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Daniel Grand's Home Prayer Case Reaches Supreme Court

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Place of religious assembly"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Daniel Grand invited about a dozen friends to pray in his home - and the prayer meeting never happened. Before the group had met even once, the city of University Heights, Ohio, sent him a cease-and-desist letter ordering him to stop using his home as a "place of religious assembly". Nearly six years later, the case has reached the US Supreme Court, which will hear arguments on December 9. The Solicitor General of the United States will argue on Grand's side.

Grand is an Orthodox Jew whose faith calls him to pray with a minyan - a quorum of at least ten men - three times each weekday and four times on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. He lives far from an Orthodox synagogue, so in January 2021 he decided to host a minyan in his own home and emailed friends who lived nearby. Because Orthodox Jews are forbidden from driving on the Sabbath, there would have been no traffic and no parking problems. The gathering would have been quiet, small and invisible from the street.

Daniel Grand Home Prayer Case: City Said No Permit, No Prayer

It never got the chance. A neighbour who objected forwarded Grand's email to the mayor, who passed it to the city's law director. Before Grand had even returned the mayor's call, the cease-and-desist letter arrived.

Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan telephoned him on January 21, 2021, and, Grand says, told him: "You are under no circumstances allowed to have any type of religious gathering in your home without first obtaining a special-use permit." Grand cancelled the gathering. In a first-person account published by Alliance Defending Freedom, which now represents him before the Supreme Court along with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, he wrote: "I understood this to be a threat of criminal prosecution."

The city told Grand he needed a special-use permit, so he applied and appeared before the University Heights Planning Commission. The commission held a hearing in March 2021 and tabled the matter while asking him for more details. Grand withdrew his application and sued the city in 2022, arguing his rights had been violated the moment the city told him he could not hold the gathering without a permit. A federal district court dismissed the case, and the 6th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld that dismissal in November 2025 - ruling that his claims were not ripe for federal review because he had withdrawn his application before zoning officials reached a final decision.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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