of golf, and certainly more entertaining than the Dogers, ladies, I do have other more important activities to fill up my day, than the go nowhere debates with emotionally charged demand feeding mothers talking about demand feeding practices.

If you would like to continue a reasonable dialogue, lets take one issue at a time, agree to drop the demagoguery and proceed with some type of organizational sanity. If your not interested in that, may I suggest you go back to your other folders and play there. After all, this folder was set up for those involved and happy with the GFI curriculums and not for those who disagree and who are not exactly on the edge of agreement.

If you want to disagree and take up the time of other people who are not interested in your positions, we can set up a La Leche League/ Attachment Parenting/GFI/Demand Feeding/ Schedule Feeding bashing folder. That way everyone can give their opinion while respecting the original intent and purpose of other folders. After all, I'm sure other personalities in this section would not appreciate having the original intent of their folders violated by a network of disgruntled people, who fly their sorties in protest of what those other personalities believe, stand for and teach. What I'm saying is, let's all respect the original purpose of all the folders.

And one more thing. Would you join me in not saying, "You believe that. . . .," (or similar statements), or imposing your interpretation on someone else's beliefs. Lets stick with what you as an individual believe rather than taking a chance on reinterpreting and misinterpreting what other believe. That includes not taking thoughts and statements out of context. If anyone needs clarification on a point, let us ask in the spirit of Christ and not the spirit of fleshly debate. We can get to all of your questions but one at a time since this is a group discussion, and one that I personally welcome.

So, if we can agree on those rules of conduct, I would like to revisit what I considered to be the first topic PVHKK brought to this series. I invite all of you to join in, Prep and demand feeding mothers alike. Please state your views.

²²It is considered a violation of online etiquette to identify AOL members by name if they have not previously done so publicly online. While Mr. Ezzo was probably unaware of this possible breach of AOL's Terms of Service and probably was just being "friendly", some who read this dialogue voiced their disapproval of his actions.

The first topic is this: What is the relationship of Isaiah 66:10-11 to breastfeeding. "Rejoice with Jerusalem. And be glad with her, all you who love her. Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; That you may feed and be satisfied. With the consolation of her bosom. That you may drink deeply and be delighted. With the abundance of her glory."

What do the Ezzo's believe about this verse and its relationship to breastfeeding?

Next Post Please

Subj: Is. 66:10-11 cont.
From: GnAM

95-07-08 16:54:48 EDT

The first topic is this: What is the relationship of Isaiah 66:10-11 to breastfeeding.

"Rejoice with Jerusalem. And be glad with her, all you who love her. Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; That you may feed and be satisfied. With the consolation of her bosom. That you may drink deeply and be delighted. With the abundance of her glory."

What do the Ezzo's believe about this verse and its relationship to breastfeeding?

1. The primacy of the verse is prophesy. It is speaking of the now barren daughter of Zion, Jerusalem, who will one day give birth again as demonstrated by that fact that from her breast she will supply her children with nourishment.
2. It is poetic. The picture that emerges is one of gentleness, consolation, compassion, and caring. The symbol used is that of a mother's love to her nursing child. The comfort of the breast is the symbol the prophet used to communicate his message.
3. The text cannot be used to support the notion that the general philosophy of demand feeding is more compassionate than schedule feeding. Nor can it support that notion that the general philosophy of schedule feeding is more compassionate than demand feeding. Therefore, the text can not be used as a biblical support or a mandate for either philosophy of feeding.
- 4.. The text cannot support the notion that demand feeding or schedule feeding is the preferred way to routinely communicate compassion, love, consolation or gentleness. We believe those are opinions drawn from one's experience but not from these verses or the Bible at large.

Your views on this passage are invited.

The next topic for discussion which came out of the above is the questions of

compassion. What is compassion? Are acts of compassion objective or subjective? What determines the type of compassion shown to infants/children? Does compassion have moral limits?

