

# Commentary: Not victim, but victory impact

October 4, 2019

No sermon. No metaphor.

[In the most unlikely](#) setting of the 204th District Court in Dallas, in front of a corps of national and international media, God stunned the world. The banner of his love, mercy, grace and forgiveness blanketed the courtroom on Oct. 2, 2019, sparking his promise of hope from brokenness, beauty from ashes.

[In a solo victim impact statement](#) following the sentencing of convicted former Dallas police officer Amber Guyger, Brandt Jean, the 18-year-old brother of the victim Botham Jean, said he forgave Guyger, who was convicted of murder for shooting and killing Botham in his own apartment. She testified she thought it was her apartment.

## A statement of impact

In front of a hushed courtroom following Guyger's sentence to 10 years in prison, Brandt took the stand and gave a victim impact statement. He said he loved Guyger, forgave her and wished her no harm. He told her to ask God's forgiveness and give her life to Christ because that was what his deceased brother would have wanted.

Then the young man made an unprecedented request of the judge. He asked if he could give Guyger a hug.

The judge hesitantly granted Brandt's request, and this young man stepped away from the stand and crossed the courtroom. He only made it halfway

before he was met with a weeping Guyger who all but ran into his hug. That embrace reportedly lasted 55 seconds.

God wasn't finished in that courtroom. After Texas District Judge Tammy Kemp signaled the adjournment of the sentencing hearing, she left the bench to speak with the victim's family. Then she made her way across the courtroom to the defense table and leaned down to speak to Guyger.

No one expected the judge to return when she left the courtroom, but she did come back—still in her robes and carrying a Bible she handed to Guyger.

Reportedly, Judge Kemp bookmarked John 3:16 in that Bible, pointed out that Scripture and told Guyger the Bible was “your job for the next 10 years.” After a hug from the judge, Guyger was escorted out of the courtroom clutching the Bible.

## **Lasting impact of an older brother**

The victim Botham Jean truly left a legacy of Christ. His younger brother boldly picked up his mantle and testified the only message that mattered in that courtroom and across the planet.

A judge stepped away from the bench to show God's love and forgiveness, even in the brokenness of a murder trial.

Momentarily, we saw heaven in a hellish situation.

Outside the courtroom and in the streets of Dallas, a coil of anger, fear and unforgiveness still wrapped its way around a fray of protesters.

Police and citizens, white and black, will we lose God or remember what he showed us in that courtroom? Will we continue to choose division in the face of such a powerful courtroom example?

# **Lasting impact of a younger brother**

Even the most hardened hearts were touched. Journalists wiped away tears as they reported this story. Lives were changed forever, and one of those lives was mine.

I am encouraged to be bolder in my faith, to step up even when the circumstances do not seem appropriate. I am encouraged to set a unique and unforgettable precedent, to let God astonish others through me.

I am humbled, amazed, inspired and awed. Part of my heart wants to linger forever in that courtroom.

I pray the footprint of my life leaves a legacy like Botham Jean's, with a faith so pristine, powerful and clear that its mantle easily can be picked up and carried on.

Brandt Jean's victim impact statement claims no victim, but only the victory of Christ's salvation. With Christ, even in a criminal courtroom we are blessed and blown away.

In the midst of a culture of chaos and conflict, politics and prejudice, fear and unforgiveness, only God would orchestrate such a scene. Let's not forget or push aside what happened that day in that 204th District Court in Dallas.

## **God's purpose through Christ**

God has a purpose and a plan. He works all things together for good for those who love Him. Could you not see it? Stamp it on your hearts.

Be the change. Let God redeem every courtroom and community of judgment. Be the foot soldier, the exception, the witness, the messenger.

Don't forget. Don't discount. Don't ever underestimate the power of the Lord, the power of his redemption, his grace, his love, his forgiveness, his plan and his purpose for each of us in every situation.

No matter where we are, what circumstance we are in, what challenge we are confronting, what persecution we face, God is at work in us and through us. I truly can't wait to see what God does next. Can you?

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*Rev. Dr. Michael Evans Sr., president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield, responds to Amber Guyger's sentencing and Brandt Jean's victim impact statement [here](#).*