

Brother Johnson's Singing

Years ago, the elders and deacons had met about brother Johnson's singing. He was loud and off-key most of the time. They didn't want to discourage brother Johnson, but some of the brethren had complained that his singing was sometimes distracting. Brothers Smith and Buford were elected to talk to Johnson and see if they could teach him how to sing more appropriately.

Brother Johnson was an old-fashioned fellow. So, when they pulled up, he was working in his field, plowing behind his mule. They pulled up in a cloud of dust and walked on to the field. They could hear Johnson's singing broken by various commands to the mule. Buford, who had drawn the short straw, started to speak, "Brother Johnson, we don't want to discourage you, but we have had some complaints about your singing..."

Johnson cut in, hanging his head, saying "I know, brethren. I sing too loud. I never had no training, so I'm off key. I can't carry a tune in a bucket. I tell myself each assembly that I'm not gonna sing that loud 'cause I know it bothers people.

"But I'll tell you, brothers, every day I come out here and work this land. I see the sun rise over those mountains over there. I hear the birds singing in the trees and see the fish jumping in the creek. At night I watch the stars sparkling down on me and the moon shining. I just can't stop thinking about this great world God has made. And how He lets me live in it and work it.

"Then I think about heaven and how great it must be if it is better than all that. I think about my parents, who died a couple years ago, singing around God's throne. I think about the voice I will have there. I think about how much I want to go.

"Then I think about how bad I have messed everything up and how Jesus left heaven to come down to this world. I can hear those Jews shouting, 'Crucify Him!' I can see those Romans beating Him with that scourge. I know He did that for me.

"Well, then I just can't help it. I have to sing. I want God to know how much I love Him. I want my brothers to know how much God loves them. In fact, just thinking about it now makes me want to sing right now. Could you hold these reins for me? I just gotta let God know how great He is."

With his tear-filled eyes looking skyward and his hands lifted up, Johnson began to sing "How Great Thou Art" as if his only audience were God Himself. He was loud and off-key. But Smith and Buford had never heard anything more beautiful. They couldn't help but join in. When they finished, they thanked Johnson, hugged him and left.

At the next elders and deacons meeting, brothers Smith and Buford reported they thought it might be a better idea if they had Johnson teach the complainers how to sing more appropriately.