

*Third-Annual Orange County Religious Community Response to Child Abuse  
Prevention and Intervention*

**MAY 14, 1996**

**RELIGIOUS PARENTING PROGRAMS:  
THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION**

presented by the  
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION COUNCIL OF ORANGE COUNTY  
PARENTING PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE  
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

During the past few years, the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Orange County has received several calls from physicians and nurses wanting clarification on specific parenting practices in relationship to child abuse. Their concerns were related to infants seen with dehydration, slow growth and development, as well as "failure to thrive syndrome". The parents of these babies were following a program called "Growing Kids God's Way". The Child Abuse Prevention Council of Orange County, CAPCOC, had only sketchy, second hand information about this program. In order to provide a fact-based evaluation, a committee with a broad range of expertise and religious affiliations was formed. Their task was to thoroughly review the written, video, and audiocassettes of individual programs available through "Growing Families International". The committee also reviewed other religious parenting programs. The following report identifies six positive aspects/criteria that the CAPCOC endorses for healthy child development and how the reviewed religious parenting programs meet those criteria. Included also in this report are individual evaluations of each program that have been approved by this committee.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Chatsworth, California 91311  
Authors: Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo

- **Birth by Design:** a Biblical perspective on the issues of childbearing. Sharon Auguston, R.N., Diane Dirks, C.N.M., Anne Marie Ezzo, R.N., Carol Gurrola, R.N., Pam Harer, R.N., Kathy Hoefke, R.N., Sharon Nelson, M.D.
- **Growing Kids God's Way:** ethics for parenting
- **Preparation for Parenting:** bringing God's order to your baby's day and restful sleep to your baby's night. A study in the philosophy, physiology, and practice of nurturing a newborn.
- **Preparation for the Toddler Years:** from 5 to 15 months, the next step in the practical development of your child's moral, academic & physical health.
- **Reflections of Moral Innocence:** a parents guide to purity with a purpose

### ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

- **Christian Parenting.** Dr. William Sears, Little Brown, NY, NY
- **Family First.** Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- **Parenting With Purpose: six proven steps to better families.** Roger Sonnenberg, Family Films, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
- **Positive Parenting.** Active Parenting, Atlanta, Georgia
- **Why Wait?: what you need to know about the teen crisis.** Josh McDowell & Dick Day, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., San Bernardino, CA 92402
- **Holy Prepared: Childbirth Class Student Manual.** Ellise Adams, R.N., B.S.N., I.C.C.E., and Joanna B. Caldwell, M.S.N., R.N., C.S., Reproductive Program Specialists, Inc., Huntsville, Alabama

## GROWING FAMILIES INTERNATIONAL PRESS

### GROWING KIDS GOD'S WAY

This report will address the six areas of evaluation for the audio tape series of Growing Kids God's Way—Ethics for Parenting. Other comments or concerns will be addressed in the concluding remarks.

**PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM:** This is part of a very comprehensive program that includes: books, audio tapes, videotapes and pamphlets. The material is targeted for parents of children from birth to adulthood. Please refer to the Growing Kids God's Way brochure for a complete listing of available materials.

**BUILDS CHILD'S SELF RESPECT/ESTEEM:** A main tenet of this program is to move away from what they describe as "Satan's tool to destroy the family", Child Centered Parenting (CCP). Trying to do so, it appears that they have let the pendulum swing to the opposite direction of "Parent Centered Parenting". There is a lot of criticism for CCP, without any proof of its harm. This is a common method used by the Ezzos—criticize without citing evidence.

Also, growing kids God's way, as defined by the Ezzos, is first done by going after the heart of the parents and then to seize the heart of the child. Their belief is that moral health is more important than psychological health. Since their moral health is based on a model of order and control, it does not address self respect as a primary concern. The assumption is that if children are raised by this method, they will have self respect as a byproduct. However, there is no evidence to support this.

In all fairness, there is a whole session on the language of love that addresses the need to say "I love you" to children through a variety of ways. The Ezzos encourage parents to be very loving in all they do for their children, including the controversial issue of chastisement. All is directed to the end of seizing the heart of the child for God.

**FOSTERS PARENTAL DISCERNMENT:** In the very first tape, the Ezzos sell their parenting philosophy through the use of guilt. Ultimately, they ask for a "discipleship" relationship with parents. In doing so, parents are asked to agree with all the Ezzos have to say. "God calls you to first time obedience 100% of the time, so He calls you to 100% for your children." And 100% would be to do it the Ezzos' way. Personally, this is a little too arrogant for me. However, if you are willing to follow their program 100%, there is some room for parental discernment within those parameters. This is mentioned occasionally throughout the tapes.

**CONSIDERS INDIVIDUAL TEMPERAMENTS:** Quite simply, this program does not consider the individual temperaments of children. There is what the Ezzos call a "biblical standard" that all children are called to follow, despite their temperament. The Ezzos emphasize character development as a means to the end of bringing children to "the standard". Temperament (which they see as inborn) and personality (which is learned) are not about moral character development.

