

MORNING
TIME
SNAPSHOTS

MYSTIE'S MORNING TIME

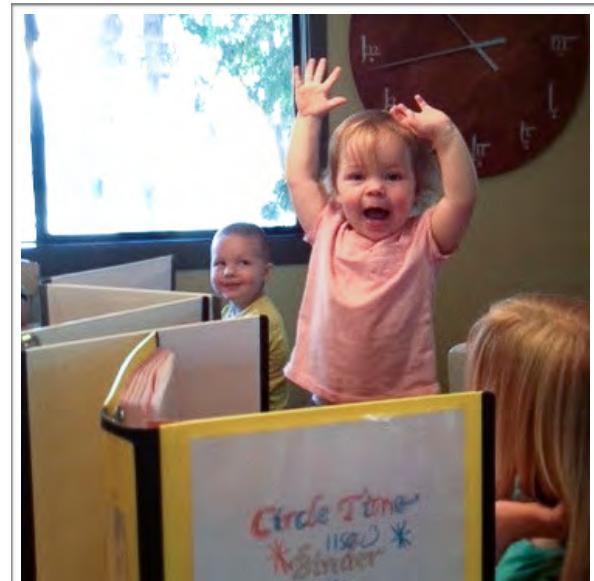
"IT HAS MOST CERTAINLY BEEN THE BEST PART, THE
MOST FRUITFUL PART, OF OUR HOMESCHOOL; WHEN
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POINTS TO. WE BOTH KNOW IT IS WHERE THE VALUE IS
HIGHEST IN OUR DAYS."

How many kids do you have and what are their ages?

My husband and I have five kids: a boy who is 12, a boy who is 10, a girl who is 7, a boy who is 5, and a girl who is 2. Two- and three-year-olds definitely present a challenge to homeschooling in general and Morning Time in particular, but we muddle on through anyway.

How long have you been doing Morning Time?

We've been doing Morning Time since the beginning of our homeschool journey seven years ago when my oldest was 5. We just began our eighth year of Morning Time! I read Cindy Rollin's blog faithfully since the time I found it when my oldest was three or four, and her posts about Morning Time resonated with me. So even when the weeks and even months have been difficult, I've stuck to it on faith that Cindy was right and I would regret giving up.



Now I don't take it on faith. It has most certainly been the best part, the most fruitful part, of our homeschool; when my husband tells others about our homeschool, it is our Morning Time that he points to. We both know it is where the value is highest in our days.

What do you call your Morning Time?

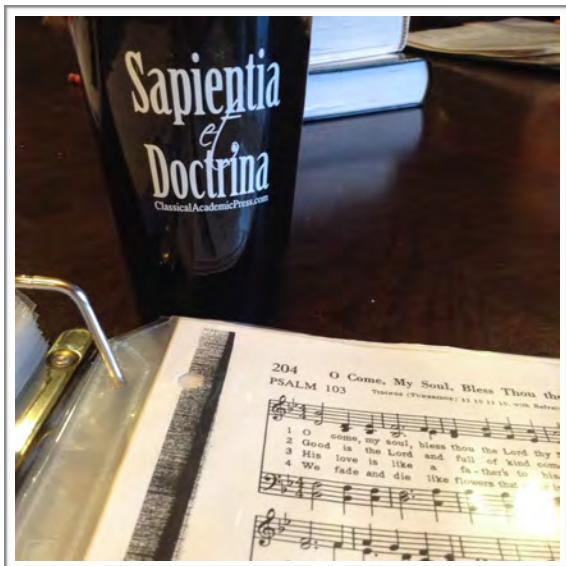
When we began, I called it Circle Time. It's been Circle Time for seven years, even though I always despised the name because it sounded so preschooly. I was brave enough this year to give our Morning Time a grown up, classical name. We're

calling it Convocation this year and I love it because in Latin it is *con* (together) and *vocare* (to speak) and in English it refers to calling people together for an assembly.

Typically how long does your Morning Time take on an average day?

Our Morning Time is usually between 40-50 minutes long, depending on how squirrely the toddler is and how slow the new reader is and how well everyone is tracking. On our schedule I block an hour off for it, though, because we're all less stressed or hurried when we have margin built into the plan.

What is your favorite Morning Time subject or activity?



My favorite, can't-be-missed part of Morning Time is singing hymns together. Even though we can't keep a tune and we sound horrible, there is something about singing together that melts bad moods and resistance and knits us together like nothing else. It is really hard to hold on to a bad attitude and sing at the same time. And, it's also hard to hold out and refuse to sing on a five or six verse hymn — even if

some didn't want to begin, they're with us by the end.

After I noticed how strongly singing affected our moods and our unity, I changed our routine to always begin and end with a hymn. Then, if (when) people come to the table grumpy (and sometimes that person is me), they have a chance and a help to get on board and then at the end we leave the table with that unity as the last

taste left in our mouths. It is a much better mindset with which to begin a math lesson!

What is your kids' favorite Morning Time subject or activity?

