

A strong sense of gratitude serves as a defining quality for lawyer with Alabama firm

By Brian Cox



Ford Mozingo is keenly aware that he has much to be grateful for as a young lawyer.

He's grateful for his upbringing in Montgomery, Ala; for his education at the University of Alabama and its law school; for the opportunity to clerk for a state Supreme Court justice; and for his associate position with the Alabama law firm Christian & Small LLP.

"I'm extremely thankful and blessed to be where I am," he says. "I am often reminded that none of this was guaranteed to me. I've been given opportunities through no credit of my own, and I want to make the most of those opportunities."

Mozingo's sense of gratitude is not simply an expression of humility. It is an aspect of the philosophy that shapes how he

approaches his career, his relationships, and the opportunities placed before him. At just the beginning of his legal career, he is focused on becoming the kind of lawyer – and person – worthy of the opportunities he has been given.

His path to becoming a lawyer began in Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, where his father was an attorney practicing civil defense litigation. While his two younger brothers found dinner table conversations about legal cases less than captivating, Ford was drawn to them.

"I found it fascinating," he recalls. "It just made a lot of sense to me. I appreciated the logic of it and the formality of court and the history behind it."

History, in fact, became one of his earliest passions. As an undergraduate, Mozingo majored in history and briefly imagined a future in academia. His senior honors thesis examined the history of slavery at the University of Alabama, which required months of archival research through centuries-old manuscripts and university records.

The project sharpened his research and writing skills. Ironically, it also dissuaded him from pursuing an academic career.

"I spent an entire semester writing this paper," he says, "and I realized probably no one was ever going to read it."

Law, he realized, offered something different. Something of consequence. What he wrote would be read and could actually make a difference in someone's life.

His desire to produce work with tangible outcomes has remained one of the defining motivations of his career.

Law school confirmed what he had suspected for years. While many students may spend their first semesters questioning whether they have chosen the right profession, Mozingo never seriously doubted his decision.



In addition to his southern roots, Ford embraces his Italian heritage, sharing a passion for cooking with his grandmother, who is from Bologna, Italy. Every Christmas, the pair makes homemade tortellini.

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After graduating law school, Ford accepted a clerkship with Justice Will Sellers of the Alabama Supreme Court.

"It was difficult for me," he says, "but from the first semester on, I knew I wanted to be a lawyer."

He also discovered that the legal profession was much broader than he had imagined growing up.

Because his father was a litigator, he had assumed lawyers naturally belonged in courtrooms. It was only after beginning law school that he realized attorneys could spend entire careers negotiating business transactions, structuring companies, or practicing tax law without ever arguing before a judge.

Still, litigation felt like home.

"I always knew I wanted to do litigation," he says. "I feel very fortunate in that regard that, from the get-go, I had an idea of what I wanted to do."

His academic accomplishments reflected that commitment. Mozingo graduated summa cum laude from the University of Alabama before earning his juris doctor from the University of Alabama School of Law. Along the way he served on the John A. Campbell Moot Court Board, became lead editor of *The Journal of the Legal Profession*, and was elected an associate justice of the school's Honor Council.

Following graduation, he accepted what he considers one of the defining opportunities of his young career: a clerkship with Justice Will Sellers of the Alabama Supreme Court. The experience gave him something law school could not.

Working inside the state's highest court allowed him to study legal issues with an academic depth rarely possible in private practice while also observing how appellate decisions impact trial courts throughout Alabama.

"I really enjoyed it," he says. "The main point was to get the law right, and you have all the time in the world to really dive deep into the weeds of the law."

In addition to sharpening his research and writing skills, the clerkship offered practical lessons about judicial decision-making and appellate procedure that continue to inform his litigation practice today.

It also reinforced the value of mentorship.

Justice Sellers became one of several experienced lawyers who invested time in helping Mozingo grow – not simply as an attorney but as a professional.

Christian & Small had offered Mozingo a position following law school and when the clerkship opportunity arose, the firm agreed to hold his position for a year while he served the court.

"I'm always grateful that they did that," he says.

That gratitude has only grown during his first months at the firm.

Christian & Small, headquartered in Birmingham, has built its reputation by pairing experienced attorneys with clients ranging from individuals and closely held businesses to Fortune 500 companies throughout Alabama and the Southeast. The firm's collaborative culture, commitment to client service, and emphasis on mentoring young attorneys appealed to Mozingo long before he officially joined the firm.