As an example, in tape eight, the issue of a child's shyness is addressed. The Ezzos say that "shyness is not an excuse for disrespect." If a child does not respond to an adult's inquiry or comment, then the parents are instructed to apologize to the adult and state, that as parents, they are working on it. Again, the goal is to bring the child to "the standard". A child's temperament or mood should not be an obstacle to calling them to "the standard".

**DEVELOPMENTALLY & AGE APPROPRIATE:** The Ezzos do not cite any references that would support this series as developmentally and age appropriate. Please refer to other committee members' evaluation of this aspect of the Ezzos' program.

**BALANCE OF LOVING GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE:** Chastisement was an element of this program that prompted this committee to review it. The Ezzos state that "if you really love your child, you will chastise him." "Biblical chastisement" is seen as a better method than "cultural spanking". For the Ezzos, "biblical chastisement" is superior because: it is done for the child, and not to the child; it is not a reaction to frustration; it is an act of love, and not a last resort; it looks to change the heart of the child, not their outward behavior; it is about amending, not punishing; if it is done right a parent could be done with it by age five (with exceptions), and it clears a guilty conscience.

Although they make a caution about child abuse, I was uncomfortable with this element of the program. In fact, the audience was eerily quiet during this part of the tape series, as opposed to the rest of the general presentation. The specific directions about what type of instrument to use and where to use it, to avoid bruising but "to inflict enough pain to change the heart of the child" was unsettling.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS:** The Ezzos have put together a comprehensive parenting series. There is some good information in this series on a variety of topics. And there is some information that is questionable. Overall, I could not recommend it. This program is not about growing kids God's way—it is about growing kids the Ezzos' way as they interpret it for God. A more honest approach would be to say as much, and not to say it is God's way. Unfortunately, too much has been done in human history as "God's way", that I can't imagine God would be willing to claim as His/Her handiwork.

## GROWING KIDS GOD'S WAY: Theological Review

PREFACE: The original report on the "Growing Kids God's Way" program was prepared jointly by Bill Peterson and myself for the November 30, 1995 meeting of the Program Review Committee. In response to the committee's request that day, I have expanded the report and included some biblical texts but have not had opportunity to consult with Bill Peterson. Therefore, I will write in the first person, though much of the credit goes to Bill.

The basis for the study is Preparation for Parenting: Bringing God's Order to Your Baby's Day and Restful Sleep to Your Baby's Night, Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo's material for training parents of babies birth to 8 months of age. The Ezzos also have a training program for parents of babies five to fifteen months of age, Preparation for the Toddler Years, and Growing Kids God's Way for parents of fifteen month olds to preteens.

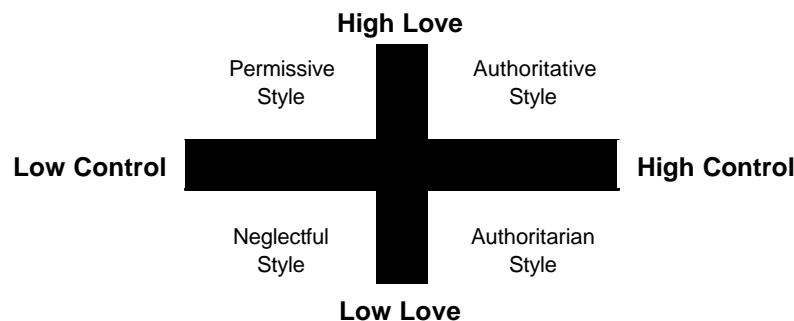
At the onset, I am uncomfortable with the Ezzos approach to this topic for two primary reasons. I feel they have a point to make and choose numerous "proof texts" from Scripture to make their point, not the broader teaching of Scripture. Secondly, I sense they claim to have a corner on the truth, making anyone with a differing perspective suspect. I have numerous questions about the Ezzos' stand on psychological and medical issues, but will refrain from commenting on them in order to restrict this report to theological issues that may be in question.

### THEOLOGICAL ISSUES TO BE CHALLENGED OR EXPANDED

(The sentences and phrases in bold print are direct quotes made in Preparation for Parenting, Fifth Edition, copyright 1995. In this paper, I will not quote the Scriptures used by the Ezzos since they can be found in the text of their book. I will quote Scriptures that support the issues or concepts that I will introduce.)

1. **"God is a God of order, not confusion"** (p. 11) I have no problem with that assertion. The difficulty is that the Ezzos primary focus related to parenting is the issue of establishing control and scheduling which they claim leads to stability and content children. It is my observation that they do not develop scriptures that refer to God being a God of love and compassion.

My feeling is that God's model for parenting demonstrates a balance of control and love. Different styles of parenting emerge based on the amount of love and control felt by children as is illustrated by Dr. Reuben Hill's work on parenting styles (University of Minnesota). Refer to the chart that follows.



Preparation for Parenting seems to lean toward an unhealthy authoritarian style of parenting. Scripture certainly teaches that God has rules, structure and guidelines. But God's control in parenting is balanced by his love affirmation and grace, which is an authoritative style. One of God's primary attributes is love. I John 4:8-1 1, "...God is Love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent his one and only Son ... This is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us ... since God loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Dr. Hill's findings indicate that parents who focus on the control of their children and are short on demonstrated love (the authoritarian style of parenting) tend to produce children with poor self-esteem who reject their parents' values. In fact, the children of authoritarian parents were most likely to rebel against

their parents, to choose a counter-culture lifestyle and have difficulty with other authority figures (i.e., teachers, bosses and policemen).

