

## Anti-Religion Group Rains on Court's Parade of Forgiveness

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Earlier this week, the nation watched a remarkable series of events unfold in a Dallas courtroom. After a closely watched trial, former police officer Amber Guyger was found guilty of murdering Botham Jean, a twenty-six-year-old African American accountant who was eating ice cream when she shot and killed him. The off-duty police officer believed she had entered her own apartment and that Jean was a burglar.

On Wednesday, the victim's 18-year-old younger brother, Brandt Jean, stunned those in the courtroom by publicly forgiving his brother's killer and pleading with her to give her life to Christ. Fighting back tears, Brandt said, "I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you." He continued, "I want the best for you, because I know that's exactly what Botham would want you to do. And the best would be to give your life to Christ."

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In an extraordinary moment that has since been [viewed](#) by millions, Brandt then asked the judge, "I don't know if this is possible, but can I give her a hug, please?" Receiving permission, Brandt embraced Guyger, who began sobbing, for over a minute. The powerful moment even touched Judge Tammy Kemp who can be seen wiping away tears in the background.

In fact, Kemp was so moved by the younger brother's actions that after official proceedings had ended, she stepped off the bench and retrieved her personal Bible from her chambers. Handing the Bible to Guyger, Kemp said, "You haven't done so much that you can't be forgiven." She then read John 3:16, and said, "You haven't done as much as you think you have, and you can be forgiven. You did something bad in one moment in time. What you do now matters."

It was another remarkable moment in a truly remarkable day. On a day justice was served, the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation brought together a devastated family and a divided community.

Dallas Police Chief U. René Hall spoke for many after the trial when she [said](#), "Botham Jean's brother's request to hug Amber Guyger and Judge Kemp's gift of her Bible to Amber represents a spirit of forgiveness, faith and trust. In this same spirit, we want to move forward in a positive direction with the community."

But not everyone was happy about the compassion and mercy demonstrated in the courtroom.

On Thursday, the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF), poured cold water on the judge's display of kindness by filing a formal [complaint](#) with the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct, alleging Judge Kemp "overstepped" her judicial authority by giving Guyger a Bible. According to the atheist group, by reading the Bible with the newly convicted defendant, Judge Kemp engaged in "inappropriate" and "unconstitutional" behavior.

At a time when our nation is fractured, aren't such moments of grace and reconciliation exactly what we need more of? Judge Kemp's act of compassion in presenting the defendant a Bible injected the normally sterile court proceedings with a human touch and was in line with how the family of the slain man has treated Guyger.

Speaking to reporters after the trial, Bertram Jean, Botham's father, also forgave his son's convicted killer. "I felt the same way as Brandt," Jean said. "That's what Christ would want us to do... If you will not forgive, neither will your Father forgive you. I don't want to see her rot in hell. I don't want to see her rot in prison... So, I wish her well and I will pray for her family and pray for her as well."

In similar situations over the last few years, the interplay of race and police authority have triggered protests and riots and threatened to destroy the social fabric of many communities. However, because of the courageous and gracious response of the Jean family and Judge Kemp, the community in Dallas has begun to heal.

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In fact, through their faithful testimony, the world was able to see a beautiful display of Christ-centered compassion and forgiveness. Unfortunately, FFRF is trying to drown out this life-giving, positive message. Thankfully, there are millions more who were inspired and deeply moved by the words and actions of the Jean family and Judge Kemp this week.

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