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Like a Rock

by Jennifer Horst

(English 1101)

Some people are born strong, meeting disaster and sorrow with a steady hand and a trusting mind that all things, no matter how broken, can be mended. Those of us who are not as confident in ourselves to conquer emotional disaster look to other people to guide us; to be a light when it seems that all is dark. In Cris Burks' short story "Precious," we are introduced to Jericho Davis, a man who is a true believer in love and family; a man who exemplifies wisdom, patience, pride and strength. Throughout Jericho's life, there have been several situations that could have threatened to break up the family that he so deeply cherished. Instead of being a victim, Jericho remained strong, doing all that he could in order to preserve his family structure. Through his personal anecdotes and advice, one can clearly see that Jericho Davis is a man of strength, with ideals of love and support that urge him to share his wisdom with following generations.

Jericho's name could be a reference to the biblical battle of Jericho, where the city met its famous demise as Joshua marched his army around its protective walls, ultimately causing the city's walls to collapse. Ironically, this Jericho is seemingly the opposite of a battle lost. Throughout his life, unfortunate circumstance has marched around Jericho's walls. Yet, he remains steadfast, shining as bright as ever. In the midst of his wife's mind decaying from Alzheimer's, Jericho remains a rock, loving and taking delicate care of her. Similarly, when his son, James, died suddenly in a car accident, it was Jericho who disguised his own pain in order to comfort everyone in his family. His daughter notes that she would see him crying behind the garages, so no one in the family would see him in pain. As his limp suggests, Jericho is old and his body tired. Yet through adversity, he remains as strong as can be, picking others up as they fall around him.

In spite of his neglected appearance, Jericho has earned the respect of his peers. His attire, which generally consists of old, ragged flannel shirts, baggy overalls, and baseball caps with his gray, untamed hair poking out wildly, makes him seem like an unkempt vagabond. Even his daughter mentions that if Jericho were walking the streets of Chicago, he could easily be mistaken for a bum. However, despite his relaxed appearance, his peers respect him perhaps more than anyone else in town. Townspeople pay little heed to Jericho's tattered clothes and dirty skin; instead, they focus on his successful auto repair business and his long-lasting marriage. Even though Jericho's lack of traditional education is made apparent through his frequent mispronunciation of words, he is still esteemed by those who surround him. In pure reverence, even his daughter refers to him as "Sir". Whenever Jericho speaks, the townspeople listen intently, often sharing in Jericho's pride of having a prosperous college-educated daughter in a town where college degrees are rare.

While Jericho is lacking formal education, his wisdom in life is abundant. Examples of his gumption are showcased throughout the story, as he tries to reconcile his daughter's broken marriage. Jericho gives sound, and logical advice, urging his daughter to differentiate love from lust. Much of Jericho's good advice in maintaining a healthy marriage comes from his own experience of loving a woman with a wayward heart. In dealing with his wife's infidelity, Jericho proves that he is a patient and understanding man, and that he is also a believer in the power of love and the importance of family. In the early years of his marriage to Anna, his wife fell in love with another man. When Jericho begged Anna to stay, she responded by telling him that she would never love him as much as she loves her new boyfriend. Jericho allowed his wife to run away with the stranger, but demanded that the kids remain by his side in an attempt to scare Anna, and to hold his family together. Three

months after Anna left, Jericho received news that Anna was alone, hungry, poor and sick, so he retrieved his wife and brought her back home. Although when Anna returned, it took a long time for the love in her heart to come back as well. Jericho maintained his love for his wife, forgiving her as if her heart had never left him alone. Jericho even went as far as to love and support a son whom he was not the father of. Jericho's love for his wife never faded, even as Anna's mind fails her as a result of Alzheimer's. Jericho sits by her side and cares for her, as if she were the same beautiful 14 year old he fell in love with so many years ago.

As stated, Jericho's appreciation of family is made obvious through his many attempts at keeping his flock together. Jericho imparts to his grandchildren the important history of the family, and how they got their freedom. He acts like the glue that bonds generations together, imbuing his knowledge and wisdom to whoever will listen. As his job as a successful auto mechanic suggests, Jericho's life involves a great deal of fixing things. Just as he fixes broken parts on engines, Jericho fixes fault lines in his family's land; his daughter's possible divorce being a looming quake in an otherwise peaceful territory. Despite his increasing age, he remains a strong and powerful force in three separate generations of Davis.

Work Cited

Burks, Cris. "Precious." *The Thing About Hope Is...* Ed, David McGrath. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2003. 157-169.