Subj: Re:Is. 66:10-11 cont.
From: KathyThile

95-07-08 18:42:11 EDT

Dear Mr. Ezzo,

I guess my question--and I do appreciate being able to ask you, the head of an international organisation--relating to the passage in Isaiah 66 and PCF, would be whether it is considered appropriate for a mother to ever comfort her baby at the breast. I often used to praise God for the way that putting a baby to breast seemed to console an upset baby. Even when I didn't know what exactly was bothering my baby, having exhausted the possibilities that I could think of, putting to breast calmed and comforted. But when I listened to the Prep tapes (older version) when my youngest was a baby, I didn't hear any provision for this capacity of breastfeeding.

By the way, I know you didn't invite comment on your "White Flag" note, but I just wanted to comment that I thought that most every posting had been well reasoned, calm, and far from "emotional". Personally, I didn't think there was anyone who posted who deserved the sarcastic treatment you gave them. I think that it would certainly be appropriate for "posting in the spirit of Christ and not in fleshly debate" to begin with you, a pastor (correct?) and the leader of an international ministry, even if it had *not* been the spirit of other participants.

In Christ,
Kathy

Subj: For Mr. Ezzo
From: Karen Faye

95-07-09 11:09:57 EDT

Dear Mr. Ezzo,

I am not part of any "network" of mothers on line, although I am familiar with some of the ladies who have posted in this folder through other places they have posted.

I have been reading back and forth with much interest, as I am part of the ATI program where your teachings have become quite popular. I have sat in the nursing mothers' lounge in Knoxville and have heard many women express frustration that somehow they aren't quite the "perfect" homeschooling mothers because they don't schedule their children by your book or seminar. I have also listened to many moms lament the fact that their children aren't sleeping at night at 6 months or so and they are tired and frustrated. So I understand the need to find a balance between feeding a newborn infant on demand, in order to increase the milk supply, and in allowing an older nursing baby to run the show. In my

doing it God's way and, your baby will sleep through the night at 6 weeks. (5 if you're lucky)." (Paraphrase mine). Since when does feeding your baby when he needs to be fed - whether it be 8 times in 24 hours or 12 times in 24 hours; nursing him when he needs to be comforted, putting him to the breast when he is thirsty, putting him down for a nap when he is tired, changing his diaper when it is dirty, constitute rebellion and naughtiness on the part of the child? I weep for the mothers in your program - I've seen the computer printouts as they try to adhere to the Schedule - and have seen them grit their teeth as they attempt to ignore their baby's cry because it isn't "time" to do something yet.

YOu haven't responded to so many of the well placed questions. I have found that when I have questioned Prep moms about how and why they do things that they too shut me out. Questioning isn't allowed in your program? Just blind obedience to your tenents? I don't find anything Biblical about your feeding methods - if it was that important, surely Moses would have mentioned feeding babies by the sundial in Mosaic law - the law certainly is specific on many other aspects of life!

Your lack of respect for women and your superior attitude that came through on that post was outrageous! God has given women a heart for their children - call it motherly instinct (which your book denounces) - and a yearning to meet their needs when they cry.

Parents need to learn that the principles of attachment parenting as stated so well by Sears does not preclude discipline at the appropriate time. "Demand feeding" and discipline are not mutually exclusive. Neither is loving & cuddling & nursing at the breast exclusive from discipline. Nor is co sleeping, or wearing your baby in a sling. (Marsupial mothering, I believe you have referred to it rather sarcastically in your book).

I weep for the babies I have seen that are failure to thrive because the parents are trying to follow your rigid rules. For those babies that have been switched to formula because of the mothers on your program who "didn't have enough milk."

Frankly, Mr. Ezzo, your program scares me. It is evident in your writings that you know absolutely nothing about the art of breastfeeding or the science of lactation. Most pediatricians don't either, so the fact that you have a pediatrician co-authoring Babywise doesn't impress me in the slightest. I suggest that your program might work for those mothers who choose to formula feed rather than breastfeed. Perhaps if you took breastfeeding out of the equation, it would work better.

Subj: Letter to Mr. Ezzo
From: ValJacob

95-07-10 12:46:33 EDT

Mr. Ezzo:

>>If anyone needs clarification on a point, let us ask in the spirit of Christ and not the spirit of fleshly debate. We can get to all of your questions but one at a time since this is a group discussion, and one that I personally welcome.<<²⁵

I agree. I fear that in a discussion of this type, there is a great danger of resorting to subtle attack and hurtful responses in order to better our "position." In fleshly debate, the person with the greatest command of the English language is the winner. If we indeed "ask in the Spirit of Christ," God's Word will be exalted and His wisdom will show forth.