A strong biblical directive to fathers is found in Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." My opinion is that an authoritarian style of parenting is exasperating to children, resulting in poor self esteem and in the rejection of parents and their values. My observation is that compliant children will conform to this style until out from under it—and then rebel. Strong willed children will fight authoritarianism while still in the home.

It is God's desire that fathers care tenderly and compassionately for their children. I deduce this from Malachi 4:6, "He (the prophet to be sent) will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers..."

I do need to give the Ezzos credit for their statement, **"...parents are to guide, nurture and discipline their children"** (p. 19). However, it is disturbing to read in the training materials that parents are to override their feelings when a baby cries in order to follow the Parent Directed Feeding routine (p. 141).

2. **"Child rearing is a responsibility given by God to parents"** (p. 19). No problem here. That is an appropriate interpretation of Scripture. However, when statements are made such as **"authority is the God-given right to rule"** (p. 31) I cringe a bit. The context of the material guides parents toward an authoritarian style of leadership. The manner in which one rules is not tempered with scriptural teaching that godly leadership is best done by serving those you lead. Jesus taught his disciples to lead by saying, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve..." Matthew 20:25-28. The primary rule for leadership is the rule of service, not control.

The Apostle Paul reminded the people of Thessalonica how he personally modeled godly leadership by writing, "But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children." "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God." I Thessalonians 2:7&1 1.

3. **"Children enter the world in a depraved state."** (p. 24) Bill and Doug differ on this one. One side would argue that man is born with a sinful nature that if left unaddressed by parents would lead to inappropriate self-centeredness and self-gratification without regard to morals or consideration of others. The other may argue that a child is essentially innocent by nature. Any inappropriate behavior is learned or developed over time as a child seeks to meet his needs in a self-centered or an immoral manner. This perspective would argue that young children are created self-centered as a way of surviving. As children grow older, self-centeredness can give way to love for others and service to humankind. This is a process over time, not achieved in infancy.
4. **"Two related evils threaten successful parenting and lead to the demise of the family. The first is downplaying the significance of the husband-wife relationship. The second is falling into the entrapment of child-centered parenting"** (p. 27). I agree that Scripture teaches the significance of the husband wife relationship in a home. I disagree that couples who focus their attention on parenting lose the significance and strength of their relationship. By making these assertions, I think the Ezzos fail to distinguish between child-centered parenting and a child-centered marriage (see Summary on p. 36 of Preparation for Parenting). In response to their statements, I think the team work required for good parenting can strengthen a marriage. The Ezzos build a strong case for the significance of the marriage relationship (and I agree). They do not, however, build a biblical case for the erosion of a marriage by a parenting style. Neglect of the marriage relationship for whatever reason will weaken it.

At the risk of misinterpreting the Ezzos intent regarding child-centered parenting, Scriptures do teach child-centered (child focused) parenting. Proverbs 22:6 teaches, "Train a child in the way he should go, and

when he is old he will not turn from it.” The words “way he should go” literally mean “according to his bent or temperament.” It is the responsibility of each parent to study his/her child, to get to know their way (the child’s unique temperament) and then train them using that understanding. If that’s not child-centered, I don’t know what it is!

5. **“Your choice of feeding philosophy will actually determine your child’s hunger patterns, sleep patterns, and even his basic disposition”** (p. 39). I have a hard time swallowing that line from a biblical perspective. Scripture teaches that how we parent affects our children, but Scripture also teaches that we must parent [by] taking into account the individual temperament of the child. And, every child is unique. (See comments regarding Proverbs 22:6 in previous paragraph).
6. **“Parents must be sober-minded in their parenting—especially when the baby cries”** (p. 141). The point being made is that when a baby cries, the parent must “asses the child’s cry” to see if it is a cry requiring parental intervention before picking up the child. This point is made by listing numerous biblical passages that address the need to be sober-minded. Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo declare that **“reason and assessment, not feelings, are the basis for healthy parenting”** (p. 140).

My opinion is that the Ezzos are over-reacting to parenting styles that teach **“when your baby cries, don’t think, just react”** (p. 151). In their over-reaction, they proof text again, without consideration for the feeling/emotional/intuitive side of parenting taught by Scripture. Without repeating the scriptures listed under the second section above, notice the tenderness, gentleness, caring, encouragement, comfort and urgency involved in parenting.

7. **“When it comes to a method of feeding, the Bible is silent”** (p. 26). This statement from the Ezzos’ text jumped out at me. Why, then, do they write 200+ pages of material promoting the “Parent Directed Feeding” philosophy and call it God’s plan (Growing Kids God’s Way)?
8. **“Do not be a legalistic parent. Legalists create prohibitions by elevating a method over a biblical principle”** (p. 118). This statement is amazing to me in light of what I believe the Ezzos have done themselves. It is surprising to me that they will caution their trainees to avoid legalism when the bulk of their training can be perceived as being legalistic, i.e., elevating a method over a biblical principle. (See section #7 above.)

