

My name is Brian Miller and this is my wife Letitia.

First of all, I would like to say a special thanks to Cy Smith and the entire staff at Mansfield Christian for letting us tell our story and testimony here tonight.

We would like to share with you the story of our oldest daughter, Nicole.

Letitia and I had our first son, Nathan, in May of 1995. Nathan is currently a senior here at MCS and has attended since he was in kindergarten.

Following the mostly uneventful birth of Nathan it was our desire to have more children. 1 year, 2 years, 3 years...and so on went by and we were unable to pregnant.

We eventually made a doctor's appointment where we learned that not only was it not likely that we would ever have another baby (without medical intervention) but we were extremely fortunate to have had Nathan. In fact, our odds were found out to be that we had a 1/1000th chance of pregnancy compared to a normal couple.

The doctor's offered us an array of medical interventions that would increase our chances. After prayerfully considering this we determined that we were going to let God be God in this area. We gave testimony both publically and privately that if God wanted us to have more children...then we would. If he did not want us to have more children....then we would not. This was our statement of faith.

In 2002, after many years of prayer and patience, we finally got pregnant. I cannot express to you our excitement. This joy gave way to extreme sorry when we found at that we lost the baby at 20 weeks. The still-born was delivered by Dr. Walt Schoutko (many here will

remember him and his many years of association with Mansfield Christian).

I believe this was the first time we realized that what we were associated with here at Mansfield Christian School was more to us than a school. More to us than a place where our children were to be educated and play sports.

Our friends, mostly from Nathan's Flames soccer team associations, brought us food and showered us with such great love. There were many others, MCS staff included, that were not associated with soccer that gave. A donation was raised and some special gifts showered on us; like a night's stay at a local bed and breakfast, a round of golf for me, and so on.

I think we realized, for the first time, that our relationship with the school, the staff, and the parents was an extension of our own family and an extension of our church family.

We eventually recovered from this loss, but not without some serious questioning of God. (I do not believe that God is afraid of our hard questions. He is a big God...He can handle it. Like why allow us to get pregnant after so many years and then lose the child? Why not just have a miscarriage but instead have Titia need to deliver a still-born? And so on. These are difficult questions to answer. We eventually learned a valuable, valuable lesson...CONTROL IS AN ILLUSION OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.)

Eventually, we got pregnant again (to the amazement of the doctor's) in 2004. This time, everything went fine and Nicole was born October 12, 2004.

Just as we were ready to leave the hospital Nicole's pediatrician, Dr. Moneme (who also has a long history of association with Mansfield Christian School), decided he wanted to run a series of tests on Nicole. He did not tell us what he was looking for but he would not let her go. We found out later he was concerned because to him Nicole looked grayish.

To our dismay, Dr. Moneme released Titia but kept Nicole overnight for testing. We received a call at 5:30am from the hospital telling us that Nicole had only 1 kidney and that the other kidney may not be functioning. They wanted us to come to the hospital immediately, pick up Nicole, and drive her to Children's Hospital in Columbus.

The tears flowed. Our jubilation turned rapidly into despair and chaos. We checked Nicole into Children's and checked ourselves into the Ronald McDonald house next to Children's. This whole process was exacerbated because Titia had a C-Section and she was developing an infection. Day after day of testing went by when finally on day 5 Nicole received a visit from the ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) specialist. He noticed Nicole's special little skin tags by her ears and in about 10 seconds turned to us and said, "She has BOR". What? BOR? Branchio-Oto-Renal Syndrome. Nicole had skin tags, Nicole has some malformations on her ears, pits in her ears, pits in her throat, and only 1 kidney. Nicole had Branchio-Oto-Renal syndrome. A dominant genetic disorder affecting the neck, ears, and kidney resulting from a mutation of the EYA1 gene.

We eventually made it out of the hospital and settled in. Nicole would be on medicine's for hypertension (high blood pressure), Acid-Base Balance, Iron, PTH Hormone regulation, and so on from a very, very young age.

Her kidney function stabilized shortly after leaving Children's at a GFR (glomerular filtration rate...the best measure of kidney function) of around 40. Her GFR stayed at around 40, with some slight decline, until she was about 6 when some rapid decline started to occur.

In February of 2011, almost 20 months ago, Nicole's kidney function dropped rapidly from the 40 level to around 27. Nicole's nephrologists had anticipated that this day would occur. We were praying that it never would. In order to avoid dialysis, which is very undesirable on kids, the hospital informed us that they would like us, if possible, to locate a donor. Kind of like a preemptive strike so that everything would be in order when Nicole's kidney eventually failed completely.

What we decided to do was to compose an email and send it out everybody that we knew. And I do mean everybody. This included Cy Smith and the staff here at Mansfield Christian School. Literally within a day of sending out this email the calls starting coming in.

