



Lesson 5

January 3, 2021

An Amazing Ministry

Today's lesson is an example of how familiarity breeds contempt, especially when it comes to those most acquainted with you. Brandon learned this painful truth.

Brandon's story begins in a small town. Fifty-six years later, his mother still lives in the house where Brandon was raised. Brandon tells the story often of how he was called into the "ministry of social justice" when at age 12 he witnessed an injustice. Brandon vowed to fight to make sure that all people, regardless of where they live, their income level, or the color of their skin, were treated with respect. In the 1970s, Brandon marched alongside his parents in calling for social rights and equality. In high school, Brandon spoke out against racial discrimination he and others encountered when they were bused to white schools.

Last fall, Brandon became aware that his town began renovating a section of town to conform it to the likes of the white middle class. Gentrification had come to town! Property taxes rose, and children had to sell their elderly parents' homes. Rent increased to levels renters could not afford.

Brandon took up the fight against gentrification. Brandon began holding rallies and protests in front of city hall. City officials who once hailed Brandon as their hometown justice advocate were now trying to silence him by arresting him and shutting down his rallies. Brandon was a welcomed voice for justice in surrounding cities and states, but city officials in Brandon's own town tried to run him out of town. It was Brandon's activism that forced his hometown political leaders to hear Brandon's concerns, especially when the town began attracting negative national attention.

While gentrification occurred in some underused areas in Brandon's hometown, the state allowed for a rent-stabilization program so that longtime residents would not have to move from their homes and neighborhoods. Grants were available to homeowners and apartment building owners for renovation purposes. The state also provided grants to fix potholes, beautify parks, and repair infrastructure so that minorities could enjoy the same conveniences as that of gentrifying neighborhoods.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss Brandon's years of fierce advocacy.
2. Discuss Brandon's belief that social justice activism is his ministry.
3. Would you consider Brandon's "ministry" amazing? Explain your answer.