

BUILDING CHARACTER

The Woodsman and the Leprechaun

BY MICHAEL JOSEPHSON

Long ago, a woodsman saved the life of a leprechaun and was given one wish. The woodsman thought for a long time and finally wished that each of his three daughters find a good husband.

But the leprechaun was full of games: "How am I to know what's good in your mind? I'll give them husbands, but you can name only one quality and it's got to be the same for all. What'll you have? Wealth, fame, intelligence, beauty ... you name it."

The woodsman thought again. "Give me men of good character, then."

The leprechaun wasn't done playing. "And how am I to know what good character is?" he asked.

"Do you have children?" the woodsman countered.

"I do."

"And do you love them?"

"More than life itself."

"Then give my girls the kind of men you want for your children."

"Ah," the leprechaun said, "then you shall have honorable men with kind and loving hearts. And I'll throw in a strong conscience, too."

What would you have chosen? Sure, wealth can buy a lot of pleasures. And intelligence, fame and beauty are great assets that can make life more enjoyable. But through the lens of parental love, the importance of good character stands out. I call this the parent perspective, a worldview that defines good character with clarity and provides a powerful impetus for our own morality. Next time you face an ethical temptation or dilemma just ask yourself what you hope your children and the people they date and marry would do. Or what action would best earn their pride and make the world the kind of world you want your children to live in.

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