CONCLUSION: I think the key paragraph in the entire book is:

**“PDF (Parent Directed Feeding) provides that (necessary parental) guidance by establishing a rhythmic structure suited for metabolic stabilization. A newborn needs outward structure until his central nervous system is fully developed. PDF is that outward structure. The principles of PDF work for Ryan (fictional baby used as an illustration for PDF) because they are directed toward the constant factors of his development, not the variables of his temperament. As his mother provides daily interaction with him through predictable feeding patterns, his hunger and sleep/wake cycles stabilize.”**  
(p. 68)

Without judging their motives, it appears that the Preparation for Parenting material reflects the Ezzos’ perspective on infant feeding rather than a theologically accurate or balanced view of parenting. May I quickly add that, in reviewing this book, I found much of the theological material to be sound. In other words, I wouldn’t cast aside the many accurate teachings just because they weren’t balanced or because they were incomplete.

Finally, it is my opinion that a mentally healthy and balanced person can take many of the principles from Preparation for Parenting, incorporate them into a balanced philosophy of parenting, and the principles that fit their situation would serve them well. My fear is for the child of an unbalanced individual who may take the teachings and apply them rigidly or legalistically without a broader framework of wisdom. I feel such a scenario would prove abusive if the child did not respond to the Parent Directed Feeding system.

If I may add a postscript, both Bill and I felt that naming their material "Growing Kids God's Way" is a bit presumptuous. After all, who's going to argue with God?

## **GROWING KIDS GOD'S WAY: Child Abuse Review**

The parenting program was reviewed from the point of view of child abuse risk issues. The foundation for this review is set in the legal definition of child abuse.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE:** In the United States, parents are given much latitude with respect to the use of physical discipline in their homes. The law does not prohibit the use of hands, belts or other instruments in the disciplining of children as long as the child does not suffer bodily injury as result of the parent's action. Although the Ezzos advocate several alternatives to corporal punishment, they include the use of a strip of "firm rubber" (????) "to strike children". When instruments are used to strike children, the risk of causing injury increases significantly. Children naturally struggle to avoid pain and often end up hit in one of many vulnerable parts of their body. Child Abuse Hotlines across the country receive many reports each year of this type of injury.

My second concern about advocating this type of child discipline is the assumption the entire listening audience posses the emotional maturity to administer corporal punishment with appropriate restraint. For a great many parents this is not true. National statistics tell us that 5 children die every day of the year in the U.S. at the hands of their parent or caretaker and 90% of those children killed are under the age of 5. Another 18,000 are permanently disabled and 142,000 are seriously injured. All this damage is inflicted by the children's parents or caretakers.

I would have liked to see the Ezzos offer more warning against the use of corporal punishment for those parents who are struggling with high risk issues in their own lives such as chemical dependency, a childhood abuse history, or poor anger management skills and impulse control.

**EMOTIONAL CLIMATE IN THE HOME:** An overriding theme in the Ezzo material is the need for parents to be solidly in "Control" of their children. My experience in the child abuse field is that tight control (even when experienced in conjunction with love and support) results in on-going power struggles and the possibility of becoming very rebellious teenagers. As children move toward adulthood they gradually desire more and more independence and naturally resist attempts to be controlled.

**SUMMARY:** The parenting program "Growing Kids God's Way" does not advocate a parenting style that fits into the legal guidelines of abusive parenting; however, there is some concern that high risk parents may experience difficulty effectively utilizing the program.



## PREPARATION FOR PARENTING: Development Issues

**PREFACE:** The basis for our study is “Preparation for Parenting” by Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo. This program is designed for parents of children birth to 8 months of age. As a master’s prepared early childhood educator and International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, I have the ability and expertise to evaluate the “Preparation for Parenting” program on basic development issues and specific breast feeding management issues.

**PARENTING PHILOSOPHIES CHALLENGED:** Many well respected philosophies and childrearing practices are dismissed as not in line with the Ezzos’ thinking. Several examples that are given in the video program of “Preparation for Parenting” give inaccurate descriptions of the basis for philosophies such as “child centered parenting”. The developmental stage of the young child which includes egocentrism as being age appropriate throughout early childhood is not considered. The video program includes statements like “child centered parenting creates me-ism ... no concern for others.” As a student of developmental psychology, I would have to disagree with the idea that child centered parenting is dangerous. Meeting the needs of children in the early years has created well adjusted human beings that interact well with others. Setting routine at birth without taking into account the individual needs of the baby may set up conflict and the inability for communication to occur between parent and child.

