

BCC Policy: Elder Concerns about GFI (Growing Families International)

Approved September 2003

Discernment in our Christian lives is necessary in every area, including in our parenting. We believe there is an endless variety of parenting styles, and the same amount of parenting advice available today. Just ask anyone what they think about how best to raise children and most people are very quick to give you their ideas. As with all issues in our Christian walk, we encourage you to pray for wisdom in your parenting decisions, and to become familiar with what the Lord has to say to parents.

A couple of years ago, the BCC elders considered the teaching and practices of Growing Families International (GFI) and its founder and leader Gary Ezzo. At that time, it was prayerfully decided that we could not endorse the GFI parenting materials as a church. This does not mean we believed that everything GFI taught or practiced was wrong, but that there were (and still are) enough concerns to keep us from using the material as a church or from encouraging people at BCC to use it. Our primary concerns remain: the way in which Scripture is misinterpreted in the materials, the use of biblical proof-texting to support certain parenting methods, undocumented claims about child rearing and baby development, and the strong language in the materials that attempts to make people believe it is the ONLY way (and God's way) to raise children.

BCC joins a long list of Christian leaders and organizations that have publicly expressed concerns with GFI: Focus on the Family, Dr. John MacArthur, *The Christian Research Institute*, etc. (If you would like a more extensive list, please see Pastor Kevin.) We find it interesting that no major parenting program or expert -- Christian or secular -- has endorsed GFI or Gary Ezzo. Instead, a number of national Christian leaders have spoken against this program, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a statement of concern regarding some of GFI's teachings. If you would like to read more about concerns with GFI, the Tulsa Kids magazine published a series of excellent articles that will help you understand the issues better.¹ Other web sites offering information are: www.ezzo.info or Christianity Today (an interview with Gary Ezzo², and an article by Kathleen Turner titled "Unprepared for Parenting"³).

No human author or program has the corner on child-rearing. Instead, we believe that God has communicated very important and instructive principles in His Word that must be prayerfully and contextually applied. Having said that, we also believe that the Lord has given insight to human authors and speakers on the subject of parenting that are instructional for raising children effectively. We have not read all of the available resources, but listed below are some of the parenting books that we would recommend:

Successful Christian Parenting, by John MacArthur

Help! I'm a Parent, by Bruce Narramore

The Complete Book of Baby and Child Care, by Focus on the Family

Becoming the Parent God Wants You to Be, by Dr. Kevin Leman

Shepherding a Child's Heart, by Tedd Tripp

Raising Great Kids: Parenting with Grace and Truth, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

The House That God Builds, by Skip Heitzig

Parent Project: Tools for Godly Parenting, by Dr. William and Martha Sears

Our purpose as elders is not to dictate but to direct, hopefully by the Holy Spirit and God's Word. It is our desire that we -- individually and corporately -- submit to Jesus Christ in such a way that He is

¹ <http://www.tulsakids.com/july-1.html>

² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/143/54.0.html>

³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/013/6.70.html>

able to live His Life in and through all areas of our personal and corporate lives. If you have questions about our current position on GFI, please share them with one of us. May the Lord Jesus Himself direct our hearts, our minds and our lives to live in submission to His will for His glory!