You have inferred that *someone* in this folder has misinterpreted your teaching and has taken your statements out of context. I did not intend to do this. I do not believe that anyone has intentionally misrepresented you. If you ever see anything of this nature, it would be helpful if you would refute it specifically. It would be especially helpful if your responses were characterized by more kindness.

As we discuss these issues, let's take God's Words through Paul as our guide:

"But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord *must not quarrel but be gentle to all*, able to teach, patient, *in humility correcting those who are in opposition*, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." (II Timothy 2:23-26)

I don't post this Scripture as an accusation, but as an admonition not only to you, but also to myself, and any one else who posts here.

Thank you.

At this point, I posted the following:

Mr. Ezzo, I really enjoyed meeting you and your wife at the CHEA convention this weekend. I'm glad I took the time to hurry over between sessions. Perhaps it's providential that Reb Bradley's session ran over and we were able to talk as long as we did?

Ladies, the Ezzos are every bit as gracious in person as I have been told. For any of you who might be familiar with our dialogue, especially in the past, and have been concerned about it, I just wanted to say that Mr. Ezzo and I were able to hug despite our differences of opinion--and no one forced us to do so! <g>

MiniPeople, I felt that there was another session that was important for me to attend (actually there were three or four sessions at that time that I would have

²⁵This is the AOL convention for quoting from another post.

liked to attend) and so I did not attend the Ezzos' session on homeschool and marriage. Thus I can't really comment on it one way or the other.²⁶

Val, I came up with another possible benefit of larger families. A number of friends I saw this weekend (who haven't seen me in over three or four years) insisted that I look much younger now than I did when I only had three children. Maybe I've hit on some sort of beauty secret? <g>

Now I'm going to settle back and read all the posts I missed while I was gone....

In an attempt to restore peace, or perhaps allow others to see the humor, I wrote:

Ladies, ladies, ladies! Let's not be so quick to take offense at Mr. Ezzo's words. Perhaps he was merely *joking*--trying to inject some levity after the discussion of a little child tragically having to endure brain surgery. Or perhaps he was commending a number of you on your expressions and descriptions of Christ-like motherhood. Remember that, when Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he said, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Mt. 23:37)

This most recent exchange, in my mind, just illustrates the wisdom of following Titus 2:3-5. God knew what He was doing in establishing certain roles within the family and within the church. There is a reason why older *women* are to teach the younger women to be good mothers and wives!

My other comments:

A few points of clarification....

Mr. Ezzo stated:

<< (I read all the responses.) >>

Yet later he stated:

<<I do have other more important activities to fill up my day, than the go nowhere debates with emotionally charged demand feeding mothers talking about demand feeding practices.>>

I also read all the posts and found that demand feeding practices were not the main topic of discussion. In fact, some of the mothers made quite clear that they did *not* demand feed their babies, especially using the narrow definition of "demand feeding" that has been stated in this folder. (By the way, when several pediatricians instructed me to "feed on demand" during the early weeks, they went on to define it completely differently than it has been defined by Mr. Ezzo in

²⁶"MiniPeople" had expressed her opinion that the Ezzos, who had never homeschooled, were not really qualified to speak on the topic of homeschooling marriages.

this folder. I think there is quite a bit of confusion when terms are being used without agreed upon definitions. For a further point of clarification, I want to go on record stating that I am opposed to the sort of demand feeding that Mr. Ezzo has described--the "don't think, just react" statement, for example. I'm still trying to discover the originator of that statement and really wish that Mr. Ezzo would steer me in the right direction by sharing his source. Please, if anyone runs across someone teaching this sort of position, let me know!

My personal opinion (as a woman <g>) is that the "debate" in this folder has been, with perhaps only a few, isolated exceptions, one of the most calm and rational discussions of this topic that I have encountered online thus far. I have especially appreciated the concern both "factions" have shown for one another in responding to Maureen's post, as well as the search for common ground.