The first three years of life set the stage for future interactions. Basic issues that the Ezzos address in their program that concern me are as follows:

- **WITHHOLDING FOOD.** The basic needs of food, shelter, and warmth must be provided to a baby so that he/she may develop to the next stage. The method of withholding food until a scheduled time so that the baby will accommodate a routine set by an outside entity is extremely disturbing. The baby is the only one who knows when he/she is hungry. The amount of milk the baby takes at a feeding coupled with the easy digestibility of breast milk means that the baby needs to be in control of the feeding pattern. We also find that babies who are in control of the feeding pattern gain weight better and are generally happier than babies from whom food is withheld.
- **TRUST ISSUES:** By setting a strict schedule we are negating the child’s needs. The specific schedule of how often to breastfeed often assumes that babies have the ability to get enough nutrition during 11 regular business hours”. In other words, by about six weeks of age the baby should not be receiving feedings at night. We set up a situation whereby the baby will not learn that the parent is trustworthy to meet his/her hunger needs at night if we refuse to meet that need. I feel strongly that basic trust is learned during this early period and that children who do not develop trust in their parents will have many problems as they grow.
- **TEMPERAMENT ISSUES:** As briefly mentioned above, this program does not take into account individual differences. I believe that some children would be fine using this approach to parenting. However, there are many other children whose temperament would not allow for the Parent Directed Feeding program.
- **CHILD ADVOCACY ISSUES:** The “Preparation for Parenting” program is written from the perspective of the adult. I feel strongly that parents need to be advocates for their children and understand child development issues. Seeing the world through child’s eyes requires an understanding of basic developmental issues.
- **CONTROL ISSUES:** Authority is a central theme to the program. The following comments from the video program support this idea:

“Gain self-control over their selfish impulses.”

“You’re going to train them.”

“...authority over your children...”

**BONDING ISSUES:** On page 1 80 of “Preparation for Parenting” it is stated that parents should resist the temptation to go to their child. As if meeting your child’s needs is a bad thing. In contrast to these comments one might study the work of Dr. Marshall Klaus, who has done many years of work on bonding and the elements of the mother-baby relationship that make for a well adjusted healthy relationship.

- **PHYSIOLOGIC ISSUES:** The program mentions that at first babies will sleep 7-8 hours per night. By 12 weeks of age they will sleep 10-12 hours per night. Their stomachs are not yet large enough to take in enough nutrition to be able to sleep for such long periods of time. Dr. James McKenna has studied incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and its possible causes. His research indicates that infants who interact during the night with parents are of lower risk for SIDS. The "Preparation for Parenting" recommendations of parental control over the schedule clearly contradicts Dr. McKenna's work.

**CONCLUSION:** In conclusion, it appears that the "Preparation for Parenting" program is not well balanced in its approach to childrearing practices. The program does not allow for the individual differences that make human beings develop in a variety of ways under a variety of time frames. An understanding of children's developmental stages and make-up must be included in any well thought out parenting program. The issues of control and authority seem to override the elements of compassion, child advocacy, and real developmental needs in "Preparation for Parenting".

## PREPARATION FOR PARENTING

This program does have some good components such as the importance of the marital relationship and establishing a routine in your parenting. It also gives numerous suggestions for daily activities and even gives sample schedules for times to feed, bathe, diaper and walk the baby, along with other related activities.

However, we all have seasons in our lives. The parenting of a newborn is one of those seasons and the marital relationship may not be as high a priority in the first few weeks of an infant's life. This is evident in the temporary cessation of the sexual component of the relationship after the birth of a child. Children certainly do better in a situation when there is a strong marriage. However, having a strong marriage with poor parenting skills certainly will not establish a sense of confidence within a child. It does not matter how a child observes the emotional closeness of both parents if the interaction with the child is inappropriate.

A routine can be helpful for both parents and newborns but strict scheduling of infant feeding may not always work and may, in some cases, lead to dehydration and jaundice in the neonate. Strict limits on the intervals or frequency of breast feedings can lead to a diminished milk supply or the infant not being allowed to take in adequate nourishment. The curriculum does give guidelines for assessment of breast milk intake but unfortunately these do not include the number of bowel movements the infant has daily. Without this information one cannot determine adequate nourishment.

Parents should be mindful of the clock AND the hunger cries in their infant. Using both helps foster a healthy feeding regime. The premise that strict scheduled feeding of the infant is "God's way" seems interesting since the scheduling of infant feeding is not mentioned in the Bible. The authors feel that by parents determining the times of feedings and when to pick up a crying baby, this exerts authority over the child and lets him know "who's boss".

The Ezzos state that an infant's metabolism is "stabilized" when the principles of PDF (scheduled feedings) are applied. This statement is not backed up with any research. Many times if infants are irritable and hungry, and are not fed, they go into sympathetic states, divert blood flow, which slows gastric emptying and can create significant problems. Children fed on strict schedules can also be more symptomatic of reflux because you tend to get larger amounts when feeding on a schedule than when you feed according to an infant's hunger cues.

Preparation for Parenting cautions against "demand feeding" which they define as feeding the baby every time it cries. This too, is not optimal because a parent could miss something if they have a pat response to the cry of their child. Cue feeding is more appropriate as it is sensitive to the child's communicating that it is hungry. When a child sucks on its hand or lips or is rooting, it is saying it is hungry. This may take place long before the child ever cries.

This program does not look at a child's individual temperament or his initial physiological component, which is extremely important when evaluating the irritable child. Many times, putting these children on a schedule is a disaster because meeting their physiological needs is so important. This may be reflected in the way the child is held, intervened with, positioned; knowing when to intervene or when to allow the child to be, or learning to recognize the type of cry.