We were contacted almost immediately by a teacher here at MCS. 2 of Nathan's soccer team players (he was a Sophomore by this time) even volunteered. What an amazing testimony!! As the days and weeks rolled by we ended up with a total of 18 total volunteers.

We eventually called the hospital and asked them how we should go about selecting a donor. They were really a bit overwhelmed with the number of people that had called them about being a donor because normally they have only at most 1 or 2 potential donors. Not 18. What an amazing testimony about the love of the people of God!!

They told us to narrow the age limit down to no older than 50, no history of smoking, no history of alcohol abuse, not overweight, and so on. These requirements immediately eliminated the vast majority of the people who had volunteered. We eventually narrowed it down to 3

and started the testing. Unfortunately, you can do tissue matching on several potential donors but you can only do detailed testing with 1 at a time because of insurance limitations. We picked our donor and the testing started.

Our primary donor passed all of the tests but was eventually rejected by the transplant board for reasons that I will not share in this forum.

We were disappointed of course, but we knew that we had 2 other potential donors. One by one these donors also fell by the wayside for various reasons.

Our disappointment turned into dismay and worry. Where was our faith? What about knowing that “control is only an illusion”. How quickly we forget the lessons God has taught us.

Nicole is currently 8 and is in the 1st grade here at Mansfield Christian. Last year she was in kindergarten and in the class of Mrs. Killian. Wendy Killian. Titia had gone in to talk to Wendy about Nicole’s academic struggles, which are many. During the course of this conversation Wendy asked Titia what the requirements were for a donor. Titia explained to her the requirements and, according to Titia’s best recollection, Wendy’s response was...”That’s me!!”.

Apparently when Wendy and Stu had their son Billy he had needed plasma at birth. Wendy eventually shared with Titia how she had prayed to God and thanked him for the person who gave the plasma. She also prayed that if she could ever have a part in saving a child’s life then she wanted to do that. Nicole, apparently, is the answer to that prayer (lesson...be careful what you pray for 😊)

Wendy was tested to see if she was a match. She was. She then contacted the hospital and started the detailed testing in late May,

early June of this year. The testing took about a month to finish. All of the testing went fine. She was eventually approved by the transplant board at Rainbow Babies and Children in late July of this year!! Praise the Lord. The donor for Nicole is in place and it is Wendy Killian. A teacher here at Mansfield Christian School.

This is an ongoing story and there is so much more I could say, but we would be here all night. Nicole's current GFR is at close to 19, but it dipped for 1 month to 15.8. The kidney transplant will be scheduled when she reaches a level of 15. So we are very close.

I want to share with you a few thoughts, in conclusion...

First, what kind of radical love for a student does it take for a teacher to give a vital organ to one of her students so that she might live? This is not ordinary. It is extremely humbling to us, I can tell you that. It is not like we even knew Wendy before Nicole was in her class last year. It is only the type of radical love that can come from a radically loving God that would send his only Son to die on a tree to pay a debt that we could never pay. To give of one's own self to the point where something great is sacrificed. And make no mistake about it, giving a vital organ to someone you barely know, is intense, radical love.

Second, I want you to take a bird's eye view of Mansfield Christian School. Or better said, a God's eye view of Mansfield Christian. Sure, MCS is a place of education. Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic are taught here like a lot of schools. Sports are played and other activities are participated in by the staff, administration, and the students. But these things occur at other schools in the area. Maybe not as well in some cases, but they do occur. But where else do these things occur AND a place where there is...

- An administration that absolutely loves the Lord and loves the students that attend here...and realizes that education is but one part of what is going on at this school
- A staff that absolutely loves the Lord and loves the students that attend here. One of those staff members has loved so much that they have offered to give the ultimate gift of life to our daughter Nicole.
- A staff that coaches soccer and performs other activities with children and teaches them that there is a right way, a godly way, to live and to perform.
- Teachers that will pray with you when things are not going well with your student...not just offer up the self-help psychology of the world but turn to the One and True Living God for solutions.
- Fellow parents that are like-minded with children that you want to be the friends of your children.

This is a place, because the administration, the staff, and the parents are bonded in Christ that the SPIRIT OF CHRIST can work in and through and radical things can occur in the lives of its students. That alone makes Mansfield Christian School special, unique and worth investing in!!

I would love to close with a scripture:

John 13:35

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

What occurs here at MCS in so many ways is radical love. And by doing so, there is the reality and the fulfillment of the greatest commandment of God...to love Him and to love each other.

I would like to publically thank Cy Smith, the staff, and the administration of MCS for their labor. And I would also like to publically thank Wendy Killian, and her husband Stu, for demonstrating such a great love to Nicole.

Blessings.