<<After all, this folder was set up for those involved and happy with the GFI curriculums and not for those who disagree and who are not exactly on the edge of agreement.>>

The first post also invited questions from those who were not involved with GFI. In addition, ValJacob's statements led me to believe that she was "happy with" Prep for Toddlerhood, so I would think that her posts would still be welcome here. Or is this folder only for those who agree with every single aspect of all of GFI's materials? What about if they agree with about 90 percent?

<<If you want to disagree and take up the time of other people who are not interested in your positions, we can set up a La Leche League/ Attachment Parenting/GFI/Demand Feeding/ Schedule Feeding bashing folder.>>

Ah, but I don't think that would satisfy any of us here. Speaking for myself and reading into the tone and substance of the posts, I don't think any of the ladies here are interested in bashing anyone.

Plus, I really wish Mr. Ezzo would address the questions and concerns of those who have asked how to best implement his programs. I certainly don't want my questions to take precedent over theirs...although I am looking forward to *all* of the answers.

<<Nice network you ladies have.>>

I'm not sure what is meant by network. Is Mr. Ezzo speaking in computerese? Does he mean AOL? Hhhhhmmmm...there are plenty of men, perhaps more men, who are online too. This folder? I'm not sure I would call it a "network". <g> Oh, I see:

<<After all, I'm sure other personalities in this section would not appreciate having the original intent of their folders violated by a network of disgruntled people, who fly their sorties in protest of what those other personalities believe,

stand for and teach.>>

Well, I can report quite cheerfully that I am not disgruntled, nor am I flying any sorties, whatever that means. And, since leaving the business world, I'm not really into "networking"...unless the networks are of the cyberspace kind and I'm trying to get my other Internet connection to work dependably. <g> If there is some sort of network going on here, this is the first I've heard of it! (All right, ladies...confess! What sort of network is this?! Identify yourselves! <g>)

Others continued to respond to Mr. Ezzo's posts:

Subj: Questions for Mr. Ezzo 95-07-10 12:49:07 EDT
From: ValJacob

Based on my study of God's Word, I believe that the teaching in Prep for Parenting is unbiblical. I have added to this folder, not to argue, but to warn and encourage parents to search the Scriptures and see if "these things" are true (Acts 17:11).

"Beware lest anyone cheat (plunder, take captive) you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:8-10)

I recognize that there are two possibilities that I have not accepted. First, it may be that I have misunderstood what you have been teaching in Prep for Parenting. Second, it may be that I have understood you perfectly, but have misinterpreted what God's Word teaches regarding these matters. In a spirit of true Christian love and out of a desire to see the Truth of Scripture understood and applied, both in my home and in the homes of those who have had contact with your ministry, would you be willing to answer the following questions?

1. Do you believe and do you teach that in order to experience success in parenting an infant, one must follow your program of scheduled feeding? On what Scriptures do you base your program?
2. Is there any proof or any scientific support for your statements regarding the metabolic chaos of a newborn being brought to order by your program?
3. Do you believe and teach that a mother should respond rationally and not emotionally to her baby?
4. Do you believe that the breast is for nutrition only and not for comfort?
5. Do you believe and do you teach that, while breastfeeding is nutritionally better, there is no spiritual difference between a choice to breastfeed and a choice to bottlefeed?
6. Do you believe that the program (schedule versus comfort feeding) is more

important than the method (breast versus bottle).

7. Do you believe and do you teach that a mother who uses a baby carrier is unwise and/or not pleasing God? If the latter, please give Scripture references which support this view.

8. Do you believe that parents who bring their baby into their bed for all of or part of the night are unwise and or not pleasing to God? If the latter, please give Scripture references which support this view.

