

Homeschooling: It's the Heart that Counts

Michael & Susan Bradrick

Homeschoolers probably all agree that traditional academic subjects—at least the basics—must be mastered during a child's educational training. These are requisites for living a responsible adult life. No question about it. However, it is easy for us as parents to forget that there are more important things to teach our children without which no academic, practical, artistic, or athletic skills will be ultimately worthwhile.

Just recall the recent news stories of prominent, skilled, successful businessmen and sportsmen who have “passed the test” in many areas but failed in the most important ones. Several have lost their careers, reputations, fame—and in some cases, freedom (behind prison bars) and even their lives. What was missing? Something that academic excellence, business savvy, or sports prowess cannot provide! These individuals did not have hearts that were faithful to the Lord and His Word. And in spite of success, they failed.

But Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33, *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* This doesn't mean we'll be rich and successful if we seek Him first. But it does mean that whether we are or not, if we seek Him first, He will provide all we need and grace us with spiritual blessings beyond what mere human eyes can see. This is entirely too easy to forget, however, when each new day comes with its demands & interruptions and the academics, music, housekeeping, and other activities take center stage. How can we seek Him first all day long? We suggest, after years of study in the scriptures and applying them to homeschooling our large, now-grown family, that we keep in the forefront of our minds a strategically designed chart. This chart looks like a pie divided into dozens of wedges—with more wedge divisions to be added as necessary. Into each wedge goes something that we parents are responsible for teaching our children:

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| 1. Bible Study & Memory Work | 7. Cultural Skills (Art, Music, Etc.) |
| 2. Interpersonal Relations | 8. Personal Hygiene & Nutrition |
| 3. Child Care Skills | 9. Organizational Skills |
| 4. Practical Household Skills (<i>for Boys & Girls!</i>) | 10. Bookkeeping & Financial Management |
| 5. Home & Yard Care Skills | 11. Vocational Skills |
| 6. Basic Academic Skills | 12. Recreational Skills |

. . . and the list goes on.

Now in the center of this circle is a smaller—but most crucial—circle, like a target's bull's eye. The contents of this circle should continually emanate out into every wedge, affecting everything that takes place in it. *This center circle represents twenty-four hour, 365 days-a-year discipleship of each child's heart for Christ through every action, activity, subject, skill ... that is learned and practiced in our family.* It means that in all that happens each day, helping our children trust the Creator God of the universe and to guard and guide their hearts by His infallible Word is the very most important thing we can do. And without this 24/7 emphasis &

accountability, we are setting our children up for failure—no matter how “successful” they are.

How can we disciple the “heart”? Of course, we can’t *make* our children trust the Lord and bring them into His Kingdom. But we can faithfully prepare the soil of their hearts for God’s work in their lives. We can faithfully teach our children God’s Word and diligently help them apply it practically “**when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.**” This means guiding and guarding their hearts by God’s precepts and principles through bed-making, science experiments, dishes washing, fun & games, reading aloud, spelling lessons, grocery shopping, giggling together, the flat tire on the way to an important event, math assignments, arguments, history research, selfishness, and everything else. And taking full responsibility for homeschooling your children provides the very best opportunity possible for doing so.

So parents, commit yourselves to live out—by God’s grace—Deuteronomy 6 and II Timothy 3:14-17 and the rest of scripture . . . all day, every day. Don’t give up, give in to mediocrity, give over the responsibility of discipling your children to others, or give up the freedom to choose distinctively Bible-based, discipleship-oriented training & curricula for your children by being lured into publicly funded programs. Lovingly, sacrificially, perseveringly, diligently. . . disciple your children’s hearts! And trust the Lord to work His work on that foundation. Parents, it’s the heart that counts.

Michael and Susan Bradrick have been married since 1967 and are the grateful parents of nine children whom they have homeschooled since 1981. Four of their children are married and have blessed the Bradricks with twenty beautiful grandchildren. Their single children, age 17 and up, are primarily home-based and are involved in many entrepreneurial ventures and personal ministries in the church and community. As a family, they delight in working and serving together through hospitality, their family ministry, Michael’s woodworking business, and their Western Washington direct-market farm. In 1985, the Bradricks established *Family Discipleship Ministries* to encourage God-honoring Christian family living. In 1991, they published their Christ-centered, multi-level, English and writing curriculum entitled *Understanding Writing*. They also help lead *Christian Heritage Home Educators of Washington*, a Christian state homeschool organization which they co-founded in 2005.