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From Campus to Court

As Covenant College alumni seek to have an impact through their careers and in their



communities, a number of graduates move from Lookout Mountain to the halls of prestigious law

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schools, becoming advocates for a variety of clients in courtrooms around the world. In this article, Kathryn 'Kat' Kimball Mizelle '09 tells about her experience and how Covenant prepared her to succeed in the legal profession.

What has your career path looked like since leaving Covenant?

After Covenant, I returned to Florida and attended the University of Florida law school. After graduation, I clerked on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida for Judge James Moody and then on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit for Judge William Pryor. I then joined the U.S. Department of Justice where I spent the next several years prosecuting white-collar offenses as a trial attorney in the Tax Division. I also served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Virginia. In my last year at the Department of Justice, I served as counsel to the Associate Attorney General where I worked on regulatory reform matters, helped defend free speech on college campuses, and oversaw the Tax Division.

I left the Department of Justice to serve as one of Judge Gregory Katsas's first law clerks on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in 2018, and then as a law clerk to Associate Justice Clarence Thomas on the U.S. Supreme Court for the 2018-2019 Term. This past fall, I joined Jones Day and am now also serving as an adjunct professor at the University of Florida Levin College of Law, where I recently taught a course about religious liberty with Justice Thomas.

As a member of the Issues and Appeals practice group at Jones Day, my role is to provide strategic legal advice to clients in a variety of matters, ranging from constitutional challenges in civil and administrative cases to dispositive motions in white-collar defense cases. I love the challenge of solving hard legal problems, and I enjoy the variety of legal issues that I encounter.

What are some of your fondest memories of your time at Covenant?

Too many to recount! I loved the many runs through the woods along the bluff trail, hours spent talking with good friends in the Great Hall, worshipping together in chapel, and attending classes where the professors were truly concerned about the development of each of their students.

Looking back, how did Covenant prepare you for your career?

Covenant provided me with a strong liberal arts education. I learned how to read critically, analyze, and write well. In other words, Covenant taught me how to think and communicate ideas clearly, which are skills I use every day to be an effective lawyer.

In addition to teaching me how to think and write clearly, Covenant taught me how to think holistically about problems. Our faith was never relegated to theology or biblical studies courses; instead, Covenant approached academics as part of a unified life, one where intellectual pursuits are joined with spiritual ones. This way of thinking is often referred to as having a “worldview.” I’m not sure that term captures the depth of this approach though, as it is not about a

political mindset or cultural perspective. It is about understanding humans and our problems as Christ sees us and this world. It is about understanding what it means that humans are made in God's image. We can be agents of God's will or choose to follow only our own. For Christians, our eternal home, the ultimate place of rest and satisfaction, is with Christ after death. That is a radical approach to life, but it prepared me to enter a profession that is often obsessed with prestige, power, and wealth.

What would you say to current students who are considering applying to law school or pursuing a legal career?

The average day of a lawyer looks different than what people see portrayed on television. Being a lawyer, especially an appellate one, consists mostly of reading, writing, and editing. And even when I was a trial attorney at the Department of Justice, most of my time was spent reviewing documents and preparing for witness interviews or grand jury.

If you are planning on applying to law school, take courses that teach you how to think critically and write clearly. For me, I found philosophy courses to be particularly useful at learning how to read dense materials and distill the primary points that held the author's argument together.

You should also pray about your vocation every day while at Covenant. Ask trusted advisors, including lawyers you know, if they think your skill set matches well with those of the profession.

Sit quietly to listen to the Holy Spirit when you pray about what the Lord is calling you to do. And be honest with yourself about the reasons you want to pursue this profession. If you feel confident that the Lord is leading you to this decision, acknowledge before going to law school that this career will demand much of your time and energy and be prepared to sacrifice to do it with a joyful spirit .

In what ways does your faith inform your career?

My faith informs my career in how I do my work and how I treat others in the workplace. We are commanded to work unto the Lord, which means being principled, honest, and hardworking. We are also commanded to do the often demanding job of being a lawyer with a cheerful spirit, being thankful for the opportunities to serve and being kind and generous with our time and energy towards others.

Other Covenant Alumni

Joshua Reif ('08)

Atlanta, Georgia

Partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough

Cumberland School of Law, Samford University ('11)

I knew that being a lawyer would be hard work, but I didn't know that it would be more than just a job to do during business hours. Lawyers can have slow business days that turn into emergency all-nighters without warning. I also honestly thought that