Subj: To GnAM
From: ChrParent

95-07-11 17:08:03 EDT

Mr. Ezzo,

>>If you would like to continue a reasonable dialogue, lets take one issue at a time, agree to drop the demagoguery and proceed with some type of organizational sanity. If your not interested in that, may I suggest you go back to your other folders and play there. << --GnAM

>>And one more thing. Would you join me in not saying, "You believe that. . . .," (or similar statements), or imposing your interpretation on someone else's beliefs. Lets stick with what you as an individual believe rather than taking a chance on reinterpreting and misinterpreting what other believe. That includes not taking thoughts and statements out of context.<< --GnAM

I am disappointed that you did not recognize an excellent confrontation of your violation of the latter statement. Rumpelst posted a summary of attachment parenting that was taken *from* the source, a written source. Kathy Thile then posted quotes from an article that you wrote for your newsletter, a *public* newsletter, that summarized attachment parenting as a "happiness doctrine" that tells parents to "exalt the child to the center of the universe". No citations, no references. Why? Because there aren't any to support this.

I understand your desire not to have someone misrepresent you. I have seen sincere questions posted asking for clarification, but when the water got hot, you jumped out. They were fair questions, fair posts, and I think that everyone would like to know where you really stand. How, then, can you bypass this seeming transgression without explanation or apology, and expect everyone to turn a blind eye?

It would appear that your summary of "La Leche League/Dr. Sear's Attachment parenting" is based on your beliefs of what it is, rather than fact. My basis for that statement is the fact that you often allege that a questioner practices attachment parenting when they did not state this nor necessarily make any remarks to that effect. Rather, it seems your conclusion is based merely on the fact that they do not embrace your beliefs.

>>I do have other more important activities to fill up my day, than the go nowhere debates with emotionally charged demand feeding mothers talking about

demand feeding practices.<<

When I read this, I said to myself, "he's ducking the issues because some valid points were made." Do you operate on the premise that the best defense is an aggressive offense? I don't see the other participants doing this; they have tried to be authentic and humble, and haven't been dodging *sincerely* asked questions.

>>If you want to disagree and take up the time of other people who are not interested in your positions, we can set up a La Leche League/ Attachment Parenting/GFI/Demand Feeding/ Schedule Feeding bashing folder. That way everyone can give their opinion while respecting the original intent and purpose of other folders.<<

No one has bashed your curriculum, and in fact some nice things have been said about it and you. I am not going to try to "spiritualize" my post by digging up scriptures to throw, but I am going to appeal to you to understand that questions are posed in *this* folder because some of the teachings appear questionable, and possibly harmful. It would be perfectly useless to start a folder for "recreational bashing"; no one wants that. If GFI is based in Truth, then truth should be able to defend itself in place. And if it isn't based in truth, shouldn't those who use the curriculum be forewarned?

Guess I'll succumb to one scripture after all: "You shall know the Truth, and the truth shall set you free". I do believe that Truth shall be evident to all, and that none should fear it.

Subj: Open letter of concern 95-07-11 15:58:16 EDT
From: MiniPeople

Mr. Ezzo,

We are not part of any network, except for the Body of Christ and, on the local level, our local church and our homeschooling support group. We don't really know most of these lovely ladies online except for their posts.

We take very seriously the Bible when it says that man and wife are one flesh.

You have offended both of us with your remarks. Sorry, Mrs. Rumpelst, but we weren't laughing and we weren't sure that Mr. Ezzo was joking. And if he was, we have a saying we got from another homeschooler that we use with our children, "If it's not funny to Alice, then it's not funny." Maybe Mrs. Rumpelst thought the description of the women in this folder was funny. Maybe you did. But several of the women have let all of us know in their posts that they did not think it was funny. When our children do or say something, even if it was not on purpose, and it was disrespectful or it hurts someone, we make sure they owe everyone an apology or they deal with us.

Mr. Ezzo, if our adult sons would ever talk to a woman the way you did in this folder, we would consider ourselves failures as parents.

Luke 6:40 teaches us that students, when fully taught, will be like their teachers. That's why our family homeschools and why we take our own walk and talk so seriously. Because of that verse and what we have read from you in this folder and other places, we have forbidden anyone under our authority to sit under your teaching. We would never want them to write the sort of things you have written.

You accused the ladies of demagoguery. According to our Webster, a demagogue attempts to lead the people, to influence them to adhere to him; he is a factious man who has great influence with a group of people. You, sir, are the demagogue, not these ladies.