A concern of the committee is that the teachings on letting infants cry might lead parents to become insensitive to their baby's needs. They could miss when the baby is sick or injured if they are used to ignoring the child's cries.

Ignoring an infant's cries could also lead to a lack of trust in the newborn. The fostering of trust is one of the most important factors in child development. According to the works of Brazelton and Ericson, building a sense of trust is accomplished by responding to a child's emotional, physical and psychological needs.

The Ezzos state that you cannot go by instinct, "mother's intuition", or emotions when responding to an infant's cries. They feel animals possess instinct, not humans. Yet the bible says we do have a conscience and intuitively know right and wrong..... Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending the." (Rom 2:15) And 2 Cor 1:12 state, "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves ... in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." This verse provides reassurance that you can parent according to what insight the Lord has given to you and you do not have to rely on the worldly wisdom of man.

The implication of bringing "God's order to your day and restful sleep to your baby's night" can be either guilt inducing or the opposite, and absolve the parent of responsibility. This may show up in a parent being unable to use the inherent knowledge given by God to meet the changing needs of their child because they are using protocols that are inappropriate for that child.

The Ezzos state that if scheduled feedings are implemented, you should expect your baby to sleep seven to eight hours per night by three to eight weeks of age. This also is not research based. These premises are guilt inducing if your child is not sleeping through the night by the prescribed time. They also state that scheduling causes a child's nervous system to mature more quickly. This statement is not backed up with current literature and is not a belief held in current child development theory.

Preparation for Parenting says that the PDF plan fosters security, but security is fostered in meeting a child's needs, not in letting him or her cry for periods of time. The authors attack attachment parenting where parents carry their infants in carriers, share sleep and demand feed. The Ezzos state that attachment parenting fosters insecurity, yet research shows that the opposite is true.

Focus on the Family conducted an evaluation of Preparation for Parenting and stated, "Although the Ezzos' work contains many worthwhile thoughts and suggestions...we believe there is reason to fear that some of their proposals—notably those having to do with controlled feeding schedules for infants—could actually result in child abuse if applied legalistically, inflexibly, and without regard for circumstance and the special needs of children. Its principles should be implemented only in conjunction with generous measures of common sense, intuition, and natural parental affection."

## PREPARATION FOR THE TODDLER YEARS

For more than thirty years I've been teaching Preschool Parent Education at the community college level. Frequently I recommend books or lectures, reminding my students to be eclectic in choosing the philosophy and techniques which are consistent with their knowledge of child development and their own basic feelings of child-rearing. Although my classes are, of course, secular, many of the parents are eager to hear about books by Christian authors. It was, therefore, with interest that I began reading the Ezzos' ideas on parenting.

I do applaud them on two points regarding infancy. One is a bedtime routine. Many parents believe that rocking or nursing an infant to sleep is the appropriate method and then are dismayed when the toddler or preschooler still expects the parent to remain in the room, or even in the bed, until the child is asleep. I heartily agree that putting an awake baby into the crib allows him/her to see the bed as a friendly, familiar place. This establishes good bedtime patterns.

I also agree that the regular use of a playpen for brief times each day benefits both the child and the parent. I meet many mothers who are overwhelmed with all there is to do each day, and never allow themselves this time to be without their children.

Other parts of the program, however, I find disturbing. The recommended slapping of the hands of a toddler or even a baby as young as 8 months is a case in point. The Ezzos say if the baby is banging the highchair tray, messing the food or hair or committing similar offenses, one is to first give a (much-too-wordy) reprimand. If the command isn't obeyed, a swat on the hand is next. The final step is to isolate if deemed necessary. This is also their method of dealing with the many little temptations-to-touch during the infant/toddler day.

It is true that the above will work, but at what cost? We know from Piaget that this age learns through sensory-motor experiences. Tactile experiences are particularly important. How willing will this child be to learn through touch with this history of hand slapping?

Again—in the high chair: The Ezzos suggest teaching sign language to the 8 - 12 month old. I admit I have no idea how well this works. It might even be fun. My concern is that if the child doesn't sign "Please more meat", "Please get down", etc., the directions are "...use natural consequences to reinforce the correct response. If he desires more food, do not give him any until he signs. If he desires to get down, keep him in his chair. If you find yourself getting into a power struggle, isolate the child rather than giving him the opportunity to challenge you directly." YIKES!!! For how long do you keep this baby in the chair or isolated??

I am with approximately seventy-five children (14 months to 5 years) a week. It still amazes me how predictable most behavior is according to age. The two year old is usually affectionate and curious, the two and a half, inflexible and demanding. Following the calm, eager-to-please 3's, come the whining "I can't" three and-a-half's. And on it goes.