My kids' favorite Morning Time activity is our new addition this year: art on an index card. As we begin, I pass an index card to everyone, and they have their crayons or

pencils, and they can draw or color or scribble or write whatever they want. They do that while we listen to some memory chants and songs on the iPod together, then we transition with a "call" (Bible reading) and a hymn to our binder time. During the binder memory work time, if they can participate and draw at the same time, they're free to. It gives them something to keep their hands occupied while their minds are active and engaged.



What is your biggest struggle with Morning Time?

Corraling and managing six people (I can be just as hard to pull to the table as the two-year-old) and bringing us all to the same place at the same time on the same page is our biggest struggle.

Starting is the hardest part of so many things in our lives, and Morning Time is no exception. I'm often tempted to skip it "just this once" or postpone it another half

hour (which becomes the same thing as canceling it) or wait until I have my coffee and then not start the coffee. It seems like it will be such an exertion, such a hassle. Once we're together and have begun, it's such a blessing and I'm so grateful for it, but having to stop the morning craziness and bring everyone together sometimes feels like too much.



How have you seen Morning Time bear fruit in your home?

I love hearing toddlers sing "Holy Holy Holy" in their cribs at nap time (all of ours have done so). I love hearing scraps of Shakespeare or poems or Scripture pop up in kids' play. I love that my children think poetry and prayer and catechism are normal. Most of all, however, I see the fruit of Morning Time in our shared family culture.

We have spoken the same words – mostly inspired, God-breathed words and large chunks of them– together in unison day in and day out. You can't do that without it changing you. God promises His Word never returns void, and that includes when it's recited or read in Morning Time.

What are your favorite Morning Time resources ?

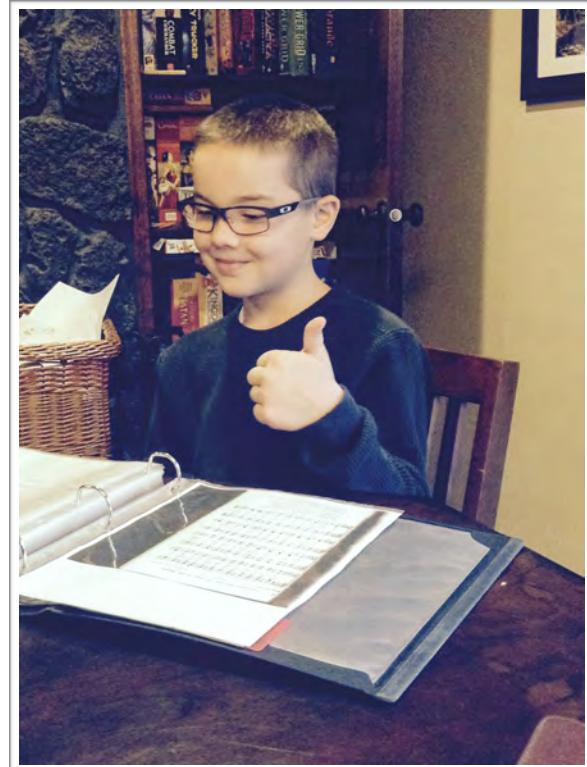
My first favorite is our memory work binders ([tutorial here](#)) which house our memory work - individual copies for each student ([index of our memory work here](#)). We also

are thankful for the [accompaniment CDs of Susan Beisner](#), which make our singing not sound as dreadful as it otherwise would. I also love having the Bible on audio ([Hear the Word ESV](#)) so I'm not talking for an hour straight.

What are some of the ritual practices you include in Morning Time?

New this year, to help my "starting is the hardest part" struggle, is how I gather everyone to the table. I was reading an early draft of Pam's *Your Morning Basket*, saw this idea, and immediately implemented it. We've been using it for over six weeks now and it has made getting Morning Time started so much less effort, which means it's happened with so much more consistency!

Rather than try to call everyone, interrupting that one's math drill and another one's typing practice and another one's LEGO play, trying to get everyone gathered up without each person feeling imposed upon, I simply start a fun song, Andrew Peterson's "Little Boy Heart Alive," a family favorite. It is four and a half minutes long, and when everyone hears it, they're supposed to wrap up what they're doing, grab their binder and whatever else they want to bring to the table, and be sitting at the table (with their index card to draw on) before the song is over.



So, instead of yelling to be heard throughout the house or cajoling students who feel resentful of having their business interrupted, all I have to do is hit 'play' - and

even then I still have a minute to get my ice water and my coffee and my binder and sit down at the table — all the while maintaining my cool and not feeling frantic or like I am already worn out. The toddler still sometimes needs cajoling, but even she now knows that song means she gets her special crayons and an index card or the container of pattern blocks or something else special to do, so she'll usually come running to her chair with everyone else – usually.

ABOUT MYSTIE

Mystie and her husband, Matt, have five children whom they educate classically, seeking to cultivate wisdom and virtue in themselves as well as their children through discipleship in a simple life full of Truth, Goodness, Beauty – and a lot of books. Mystie writes about homeschooling and homemaking at [Simply Convivial](#), shares about how organization is about attitude at [Simplified Organization](#), and shows how to make getting dinner on the table easier at [Simple Pantry Cooking](#).



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MORNING TIME PLAN



DAILY
