

‘Jesus Take the Wheel’ Songwriter, Brett James, Dies in Shocking Tragedy

The Christian music community and the world of country music are mourning the sudden passing of Brett James, the award-winning songwriter whose work touched millions of lives with words of faith, hope and redemption. James, 57, was tragically killed in a plane crash on Sept. 18 near Franklin, North Carolina, along with two others aboard an aircraft.

Authorities confirmed that the plane, which had departed from John C. Tune Airport in Nashville, went down in a field near Iotla Valley Elementary School around 3 p.m. local time. Miraculously, no one at the school was harmed. The FAA and NTSB are investigating the cause of the crash.

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A Life Redirected by Calling

Born Brett James Cornelius on June 5, 1968, in Columbia, Missouri, James initially pursued a career in medicine before answering the call to music. He released his own debut album in 1995 but soon found his greatest impact in songwriting—crafting melodies and lyrics that gave voice to some of the biggest artists in country music and beyond.

His most enduring work may be “Jesus, Take the Wheel,” recorded by Carrie Underwood, a song that not only won a Grammy but also became an anthem of surrender and faith for

countless believers. James also penned hits such as Kenny Chesney's "When the Sun Goes Down" and songs for Jason Aldean, Dierks Bentley and Rascal Flatts. In all, more than 500 of his songs were recorded, contributing to millions of album sales worldwide.

Honored Legacy

Over the years, James was twice named ASCAP Country Songwriter of the Year and was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2020. Yet for those who knew him, his faith and love for family shone brighter than his accolades. He is survived by his wife, Sandra Cornelius, and their children. One of his final public posts was a joyful Father's Day photo with his family, a testimony to the priorities that defined his life.

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Remembering His Impact

In moments like this, we are reminded of the fragile nature of life and the eternal weight of the legacy we leave behind. Brett James gave the world more than chart-topping hits—he gave us songs that pointed hearts heavenward. Through "Jesus, Take the Wheel" and other works, he captured the cry of a soul surrendering to God in times of desperation.

While his earthly journey ended suddenly, his music continues to speak, calling listeners to trust in the Lord who holds our lives in His hands. As believers, we grieve with hope, knowing that death is not the end but a doorway into eternity with Christ.

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Let us pray for comfort and peace for the Cornelius family during this time, and may we honor Brett James's life by taking to heart the message he gave the world: to let go, and let Jesus take the wheel.

Prepared by Charisma Media Staff.