

## TESTIMONY OF PASTOR JOHNSON BEGAY

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1932, Johnson D. Begay Sr., was born to Denet Deal & June Dez Nos Bah Begay in White Rock, New Mexico. As a child, he was taught farming, shepherding, and horsemanship. Johnson had fond memories of making mud toys while herding his family sheep. He loved horses! He became a skilled horseman that led him to bronc riding at a young age. He remembers the beautiful prayers of blessing that his father performed every day at dawn. This action inspired him that one day; he would be a medicine man.

Life changed at the young age of 16. Johnson went to work for the railroad along with his father. He was introduced to alcohol at a very young age. This job took him to many different parts of the country, including New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and South Dakota. While in Wyoming, his father passed away and was buried there.

In the early 1950's Johnson met Dorothy White Hawk, a Sioux Native of South Dakota. They married and had eight children together. The eldest is Terry Begay, Raymond "Ben" Begay, Verlie Swingman, Leitha Foster, Bobby Begay, Rand Begay, Art Begay and Anna Marie Begay, the youngest. This is a total of 5 boys and 3 girls. Sadly Johnson and Dorothy's marriage ended. It might have been from the abuse of alcohol that has plagued many natives across the land. Alcohol created more problems and later Johnson returned to the Southwest for work. He left his family behind and sought work in Arizona and California. He became a migrant field worker and traveled between Arizona and California for several years harvesting fruit and vegetables. That is where he met Barbara Wilson while working in the fields.

They later had 4 Children: J. Deal Begay Jr., Sandra Silversmith, Violet Flores, and Samuel Begay. Johnson was well on his way in working but was still battling alcoholism. Like his first marriage the problem of alcoholism started to arise and Barbara knew she needed to do something.

The early 1970's Barbara became a Christian. She attended the Cocopah Nazarene church under Pastor David Young. Barbara made several attempts to invite Johnson to go to church with her. A couple of times, Johnson even threatened Pastor Young and even jerked and slapped him in the face. Johnson had nothing to do with a white man's religion.

On Sunday, with no money, no job, and no work, Johnson was desperate for whisky. Alcoholism had taken control of his body leaving him with terrible body shakes and muscle spasms. He was desperate and needed a drink to ease the hangover. Barbara was also desperate and wanted to help her husband. She offered to buy him a bottle of whiskey if he promised to attend church with her that day. She had been praying weeks before for help. The Lord answered her prayer and Johnson was dressed that Sunday and sat in church. His intentions were to only get what had been promised to him. He made it clear that he went only to satisfy the inner craving of alcohol. Little did he know that that was the last day he would ever drink alcohol.

He remembered his promise of alcohol. While sitting in the pew all he wished for was his alcohol. The time came for the altar call. He went up and knelt but didn't pray. Later at the store, he got his money from Barbara. He went right into the liquor counter but the conviction of God fell upon him. He never did buy his bottle of liquor; instead he chose to serve God over a bottle of orange juice. Since that day, he was a changed man. His ultimate goal was for salvation and to preach the wonderful Word of Jesus Christ. His great mission had begun.

In 1972, Johnson & Barbara packed up the family and moved to Albuquerque, NM to attend the Nazarene Indian Bible College. The Cocopah's thought he had lost his mind, his mother in law called him a "crazy Navajo man." He didn't care what others thought of him. He proved them wrong and graduated in 1976 along with Barbara and they both received their Minister's License and Ministerial Degree.

The following years brought much happier days in days in serving Jesus Christ. Both Barbara & Johnson took the pastoral jobs of several churches including Kaibeto Nazarene, Window Rock Nazarene, Navajo Station Nazarene, Poston Nazarene and Lehi Nazarene. He was dedicated to serving God with all his might.

For the past 27 years, Johnson & Barbara have been working with the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indians in Phoenix. They have established the Community Bible Church in the Bunnyville area. This was his greatest love and dedication for God and for the people. He did his best till the end. His legacy of love will never end. His legacy of salvation carries on with the teaching we have learned. He was a great man that came from a humble home with nothing to give but his all.

Rev. Johnson left us at dusk, Thursday, Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009. It was a sad sunset but a glorious sunrise over in Glory Land! We will miss him dearly!