I don't believe God created these natural changes in children for us to fight them all the way. I find parents are greatly relieved to realize how "normal" certain behaviors are, and they are grateful to learn appropriate techniques to help the child move on to the next stage without feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

Two-and-a-half tends to be a peak age of disequilibrium. It's often a time of confusion, frustration and wanting to gain autonomy. For many children it is a time of temper tantrums. The Ezzos write: "A tantrum needs an audience to be successful. During a toddler's tantrum, never spank him, talk to him or compromise with a bribe..." Most authorities agree tantrums (and the tendency to throw them) end sooner when they are ignored, so this is good advice, but the Ezzos go on: "Rather, inform him that when he settles down after his temper outburst, he will receive his spanking and do it." They seem to feel discipline is synonymous with punishment or revenge. In this case they advise spanking a child who is now behaving well.

They suggest the only option to spanking is "...manipulating with guilt and/or conditional love..." I contend children learn acceptable behavior more successfully as a result of natural or logical consequences. Setting positive rules, and then promptly following through to see they are followed, is helping children to become self-disciplined.

I feel that the Ezzos have a lack of knowledge regarding the stages of growth when they claim "...sitting, focusing, concentrating. These are moral developmental skills, not stage-acquired activities." Be aware that their first example in reference to this is nine months old. The majority of young children are not physically or neurologically ready to attend in this way on any consistent basis.

As a life-long-church-attending Christian and a long-time member of a Bible Study group, I cannot believe slapping an infant's hand or using a spanking tube on a toddler's bottom will bring a love of God in his heart. Overall, I would not recommend this program; in fact, I would discourage parents from becoming involved in it.

## **REFLECTIONS OF MORAL INNOCENCE—A PARENTS GUIDE TO PURITY WITH PURPOSE**

**PREFACE:** This review is taken from both the 1992 and new revised 1995 written and audio materials. To start we want to say that we have reviewed all of the Ezzo, programs listed in this packet and this is the material that presents the greatest concern for children. The principles which underpin the teaching in "Reflections of Moral Innocence" stem from the premise asserted in "Growing Kids God's Way", that children enter the world in a depraved state rather than having a sin nature that if left unaddressed by parents would lead to inappropriate behavior. Also as in "Growing Kids God's Way", the Ezzos state that God's Word is not specific on the topic of providing sex education for our children but, if the recommendations given by the Ezzos are not followed, frightening things will happen to parent and child because they [the Ezzos] speak from a biblical perspective.

Of concern is the basic premise presented throughout the program that knowledge of sexual anatomy as well as the anatomical function of the sex organs takes away childhood innocence, and [the implication] that this knowledge is evil and corrupting in itself. [The] Ezzos believe that children have perverse imaginations and can be corrupted by knowing correct anatomical names and functions of the genitals, even when taught morally by parents, with the focus on respect and responsibility. Most experts direct parents to teach children the truth while putting the focus on moral and responsible behavior. Giving age appropriate facts to children in a moral way will promote a healthy attitude; avoiding the subject will encourage children to seek answers to their questions from outside the home. In actuality, truth propagates truth; and deceit propagates deceit.

The Ezzos belief 'that children should not be educated about human sexuality until they marry is also of concern from the point of view of empowering children to protect themselves from sexual abuse or exploitation. The Ezzo philosophy of deflecting children off the subject as much as possible will greatly minimize the chance that children will go to their parent if they become victims of sexual abuse. Children will most likely interpret a parents' avoidance of a subject as a message that the subject is taboo. It is a well established fact that most child sexual abuse is perpetrated by a child's parent, relative or other adult known to the family. The Justice Department recently came out with the results of the largest survey ever conducted of state prison inmates. What they found was that children are more likely than adults to be sexually victimized and that child molesting remains a crime most often perpetrated by relative and acquaintances rather than strangers. Three out of four child molesters committed their crimes either in their own home or the child's home. Some studies have found that 1 in every 3-4 female children are molested by an adult before they reach the age of 18 and 1 in 6-7 children. This is a national crisis—and the best protection for children is to grow up in a home where their parents are very comfortable with and approachable about the subject of sexuality.

The Ezzo teaching is for children to associate only with those who are "like minded" and a part of the same moral community", and those who are not, "don't know God". Our concern is that this promotes spiritual elitism as well as secrecy and separateness. A child needs to learn how to survive in the world outside his/her home. It is quite naive to think that it is possible to shield a child from any contact with anyone who does not believe as a child's parent does. There is no balance taught on how to be "in the world and not of it".

In summary, "The Reflections of Moral Innocence" has little to say about the healthy biological aspects of human sexuality; their approach is shrouded in secrecy and avoidance. It is hard to conceive of how these principles could produce an adult with a full understanding of human sexuality.

## BIRTH BY DESIGN

This review is taken from the book; there are no audio or video tapes for this program. Most of the material in this book is beneficial to expectant parents and would be a helpful addition to medical care and prepared childbirth education classes, if it were presented as “Personal Opinion” rather than dogmatic fact. The history of childbirth section is accurate and interesting, although it teaches that “Childbirth practices change through the years because of man’s depravity”. However, there are a few passages that cause concern.

1. The focus on the husband and wife relationship, shows some imbalance. The teaching is: “Foundational [is] that the husband/wife relationship is the priority in the family”, “is the greatest influence on children”, “The quality of the parent/child relationship depends on it”, “All other relationships depend on it”, “Viability of the family depends on it”, “If it is not [the priority], it can be devastating to the child”, “Causes Dad to have postpartum depression” (?)