Ford with his father, a fellow attorney who practices civil defense litigation in Montgomery.

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He first encountered Christian & Small through the University of Alabama's on-campus interview program.

"I really enjoyed the people I got to work with," he says. "I always just got the impression, even as a summer associate, that they cared about me."

Today, he works primarily with partner Michael Vercher, handling commercial trucking litigation, appellate litigation, and other civil defense matters, while also gaining experience in product liability and construction-related disputes.

Because associates work closely with individual partners rather than rotating through practice groups, he has enjoyed early responsibility and consistent mentorship.

"It's been a great start to my career," he says.

Although still only months into practice, Mozingo speaks with genuine enthusiasm about continuing to learn.

"I've gotten a few courtroom experiences," he says, "but the actual practical real-world experience is something that you can't get anywhere else until you actually do it."

Mozingo is energized by the thought that every new assignment presents another opportunity to improve. He credits his parents for modeling hard work and speaks warmly of the professors and judges who invested in him.

Outside the office, that same desire for steady growth shapes much of his life.

He enjoys cooking, a passion inspired by his Italian grandmother from Bologna, whose authentic recipes introduced him to a culinary tradition that complemented the Southern cooking of his father's Alabama family.

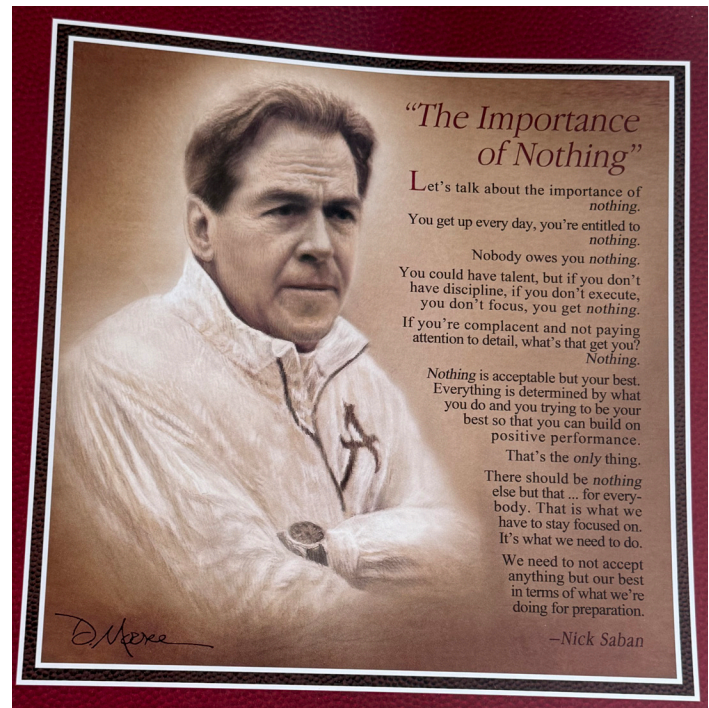
He is an enthusiastic Alabama football fan who rarely misses a home game in Tuscaloosa during the fall.

He currently shares a house in Birmingham with his two younger brothers and their rescued cat, "Minka Fitzcatrick" – named after former Alabama football star Minkah Fitzpatrick.

He also makes time to stay active; he started running half-marathons in law school and plans to run his first full marathon later this year.

"One way you keep growing is to find new ways to challenge yourself," he says.

During his clerkship year, Mozingo regularly invited experienced attorneys to lunch, seeking advice not only about practicing law but about balancing work, family, and life beyond the office.



Ford, a fervent Alabama football fan, keeps an inspirational quote on his desk from legendary coach Nick Saban about approaching every responsibility with discipline and humility.

Among the best advice he received was from an attorney who told him, "Be a good lawyer. Be a better person."

It's advice Mozingo hopes to carry throughout his career.

He's also found inspiration from longtime Alabama football coach Nick Saban, whose message about approaching every responsibility with discipline and humility now hangs beside Mozingo's computer at work. The reminder reflects a mindset the young lawyer tries to carry into every assignment, regardless of its size. Whether handling a significant commercial dispute or a routine matter, he wants clients and colleagues alike to know they are receiving his full attention and best effort.

"I'm going to do my job, whether it's the smallest case or the biggest case, with as much enthusiasm and as much passion as I can," says Mozingo, "and be the best version of myself I can be."