

Lesson from a 6-Year-Old

A Walt Disney movie on television a while back told the story of Ruby Bridges, a 6-year-old African-American child who was the first to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1960.

Every day, federal marshals escorted her into the schoolhouse because both sides of the sidewalk would be lined with people who were screaming threats at her.

Robert Coles, a noted Harvard psychiatrist, volunteered his time to work with young Ruby. Every day, he would talk with her, trying to help her weather the crisis.

On the television news one night, Coles noticed Ruby walking up the sidewalk and the people yelling and throwing things. Suddenly, however, she stopped, said something, and started backing down the sidewalk. Then the marshals picked her up and took her into the building.



That night, Coles asked her what she said to the marshals. She answered, “I was not talking to the marshals.”

“Oh yes, you were,” Coles said. “I saw you on the news. I saw your lips moving. You were talking to the marshals.”

Ruby insisted: “I was not talking to the marshals.”

“Well,” Coles said, “what were you doing?”

“I was praying for those people who were hollering at me,” Ruby replied. “I had forgotten to pray, and I was trying to go back and pray for them as I walked to the school building.”

Coles shook his head and said, “You were praying for the people who were screaming at you?”

“Yes,” Ruby responded. “My mama taught me that when people speak mean of you, you pray for them, just like Jesus prayed for the people who spoke mean of Him.”

What a lesson from a 6-year-old! Her example should inspire us in situations when folks may speak ill of us.

You see, when Jesus lives in your heart, you just can’t hate anybody.

He taught His disciples: *Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven* (Luke 6:37 ESV).