

The Life That Jane Built

By Barbara Gordon
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The Life Built Upon the Rock
--A Common, Everyday Story--

Jane and Betty were sisters, biological sisters, both raised in the church. They were both often described as nice, attractive and smart girls, and there was every indication that they would both do well in life. And they have.



When they reached the age of adulthood, Jane chose to attend a local junior college so that she could stay home—close to what she was most familiar with. Betty, the more adventurous of the two, chose to attend an out-of-state college and pursue an advance degree in medicine. There were times when Jane wondered about her choices, as she listened to Betty’s stories about the exciting activities taking place in a four-year university and all the creative people that came and went in her life. Jane even joined a sorority, a national and prestigious one, and made a new friend—Gina, who was a professional model. Hanging out with popular kids, Jane soon was dating a very handsome assistant professor who had what she called “promising prospects.”

But Jane contented herself with teaching Sunday School, working with the older sisters at the church and learning to be an events planner, while she studied to be a nurse. Shortly after Jane received her Associate’s Degree and became a Licensed Practical Nurse, she agreed to marry Dave—the young man from church she had dated since she was 16. Jane and Dave decided on a long engagement so that they could work and save money for a “really nice wedding” and a down payment on a little house. When Jane shared the news with her sister Betty, Betty was really glad for her. Although Betty felt Jane’s practical approach to setting up her future was somewhat boring, she knew it fit her sister because neither Jane nor Dave were risk takers. She had heard both frequently make the same statement whenever the conversation involved those things that indicated “upward mobility”--cruises, expensive cars, stock investments. They always said, “There will be time for frills later.”

At the same time, Betty was making a great deal of progress achieving her life-long dreams. Her sorority-sister Gina got her signed up with a modeling agency. She was able to earn enough money to pay her own tuition bills and to buy her own car. Betty was only a little disturbed that her parents hadn’t expressed more pride over the fact that she was able to pay her own way so early in life. She felt they were no doubt disappointed in the new, fashionable look she had to develop—one that more resembled a fashion model. With Gina’s assistance, Betty had found the right make-up, hairdo and designer clothes, resulting in her being very popular on campus. She was voted Homecoming Queen as a junior and was featured in two national magazines! When her modeling agency suggested that she could earn even more money in New York, Betty’s assistant professor proposed marriage. He didn’t want to lose her. So, he gave her a huge, 2-carat diamond ring and assured her that after he became a full professor he would make sure she had a job working in the medical research department at the university. Betty was so pleased—she had almost forgotten her original desire to have a career in medicine. Two months later, they

had a “storybook wedding,” and had it at church—although no one had really seen much of Betty since she went off to college, everyone from home attended the wedding along with her new college friends. And, all that the professor promised did come true.

Fifteen years later—Betty frequently looks at the big diamond ring that is on her ring finger, the one that matches the circle of diamonds shining on her other hand, and she complains to herself that “all that glitters is not gold.” She still wears designer fashions, only now they are designer business suits, as a suit is the appropriate attire for the head of the university’s Radiology Research Department. She is still very popular and very much admired. Everyone thinks she and her handsome husband have it made! Their spacious quad-level home in the suburbs is expensively decorated, they travel a lot as both are frequently asked to be presenters at conferences and seminars, and they have no children to hold them down. The professor forgot to tell Betty that he couldn’t have children—and Betty dearly loves them. The professor also forgets to tell Betty what his day-to-day schedule will be—but Gina, Betty’s best friend, somehow always seems to know what’s going on in his life. Her unmarried best friend and her husband are close friends too or so they say.

Betty contents herself with her two pedigree doggies and photos that line the wall of her family room—photos of when she was an up and coming “Cover Girl.” When she’s out shopping, and she shops a lot, she buys a lot of things for Jane’s children. And why not. She has just about purchased for herself everything anyone could ever buy. When she gets too depressed, she stops by the local church and asks for prayers. It doesn’t seem to help much. She knows she would feel better if she were actively involved with the church in some real way, but with all of her job responsibilities she doesn’t really have the time. One day, she’s going to make the time. Until then, she just pops one of those little white pills that takes away the anxious feeling that creeps up on her more and more.

Jane wishes she could make things better for her sister. She tries to use the scriptures to uplift Betty and to keep her strong. She tries to never “over-do” it when she’s describing what’s going on her life. She was careful not to sound like she was bragging when she told Betty that Dave was being ordained as a Deacon at church—poor Betty can’t even get her husband to go to church. She quietly told Betty about the funding for a small, but free, medical clinic she was able to get—and that she would be running the clinic out of the basement of the church. And she only casually mentioned that Dave had now purchased their third apartment building. She wasn’t sure if Betty would be interested in knowing she and Dave were landlords who specialized in renting to low-income, single mothers. How Dave provided for his family wasn’t glamorous, but it did pay for two full weeks at Disney World last summer—and a person could travel to Australia and back on what that cost! God is good.

But, Jane does try to always remind Betty of the joy that can be found in being of service to others. She always says, “Because as you know, the Lord blesses us so that we can be a blessing to someone else.” Jane prays for her sister and hopes that one day soon she’ll be motivated to seek out what she can for others in place of waiting for something wonderful to come along that will make her happy.

--May the Lord add a blessing to the readers of this story.--