Respectfully,
Mr. and Mrs. "MiniPeople"

Shortly after this, the folder sort of died away. Gary Ezzo never did post any sort of apology-- or any other post, for that matter. In their last contact with me, "Mr. and Mrs. MiniPeople" indicated that Gary Ezzo never responded to their concerns.

In my early teens I grappled with issues of Scriptural inspiration and inerrancy, and I often flung my probing questions at my pastor father. Never once did he say, "I doubt any of my answers will satisfy you, Rebecca. There are too many differences in our starting points, premises, theological training, years of experience, and Bible knowledge. There is no way we can have meaningful dialogue."²⁷ Instead, he got out his Bible and showed me why he believed what he did. He taught me that his faith, based on God's Word, could withstand the most intense and careful scrutiny. He welcomed my questions because he knew they would guide me to the truth. I have, perhaps somewhat naively, expected the same sort of response from others who would presume to teach within the Body of Christ. That is why I have been so troubled by Mr. Ezzo's responses, both to me and to others who have attempted dialogue with him.

I cannot help but conclude that the Ezzos are incapable of a logical, biblical defense of his parenting philosophy (in part because I believe that no such defense exists). Perhaps that is what causes both the tone of his responses and their lack of true substance: his teaching cannot withstand scrutiny. My father won both my intellect and my heart with his life, ministry, and teaching. Mr. Ezzo has responded in a manner that other readers of his letters and online posts have described as "rude" and "arrogant".

Since writing my original article and critique, I have become aware of yet another concern. I have reason to question the accuracy of the research that has gone into formulating the basis for the Ezzo Method. There are several reasons for this. The

²⁷ direct quote (with punctuation and grammar corrected) from a letter dated April 27, 1993 written by Gary Ezzo to me.

third edition of "Preparation for Parenting" contained an alarming number of serious errors in the documentation and footnotes. (Just two examples: the citation in support of the claim that Mary used "parent-controlled feeding" with Jesus had nothing to do with infant feeding; at least one of the other articles cited did not even exist.) The fourth edition "fixed" this problem by removing most of the offending and erroneous citations but, in most cases, allowed the statements to stand without any documentation.

The Ezzos also have either misunderstood or misrepresented what Dr. Sears terms "attachment parenting" in referring to it as a "happiness doctrine" and making reference to a supposed teaching (without identifying the source) of "Don't think; just react." For example, in the *Growing Families Journal* of Fall 1994, they write, "The 'happiness doctrine' is the crux of the attachment-parenting theory, advocated by such groups as La Leche International. Monitoring feelings rather than behavior is a preoccupation. Attachment mothers are told to exalt the child to the center of the family universe and try to avoid or remove all conflict, anxiety and discomfort from the child's life in order to protect him from any future debilitating psychosis that is sure to occur if you do not get with the program." I have not been able to find anything remotely resembling this in any of the attachment parenting literature, nor have I ever heard an attachment parenting advocate teach anything of this nature.²⁸

GFI's rebuttal to my original article contained a number of errors, misquotes, etc. They wrongly attributed statements to me that had been made by others. (My article used the proper convention, with footnoting, to differentiate my own statements from those I was quoting. Yet, whoever wrote the rebuttal seemed unable to make this distinction.) In one case, they changed one of my statements from "In my interpretation and study of the Bible, I have adopted a methodology similar to that espoused by Charles Hodge..." to "In my interpretation and study of the Bible I have adopted a methodology similar to that **exposed** by Charles Hodge..." [emphasis mine] Either this was an extremely careless error, or it was a deliberate attempt to misrepresent me and cast aspersions on my methodology of Biblical interpretation, implying that Charles Hodge felt the need to expose it. In any case, I no longer have any confidence in the accuracy of the materials produced by GFI.

Address any comments, concerns, or opinions regarding this article to rprewett@fix.net

More information is available on the Internet at <http://www.fix.net/~rprewett/fam.html>

²⁸If Mr. Ezzo's description of attachment parenting is accurate, I am most curious about one thing. Which of their eight children do the Sears "exalt to the center of the family universe" and how do they manage to do so?