

# *Focus on Jesus*

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## DOES GOD EVER SPEAK TO US?

Sure He does! He probably speaks to us far more often than we realize.

About sixty-five years ago I was working for the United Pocahontas Coal Company at Crumpler, West Virginia. Working in a coal mine isn't the greatest way to make a living, but it sufficed at the time. The coal seam we were mining was about four feet thick. I was about six feet tall so I had to do all my work bent over or on my knees! A bit awkward to say the least.

I was a member of a loading machine crew consisting of eight men. My partner was a black man named John Jones. The two of us set timbers and laid track.

One day we were working in a place not far from where the cutting machine operator was preparing the coal face for the shot fireman. The cutting machine operator was a white fellow named Casey Jones.

Suddenly we heard Casey cursing and yelling at the top of his voice. John said we had better go see what was wrong with Casey.

Our crew was doing what was known as "retreating." That part of the section had been worked until almost all of the coal was gone. There was a small amount left called the "stump." It was supporting the ceiling. We needed to

remove the stump so the ceiling could fall.

When we reached the opening to the place, John told me to stay where I was until he could find out about Casey's problem. Shortly he returned with Casey in tow. Casey told him that while he was making a cut in the stump the mountain shifted pinning his cutting machine and now the place was collapsing. He wanted to save the machine but he couldn't free it. John told Casey to go to the closest break-through and wait for us there. John told me to set several breaker timbers across the opening while he returned to the machine. John drilled a hole just above the cutter bar and inserted a half stick of powder. He came out to where I was and then we joined Casey.

John fired the shot and after the mountain had settled a bit he went back to the machine. It was free! John backed it out and parked it in a safe break-through. Casey was elated and shortly took the cutter to work another loading place.

John and I removed the track from Casey's place and installed several more breaker timbers. A short time later the roof collapsed and all was well.

One of our mine's rules had to do with the loss of electric power. If power failed the entire crew was to go to the site of the loading machine. If power were not restored in fifteen minutes the crew was to roll the loading machine to a safe break-through then start walking for daylight.

About three months following John's and Casey's episode we had a power outage. As required we assembled at the loader site.

While we were sitting and waiting John told us he had taken a bus trip to see relatives over the weekend. On his return the bus driver announced a rest stop. John said he went in the restaurant and stood at the counter. He asked the waitress for a glass of water. She told him blacks were not served there. He said this treatment was wrong and we all agreed with him.

John asked if we thought he would risk his life to help one of us who might be caught in a rock fall. Casey interrupted to remind us that at great risk John had saved his life and his machine three months previously.

Then John asked if any of us would risk our lives to help him if he were caught in a fall. Everyone said they would help him. One of the group told John to remember we were all brothers and needed to depend on each other because of the danger in the mountain.

John replied with, "Well, if we be brothers here in the mountain how come when we hits daylight I gets to be a black S.O.B.?"

The silence was deafening. Then suddenly power was restored and we all returned to our work places.

Did God speak through John Jones on that day in the mountain? I think He did and all seven of us heard His message.

Through John, He told us we were all His children. The color of our skin might be white, brown, black, yellow or whatever and we were still His children. He told us He loves us all. Remember He

has made a place in His kingdom for each and every one of us. All we need do is accept His gift by believing in His Son, Jesus.

**WHAT A GIFT!**  
**WHAT A GOD!**  
**WHAT A SAVIOR!**

I MISSED YOU AT CHURCH  
LAST SUNDAY.  
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

Many times church members just plain disappear. They turn up missing and very seldom does anyone find out why they are no longer among those present for worship.

In World War Two, I was the first sergeant of the Head Quarters Squadron of the 382<sup>nd</sup> Air Service Group (Special). It was my job to know the whereabouts of all 250 men in my squadron. I couldn't do the job all by myself so I had a number of men who helped me keep track of the solders in our unit.

Why not do the same thing in our church? You might decide to keep up with three or four people. It's not a hard job and it lets folks know that you care about them. It also reminds them that God cares about them. More about this in our next issue.

ALWAYS REMEMBER

**John 3:16-17 ( NRSV )**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."