

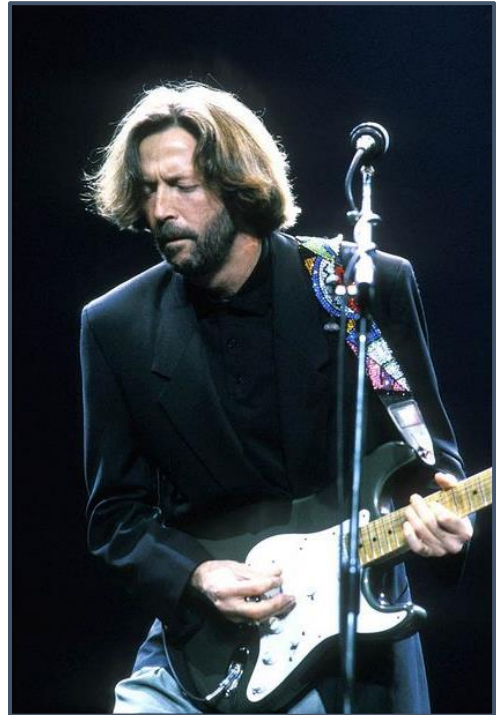
The Grief of Eric Clapton

Eric Clapton is an English rock and blues guitarist, singer and songwriter. He is the only three-time inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – once as a solo artist and separately as a member of the Yardbirds and of Cream. Clapton has been referred to as one of the most important and influential guitarists of all time.

On a warm spring day in March 1991, he received a phone call from his wife, Lori. In a frantic voice, she told him that their 4½-year-old son, Conor, had just accidentally fallen to his death after falling out of an open window of their 53rd-floor Manhattan apartment.

Clapton could not believe what he was hearing and rushed over the 10 blocks to find paramedic equipment everywhere, along with ambulances and police cars. Only then did he begin to realize with a sinking heart, “Oh, my God, it is true!”

Months later, Clapton was to say in an interview in *Rolling Stone* magazine, “After it sunk in that my son had died ... it’s funny, but I really didn’t feel anything; I went blank. I just turned to stone and wanted to go away. I mean, there was no way I could have ever prepared for what had happened. But in time, I found that I couldn’t avoid feeling the pain of Conor’s death. I had to go through the suffering.”



Out of that suffering, Clapton turned to his music and wrote a very personal song to express his grief, his struggle to live with the loss of his son, his yearning to know peace in his life again. The song became a popular hit. It is called *Tears in Heaven*, and its lyrics speak of Clapton’s search for the healing of his shattered heart. These are the words he wrote to his son:

*Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?
Would you hold my hand, if I saw you in heaven?
I must be strong to carry on,
'Cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.*

The last words of the song are these:

*Beyond the door, there's peace for sure,
And I know, there'll be no more tears in heaven.*

(more)

When I was growing up in Cookeville, one of the most shocking stories in our neighborhood occurred on the morning of a washday when a child under the age of 1 fell into a tub of scalding hot water and died. I can still hear in my mind the screams of agony of that grandmother who had briefly turned her attention away from the baby. Neighbors from blocks around felt her pain and that of the young parents.

There is tragedy in death, of painful loss, of heartfelt grief, and even more so, it seems, when it's children. Two miracle stories in the Bible tell of a young person being rescued from death's door: the prophet Elijah resuscitating a child who had stopped breathing and Jesus raising up a young man already in his coffin.

Our emphasis, however, should not be on the miracles, but on the truth behind the miracles: God sees and cares for us in our grief.

We all have those occasions of loss of the people we love – family members and good friends. The pain is real, and we look to God for comfort and assurance. His grace is sufficient.

That grandmother, living in the house across the street from ours, was sustained by that truth.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter