



THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE

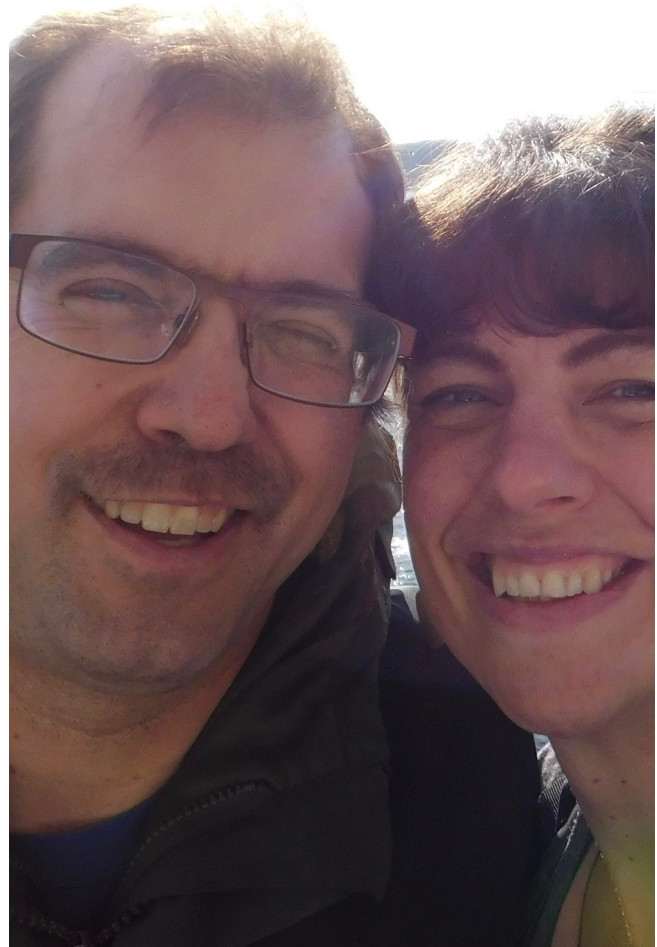
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**John G Lake was used by
God in a wonderful way.
Read of the miracles that
followed his surrendered
life. God bless you.
Shawn Stevens**

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The Life Of John Lake

The examples of some people's lives make it very easy to believe in the Lord. The life of John Graham Lake was one such life. It can be measured as one long string of miracles. He was born in Ontario, Canada, on March 18, 1870. He came from a large family of eighteen and they moved to Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan while he was still a young boy.

At age sixteen, Lake heard the gospel at a Salvation Army meeting and, shortly after, gave his life to Christ. Lake says, "I made my surrender to Him. The light of heaven broke into my soul, and I arose from my knees a son of God, and I knew it."¹

One difficult trial which faced the Lake family was that of chronic illness. Four of Lake's brothers and four of his sisters died prematurely from illnesses. Lake says, "For thirty-two years some member of our family was an invalid."² He said, further, that "During this period our home was never without the shadow of sickness."³ His childhood memories were filled with "sickness, doctors, nurses, hospitals, hearses, funerals, graveyards and tombstones; a sorrowing household; a broken-hearted mother and a grief-stricken father, struggling to forget the sorrows of the past in order to assist the living members of the family who needed their love and care."⁴ These memories Lake would carry with him into his adult life. When Lake was twenty, a Christian farmer taught him about sanctification. Lake had a great revelation of this and it profoundly affected him. In 1891, he moved to Chicago and joined a Methodist school of ministry. He was offered a pastorate in the state of Wisconsin but he declined this

appointment. Instead, he moved to Harvey, Illinois, and founded a local newspaper called *The Harvey Citizen*.⁵ In Harvey, Lake met, and later married, Jennie Stevens. She was very strong in her faith and was greatly used by the Lord in intercessory prayer. However, tragedy would strike Lake's home. Two years into their marriage, Jennie was diagnosed with tuberculosis and heart disease. Her irregular heartbeat was so serious that she would lapse into unconsciousness and Lake would sometimes find her this way, as she lay on the floor. Doctors prescribed stimulants, which they kept increasing, and, eventually, they prescribed nitroglycerin tablets. Jennie became a virtual invalid. During this time, Lake moved his family back to Sault Sainte Marie where Jennie's condition continued to decline.⁶

The strain of these circumstances greatly grieved Lake. One of his brothers had been an invalid with internal bleeding for twenty-two years. One sister, age thirty-four, had breast cancer. Now, Jennie was close to death. Lake knew that God could heal. He knew this, not only from reading the Bible, but also, from his own personal experience. Earlier in life, Lake had suffered with rheumatism. In search of help, he had traveled to Chicago to visit the minister, John Alexander Dowie's, healing home. There, he received prayer and was healed. Remembering this, he brought both his invalid brother and sister to Dowie's healing home and they were miraculously healed. Encouraged by this, Lake planned to take another of his ailing sisters to Dowie's healing home but, before he could, he received word that her condition was deteriorating very rapidly and that, if he wanted to see her alive, he must come immediately. Lake

did come, and found his unconscious sister in a room full of mourners. They could not even find a pulse in her. Her baby lay in a crib nearby. ⁷In agonizing grief, Lake thought, "She must not die! I will not have it!" ⁸He said, "No words of mine can convey to another soul the cry that was in my heart and the flame of hatred for death and sickness that the Spirit of God had stirred within me. The very wrath of God came to possess my soul." ⁹Lake again thought of Dowie and telegraphed him, "My sister has apparently died, but my spirit will not let her go. I believe if you will pray, God will heal her." ¹⁰Dowie sent this message back, "Hold onto God. I am praying. She will live." ¹¹Lake did hang onto God and, in the name of Jesus, he rebuked the power of death. Miraculously, his sister completely recovered and, in five days, joined the family for Christmas dinner.

Lake's brother and two sisters had been healed but, on April 28, 1898, Jennie seemed to be in her final hours. A fellow minister counselled Lake to accept Jennie's approaching death. Lake opened his Bible randomly and it fell on an account of where Jesus healed a woman. This sparked faith in Lake and, approaching Jennie's sickbed, he boldly declared that she would be healed. He also contacted Dowie, informing him of these things. Lake then knelt at Jennie's side and prayed fervently for her healing. Again, miraculously, God answered. ¹²Jennie, aware that something had happened to her, shouted out loud, "Praise God, I'm healed!" ¹³

The news of Jennie's healing made the newspapers and spread across the country. Before long, people were traveling to Lake's home, requesting prayer for their own healing. While in Sault Sainte Marie, Lake did pray for them but, in 1901, he

moved to Zion, Illinois, and joined Dowie's ministry. Lake worked for Dowie full time and was given opportunity to preach. ¹⁴

In 1904, Lake left Zion and moved to Chicago, where he bought a seat on the Chicago Board of Trade. Lake was financially successful and, in a year's time, had accumulated \$130,000 and real estate worth \$90,000. He formed a trust, which included the nation's three largest insurance companies, from which he gained a salary of \$50,000 a year. This was a fortune in the early 1900s. ¹⁵

Although successful in business ventures, Lake's heart was more interested in God and ministry than in business. He said, "It became easy for me to detach myself from the course of life, so that while my hands and mind were engaged in the common affairs of every day, my spirit maintained its attitude of communion with God." ¹⁶Lake still sensed his calling to the ministry. While living in Zion, Illinois, a fellow preacher, Tom Hezmalhalch, had said to him directly that Jesus had told Hezmalhalch that he and Lake would preach together. This would become significant later on. ¹⁷One day, an old man visited Lake and told him about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Lake determined that, if what he heard was true, he wanted it. For the next nine months, Lake intensely hungered for more of God. Sometimes, Lake could be seen walking down the street, repeatedly groaning in hunger for God. ¹⁸

One day, Lake and Hezmalhalch went to pray for a sick lady. As Lake was praying for her, he, himself, had a powerful spiritual experience. Hezmalhalch, discerning this, said to Lake, "Praise the Lord, John ... Jesus has baptized you in the Holy Ghost." ¹⁹Lake said:

When the phenomena had passed, the glory of it remained in my soul. I found that my life began to manifest a varied range of the gifts of the Spirit. And I spoke in tongues by the power of God, and God flowed through me with a new force. Healings were more of a powerful order. 20 Lake had, indeed, been baptized in the Holy Spirit and he testified of this in Charles Parham's tent services in 1906. 21 After his baptism in the Holy Spirit, Lake desired to extend himself in ministry even more. He left his \$50,000-per-year job, initially on a three-month leave of absence, and never returned to it. He was now in full time ministry. He said, "I am through forever with everything in life but the proclamation and the demonstration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." 22 Lake had a further experience in which he claimed that God specifically called him to go to Africa. He began to pray and to prepare and, in 1908, Lake, Jennie, their seven children, Hezmalhalch, and three others, boarded a ship for South Africa. By 1908, all of Lake's wealth had been spent or given away. Lake boarded the boat with \$1.50 in his hand. Upon arriving in South Africa, the immigration department required a fee of \$125 to be paid for each family. Lake didn't have the money but, nevertheless, he stood in line with the other passengers who were paying their fees. As they stood in line, another passenger, after asking Lake a few questions, handed him \$200 which enabled them to pay the fee. This miracle would be followed by another that very same day. The Lakes had nowhere to live. As they stood on the dock in Johannesburg, they noticed a certain American woman. She began talking with them and, before long, offered them her home to live in. 23 Now, with a home provided for them, Lake could turn his full attention to ministry. He

had only been in South Africa for a matter of days when his first door of ministry opened. A pastor, due for a leave of absence, asked Lake to fill his pulpit. Lake began ministering and was blessed with phenomenal success. Africans were being healed in his meetings and the news of this soon spread far and wide. Before long, Lake had a stream of visitors coming, not only to his meetings, but also, to his home. Both Lake and Jennie spent hours ministering to, and praying for, their many visitors. While in Africa, Lake did not take offerings but, often, people donated food and money to him discreetly. Lake and Hezmalhalch preached together and Lake established the Apostolic Tabernacle in Johannesburg. This began a movement of churches that would spread throughout Africa. 24 Amidst all this success, the Lake home was about to experience a painful tragedy. On December 22, 1908, while Lake was ministering in the Kalahari Desert, Jennie died. When he returned home, he learned of her death. Most accounts of her passing attributed it to a combination of physical exhaustion and malnutrition. Lake was devastated. 25 There would be more painful trials ahead. In 1910, a plague was raging in South Africa. A quarter of the population had died from it. Doctors and nurses were afraid to be around this disease and the government was offering \$1,000 to nurses who would care for the sick. Lake, and those with him, would go free of charge, remove the dead from their houses and bury them. Through all of this, Lake did not contract any symptoms of the disease. Also in 1910, Hezmalhalch left Lake's ministry and Lake continued on without his old friend. 26

Lake did continue on for a while but, in 1912, Lake would leave Africa. During his years there, a huge movement had formed under his leadership. He had started two main groups, the *Apostolic Faith Mission/Apostolic Tabernacle* and the *Zion Christian Church*. With 100,000 converts, 625 congregations had sprung up. 27 Lake returned to America. In 1913, he met and married Florence Switzer. He would go on to have five more children with her. Florence was a skilled stenographer and she recorded many of Lake's sermons. The Lake family settled in Spokane, Washington, where Lake set up his own type of healing home, which he referred to as "healing rooms." Scores of visitors were miraculously healed at these healing rooms and the news of the healings was frequently published in the local newspaper. Before long, as many as two hundred people a day were visiting Lake's healing homes. 28

While in Spokane, Lake began another Apostolic Church but he would not stay there indefinitely. In 1920, he moved to Portland, Oregon, where he started another church. Lake did a lot of traveling ministry and, eventually, established forty churches in the United States and Canada. 29 In 1931, he returned to Spokane.

On Labor Day of 1935, the Lakes returned home from a Sunday School picnic and Lake was exhausted. He lay down and, later that night, Florence found that he had suffered a stroke. For two weeks, he lay in a debilitated condition and, on Sept. 16, 1935, at the age of sixty-five, John Lake died. 30

Lake's spiritual journey began at age sixteen in a Salvation Army meeting. His faith carried him from America to Africa, and again, back to America. In every place, lives were changed as he shared the gospel and power of Christ with desperate

souls. His legacy included a large movement of churches on at least two continents. Some lives make it easy to believe in God. One of Lake's converts said this about him:

Dr. Lake came to Spokane. He found us in sin. He found us in sickness. He found us in poverty of spirit. He found us in despair, but he revealed to us such a Christ as we had never dreamed of knowing this side of heaven. 31

ENDNOTES

1. John G. Lake, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1996), 169.
2. Ibid., 170.
3. Ibid., 170.
4. Ibid., 170.
5. Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1996), 170.
6. Ibid., 170-171.
7. Ibid., 171,172.
8. John G. Lake, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 172.
9. Ibid., 173.
10. Ibid., 173.
11. John Alexander Dowie, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 173.
12. Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 173-174.
13. Jennie Lake, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 174.
14. Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 175.
15. Ibid., 177.
16. John G. Lake, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 175.
17. Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 176.
18. John G. Lake, quoted in Dr. Michael Brown, *Giants of the Faith : John Lake*, ICN Ministries, Audiocassette.
19. Tom Hezmalhalch, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 176.
20. John G. Lake, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 176.
21. Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit : 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901 – 2001* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 89.
22. John G. Lake, quoted in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 177.
23. Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 178-179.
24. Ibid., 179-182.
25. Ibid., 182.
26. Ibid., 182-183.

27. Ibid., 184-185.
28. Ibid., 185,189.
29. Ibid., 189, 192.
30. Ibid., 192.
31. Anonymous quote, found in Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals*, 195.

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- Brown, Dr. Michael. *Giants of the Faith : John Lake*. ICN Ministries. Audiocassette.
- Liardon, Roberts. *God's Generals*. New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1996.
- Synan, Vinson. *The Century of the Holy Spirit : 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901 – 2001*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