**Comment:** It is undeniable that the husband and wife relationship is an important and pivotal part of a home, that affects everything else. The problem here is balance. This teaching could easily be interpreted to make the husband/wife relationship a priority to the exclusion of the children. Particularly interesting is a tally kept of the times a few issues were mentioned throughout the book:

- A. Marriage a priority above all—22 times
- B. Love/nurture of children—6 times
- C. Threats of danger if marriage is not the priority—8 times

If this were a book on marital relationships this tally would make sense, but [it] is a book on prepared childbirth.

2. Tools for working with the process of labor include: a list of scripture verses, other “Coaching” techniques and comfort measures. From the text: “Perception of using a focal point, meditation, visualization can only be ‘New Age’ and pursuing ‘God like powers’”, and “emotions have been inflated and made too much of the birth experience and caused increased intervention”.

**Comment:** The use of scripture verses listed could be very beneficial to any laboring woman. [As for] the warning issued regarding the use of a focal point, meditation and visualization, [these] are widely accepted by most Christian experts and expectant parents, as positive, helpful and within the standards of biblical teaching. They are tools that can be used in a positive way and for God’s glory or could be used with hypnotism and mysticism. This choice is not offered by the authors.

3. The infertility section brings up some interesting ethical and theological questions regarding artificial means of conception, pregnancy and birth. When addressing unfulfilled desires to have children, the theme or focus is on how it lessens a person’s spiritual life but resolution brings growth. Adoption is presented in a clear and concise way. Conception control addresses difficult ethical questions and is presented in [an] easy to understand graph.

**Comment:** When parents want a baby, even the Bible recognizes the anguish of those unfulfilled desires. Proverbs 30:15 & 16 says: “There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, it is enough: the grave, and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that say not, it is enough.” The Bible also tells us to “Weep with those who weep and to mourn with those who mourn.” Including consideration of these passages along with resolution seems to be a more balanced approach.

4. Postpartum depression (they also call [it] “Postpartum emotional instability”) causes listed are marital conflicts or infidelity. Solutions are addressed in a considerate, practical, helpful way. Regarding postpartum psychosis the authors write “choosing to bring one’s feelings and responses to stress under control takes personal discipline. It is an act of will” and “she will find answers when she learns and

applies God's Word, seeks support of mature believers and deepens her commitment and desire to trust the Lord.”

**Comment:** There is a great difference between postpartum depression and psychosis. Postpartum psychosis is defined as, and has symptoms of: inability to sleep, making irrational statements, delusions and bizarre hallucinations, incoherence, hearing voices and having violent or suicidal thoughts or actions. The title “Psychosis” necessitates the involvement of medical professionals. All the well meaning support and counsel a person receives will not correct a chemical imbalance. It can and has allowed symptoms to worsen and contributed to great danger to the mother and baby. There are many documented cases around the world of new mothers suffering with postpartum [psychosis] who have not received medical care and killed themselves and/or their baby. This teaching is not only unwise, but clearly very dangerous.

**SUMMARY:** With the exceptions listed in this report, this book has valuable information and addresses ethical questions rarely discussed. The focus always goes back to putting the husband/wife relationship first, to the point of excluding, rather than blending, the relationship with the children and focusing on the family. It is not complete enough to use alone, but could be used in addition to childbirth preparation classes. Due to the concerns listed in this report, we would stop short of recommending this book.

## ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

PROGRAM TITLE	PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM	BUILDS CHILD'S SELF RESPECT/ESTEEM	FOSTERS PARENTAL DISCERNMENT	CONSIDERS INDIVIDUAL TEMPERAMENT	DEVELOPMENTAL & AGE APPROPRIATE	BALANCE OF LOVING GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE
ACTIVE PARENTING	YES	YES	YES	X	YES	YES
CHRISTIAN PARENTING & CHILD CARE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
FAMILY FIRST	NO	YES	Somewhat	X	X	YES
HOLY PREPARED	X	X	YES	X	YES	X
PARENTING WITH PURPOSE	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
POSITIVE PARENTING	YES	YES	YES	X	YES	YES
WHY WAIT?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

YES = meets criteria  
 NO = contradicts criteria  
 X = does not address



## GROWING FAMILIES INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

PROGRAM TITLE	PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM	BUILDS CHILD'S SELF RESPECT/ESTEEM	FOSTERS PARENTAL DISCERNMENT	CONSIDERS INDIVIDUAL TEMPERAMENT	DEVELOPMENTAL & AGE APPROPRIATE	BALANCE OF LOVING GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE
GROWING KIDS GOD'S WAY	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
GKGW-THEOLOGICAL	YES	limited	NO	NO	NO	NO
GKGW-DEVELOPMENTAL/CHILD ABUSE	YES/ YES	NO/ limited	NO/NO	NO/NO	NO/YES	NO/NO
PREP FOR PARENTING	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
PREP FOR TODDLER YEARS	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
REFLECTIONS OF MORAL INNOCENCE	YES	NO	NO	X	NO	X
BIRTH BY DESIGN	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	X

YES = meets criteria  
 NO = contradicts criteria  
 X = does not address