

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

When I sat down with Mrs. Ray, I really had no idea what to expect. I knew that she was a very kind, gentle person that genuinely loves others. However, I had no idea the incredible depth of Faith she has, and how remarkably fortunate we are to have someone like her to educate our students. Recently a parent remarked at how Cynthia’s eyes sparkled as she talked about science at our Connexio event. This parent recognized Cynthia as a person with a vast intellect and passion who inspires and teaches students the details of God’s world. Students recently commented that Mrs. Ray, “somehow made science fun,” and, “science is amazing in seventh grade!” Her life story brought me to tears because of the tremendously strong Faith she has always demonstrated despite incredible circumstances that would truly crush most of us.

Cynthia Ray was born and raised in a family with multigenerational roots in Stockbridge, Georgia. She recalled memories of attending Stockbridge Presbyterian Church, and she made very clear that her mother was a “big influence” on her and her siblings. She said she could not recall missing church on ANY Sunday. In fact, on a Senior trip in south Georgia she and her friends were sure to find a church where they could attend services. Cynthia said that her mother was so “Godly,” and “lived her Faith” authentically rather than preach at people. She remarked, “I wish people would say only one tenth of the things about me” that they said about her mother when she passed away.

Cynthia has always been a bit advanced for her age in school and her Spiritual life. She started first grade when she was five years old. She joined the church at the age of ten, at which time she, “felt the presence of God clearly.” She recalled she could not remember a time where she did not believe in Jesus. She credits her mother’s influence and the Lord for protecting her from the normal temptations that teens face in life. She began taking college courses at the age of sixteen before eventually enrolling at the University of Georgia at seventeen as a sophomore! She knew she always wanted to work with children, but initially she majored in Clinical Psychology and minored in French. During these years she also began to date her future husband, Scott who she had been close friends with since high school. Their first date was with his youth group near Emory University. A sharp enough man, Scott decided to transfer to UGA to be near Cynthia and became engaged to her.

Mrs. Ray graduated with a 4.0 GPA by the time she was twenty and began to consider graduate school. Her professor of Childhood Development, Richard Endsley, convinced her to work for him in an independent study. She then went on to earn her Masters and became the Head of the Head Start program at the Laboratory School at the University of Georgia. She prepared for the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) and most likely would have made a wonderful doctor, but fortunately for Covenant Christian School, God led her down a different path.

Cynthia and Scott moved to the Atlanta area and started a family. They had three daughters: Katie, Sydney, and Jesse. Katie accepted Christ at a young age, had a very sweet spirit, and began an International Baccalaureate program at fourteen. She resembled her mother in so

many ways. Cynthia's story began to take a difficult road. Katie became very ill to the point of death while having a 107 degree fever. She suffered irreversible brain damage and would never be the same. Her youngest sister, Jesse had the same illness, but with much intervention is now a senior in high school and working on applying to college. She hopes to continue playing fast pitch softball at the collegiate level. Sydney would go on to live a more normal childhood and is currently in medical school. During these same traumatic years, Scott's dad and Cynthia's mom both passed away from cancer.

Most people would give up and cave under any one of these events. Cynthia took the road less traveled and leaned heavily on her Faith. She worked for two years helping to create and lead a preschool for children with autism. She told me that from this experience as well as the work she does with her daughters she empathizes with parents who have children with a variety of learning needs. She can tell people in similar circumstances, "I've had this experience, and I would love to share my experience with you." The people who I have met with the greatest Faith accept whatever happens in their lives as God's will. Perhaps Cynthia's upbringing and belief in God's omniscience in the path of each of our lives is a foundational element of her trust in the Lord. To take these monumental situations of adversity and to respond to them by using that kind of pain to help others, for me, is saintly.

Mrs. Ray was hired to be a part time science teacher at Covenant Christian School, and then as a long term math substitute for a teacher who was out on maternity leave. We have been beyond blessed to have this pillar of faithfulness pour into the lives of our students for many years. Mrs. Ray has tutored countless students in math and science. She has spent many hours after school and over her summer break to help students prepare for the standardized testing they have to complete for local public magnet schools and private schools. She has done all of this work for free because she loves what she does and the children she serves.

There are great ones in the Bible that I have looked up to since my youth. Getting to know Cynthia better, Job's words came to mind, "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted." When I think about all of the Christians I have known over the years, no one has been through more and still stood rock solidly knowing the Lord loves them and whatever happens is based on that love.

I hope that this brief story begins to fulfill Cynthia's desire in relation to her mother mentioned earlier. Surely her mother's legacy and Spirit lives on through Cynthia vibrantly. We are so indebted to her because she completely embodies the sweet, kind, humble presence of the Holy Spirit each day to her students and the rest of us. The impact she has had here at Covenant Christian School will continue to affect generations to come for the Kingdom of God. We are so thankful the Lord decided to bring her to CCS so many years ago.