

“Emotional losses have been the hardest to bear as I have walked through this searing grief.

I have two children, Colleen and Ben. They have been a wonderful blessing and both have beautiful hearts. I am very proud of them. One is in heaven now and I ache for him and miss him dearly. I have lost something so very precious to me.

I loved my son very much. Benjamin John Farrant was an outstanding, caring and talented young man that was pouring himself out to make the world a better place. He was a quiet caring leader who was passionate about helping others. He was motivated by his love for the God that loved him relentlessly.

He loved his Lord Jesus with all his heart, soul and mind and he loved others as himself. He cherished his family, his church, and his friends too. He travelled through Africa in 2002 and the tragedy of the Rwandan genocide stayed with him. As a result he was an active Board Member of Wellspring Foundation for Education – an organization committed to establishing quality education in Rwanda, because he was passionate about rebuilding the nation through the next generation.

He was instrumental in helping create a documentary called “Hope Rises” which is the story of Rwanda’s struggle to recover from the devastation of the genocide. In fact it will be screened in Toronto on May 12, 2009. He was an outdoor adventurer who climbed nearby Mt. Baker and far away Kilimanjaro, and loved white-water rafting and mountain biking.

He was ruggedly handsome in an “Arnold Schwarzenegger” way. He had outstanding friends and he was instrumental in organizing their 3 month trip to Africa as the “Safari Six” after they graduated from University in 2002 and had marvelous adventures. He had a degree in computer science was successful in the field, and even started his own web design company while he was in high school. He used his technical skills to assist his church so that it was said that “his finger prints are all over their computers” but he also poured hours into the developing and training the church youth spiritually.

He was the kind of man who, without being asked, helped a needy older neighbour download digital pictures. He served up turkey dinners for 16 of the church young people, his friends. He would bicycle alongside a slow fellow cyclist and push them up a steep hill. He sent encouragement cards to those facing difficulties. He would drive 7 hours to cheer his sister and brother-in-law at their marathon. He would pack his suitcase till it burst so he could leave extra things for the needy in Rwanda. He ferociously fought off 5 muggers in Africa when they attacked his female companion. And he would still happily spend the afternoon looking at floral gardens with his Mom!

By the age of 25, his friends called him a man of great integrity and he had more positive impact on this world, than many of us have in a lifetime. His life held even more promise. The world lost out too when he died.

Losing my child also meant losing part of my own future and a significant part of my own life work. I was a stay-at-home Mom and invested myself in my children year after year, dreaming of their bright futures. But my son's life ended while he was still 25 year old and single. I will not see him marry, or enjoy his children, or celebrate his future successes. His sister is now "an only child" and her two daughters will never know their outstanding uncle. It is perverse that child that represents the future should die before the parents – and he strangely and incomprehensibly becomes the past. But I am very proud of his life and he lived fully and well, packing so much into those 25 years.

Ben had also grown up to become a friend to me too so that I not only lost a child but a kindred spirit too. We shared many common interests and talked on the phone for hours discussing everything from camping to his job to theology. He was my personal long-distance computer tech even though he also helped so many others, and he liked to give his Mom computer "advice" for which I was very grateful and really miss. We visited back and forth between BC and Ontario hiking and eating out and playing scrabble and more. He spent his last Christmas vacation with me, his wonderful sister and fine brother-in-law. Our relationship was warm and supportive. At the memorial service a friend of his publically stated that "Ben loved his mother". I cried and I treasure that. He truly was a gift to me and also to the near and far community that he influenced.

When Ben died I was struggling with numerous health problems including cancer as well as a painful divorce after 32 years of marriage. Benjamin means "son of my right hand". I feel like I have lost that right hand and arm and a chunk of my heart too. I live the rest of my life with that emotional handicap.

I tell you this to help you understand how difficult my journey to forgiveness has been. Although it is a tremendous comfort to me that, because of my faith, I know I will see Ben in heaven again. However, for now, I live with his loss daily. I am called upon to pay the cost of the wrong behaviours of others with my grief, pain and tears. But my son paid it with his very life. Who could ever make it up to him or to me and pay me back enough in any kind of a just way? The cost is priceless and such a payment needs to be immense. Only Jesus could do that, and he did it on behalf of others. Everyone in the world was included in him when he died to pay penalties owed to justice and to God. Justice was served in him, who was the only one who had enough to lose to pay the price.

Today, by the grace of God I can say, I do forgive you as Christ has forgiven me. I do not say that lightly because it has been excruciatingly painful a journey that still challenges me at new moments of pain. It does not mean exoneration and it does not abdicate responsibility. It does not negate the validity of anything the

justice system enacts but rather, it is a statement to release you from owing me anything spiritually. I am not tied to you by the demanding cords of unforgiveness and you are not tied to me. You will not answer to me spiritually but to the highest Judge, the King of Kings, the God of all, just as we all will one day. You need to deal with him, not me and he deals with us with endless grace, not to condemn but to save. Jesus really is the kindest person you ever met and really does extend amazing grace to those that humbly call on him.

My view of heaven is that it is so amazingly fun and wonderful, full of laughter and singing so that once you get there no one wants to leave. It is in a different dimension that is full of peace and goodness that radiates from the throne of God. I like to imagine that Ben has given Moses some mountain biking tips while they cycled down Mt. Sinai together and that he trades adventure stories with his great-great-grandfather and sings his favourite hymns along with the angels. I know he would love to hang out with Jesus and I imagine that they dream up fabulous things to pray for us and to encourage us. I believe that he very likely is here now with the "cloud of witnesses" that the bible talks about, cheering us on to run our own race with truthfulness, kindness and love. I hope you will meet Ben there one day. I'm sure that Ben will be among the first ones to welcome you, with his warm handshake with one big hand and his trademark "wrap around bear hug" with the other. I know Ben would like me to tell you today that his Jesus is good and kind and that his heart is full of love toward you.

Now with the completion of the trial, I plan to go my way and you will go yours. I will still bear the unwarranted and painful loss of my beloved son, and you will still deal with the fallout of the event, but I do wish you well. I do not hold you with any spiritual chains despite my life-long loss. I am at peace and I release you spiritually to go in peace too.