



NEWSLETTER

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN GENERATIONS

THE WISDOM OF GREYNESS AND THE VIRTUE OF YOUTH



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Family businesses do not survive only because the numbers add up, but because the family carries one another.

Sustainability requires wise business decisions and healthy relationships.

When one of these is missing, the foundation begins to crack.



Good business decisions provide direction. They bring order, discipline, and planning. They require strategy, structures, accountability, and sometimes difficult choices. Without sound business decisions, a family business becomes an emotional ship without a rudder - full of good intentions, but at the mercy of storms.



Healthy relationships are equally important because they give meaning. They create trust, safety, and a sense of belonging. This is where respect, listening, forgiveness, and empathy reside. Without healthy relationships, even the best business decisions become cold and unapproachable - a success on paper, but a pain in the heart.



The danger lies in thinking we must choose: either business or family. Sustainability requires both.

Decisions must be made with wisdom, but also with compassion.

Conflict must be handled professionally, but approached humanely. Boundaries must be clear, but hearts must remain open.



When your mind and heart work together, something special happens. The business becomes more than a source of income; it becomes a carrier of values, a teacher to the next generation, and a legacy that measures not only wealth but also family harmony.



Family businesses will only be sustainable if they understand the following truth:

- You cannot build the future with only a sharp mind, nor can you carry it with only a soft heart.
- Only when your head and heart join hands do a business become something worth entrusting to children and grandchildren.
- The footprints we leave behind determine the value of our legacy.

This brings me to the relationship between parents and children in a family business. After more than 650 consultations over decades and many mediations, I have often witnessed how parents and children can clash.

As a child, I challenged my parents about the 'Virtue of Youth.' As a parent, I now challenge my children about the 'Wisdom of Greyness.'

The Bible teaches that children must honour their parents so that their days may be long. The Bible also teaches that parents must not discourage their children. The sword cuts both ways.

Scripture itself guides us - not as a formula, but as a relationship of mutual honour. The key lies in not confusing honour with submission, and not confusing leadership with control.



Let me sketch a typical story that plays out on a family farm. The father, Peter, prefers the traditional way of doing things because it has worked for generations. The son, Steven, has learned new agricultural methods at university and tries to persuade his father to adapt to these new approaches.

BETWEEN ROOTS AND SHOOTS

The Uncertain Path

The old oak tree has stood on the farm for four generations. Its roots grow deep into the red soil, and its trunk is thicker than the farm foreman, Phineas's, large waistline. The tree is bent from years of storms, droughts, and seasons that came and went without apology. Father Peter teaches Steven what his grandfather often said:

“The oak tree does not stand because it grows fast, but because it grows deep.”



That morning, Peter once again stands beneath the oak tree. Before him lie the fields - vineyards on one side, young olive trees on the other. This is where his father taught him to read the land with respect: where water gathers, where the wind cuts, where to wait, and where to dare.

Behind him, he hears Steven's footsteps approaching.

“Dad,” Steven begins cautiously, like someone knocking on a door he is not sure will be opened. “We need to talk about the new water system.”

Peter does not turn around. He responds impatiently:

“We've been talking about your new methods for months, and every time it ends in the

same place. Don't meddle with things that have worked well here for generations.”

“This is not the same rainfall as when Grandpa farmed here,” Steven responds.

“The climate always changes,” Peter interrupts him. “But the land likes consistency.”

A silence follows. Not the comfortable kind.

“We've done it this way for four generations,” Peter continues. “Don't tamper with a successful recipe.”

The words lie between them like heavy stones.

Steven grips his notebook more tightly. Everything he learned at university - data, scenarios, new technologies and farming methods - suddenly feels useless against those words: Four generations.

“I'm not trying to break the winning recipe, Dad,” he says softly. “I'm trying to protect it.”

Peter turns around. For a moment, there is uncertainty in



his eyes - the kind that comes when someone realises, he might be wrong, but also does not want to change the ways of his forefathers.

“You don’t protect something by changing it,” he says, as convincingly as he can.

“And Dad doesn’t protect it by refusing to listen,” Steven replies - too quickly, too sharply.

That evening, the oak tree stood alone in the moonlight.

Roots

The second part of the story deals with Peter’s thoughts after his conversation with Steven.

Later that week, Peter walks alone through the vineyard.

Slower than usual. His knees remind him of years of work - each season a sacrifice, each harvest a prayer.

He stops next to an old vine.

One, he planted himself when he had just taken over the farm. He thinks of the deep roots now feeding the vine.

Suddenly, he remembers what his father said back then when they planted it: “Don’t change everything, but also don’t think that nothing can change.”

He begins to argue with himself as he recalls his father’s words. For the first time, he wonders whether he may have seen his son’s words as a threat when they might in fact be good advice.

Shoots

The third part of the story deals with Steven’s thoughts after his conversation with Father Peter.

Steven sits in the old shed where he played among seed bags as a child. His notebook is open, but he writes nothing.

He feels guilty about the sharp way he spoke to his father. He knows his advice is sound, but now he realises how easily knowledge can sound arrogant when it is not spoken with humility.

Steven takes a deep breath. A shoot that grows too fast breaks easily, his grandfather always said.

“I need to be more patient with my father and not want



to change everything too quickly,” he whispers.

Rain

*The rain comes unexpectedly.
Heavy. Continuous.*

Water begins to pool between the rows - exactly what Steven warned about earlier. Peter stands next to him. They say nothing. They simply watch.

“Tell me again,” Peter breaks the silence, his voice lower than usual, “about that water system.”

Steven opens his notebook. This time, he does not try to convince his father. He simply explains calmly what he has learned.

“Dad,” he concludes, “I wouldn’t be standing here today if it weren’t for what you and our forefathers built.”

Peter nods slowly and replies:

“And I, my son, must not forget my father’s words to me. He said: ‘Don’t change everything, but also don’t think that nothing can change.’ Let’s sort this challenge out together.”

Consensus

They did not change everything, but they also did not leave everything as it was. Under the oak tree, father and son decided together what must remain -so as not to forget the lessons of their

forefathers - and what must change because the future demands it.

The roots remained deep, and new shoots quietly broke through the soil. The family farm could breathe again, because true stewardship is not about clinging or letting go, but about building together on the inheritance God has entrusted to us.

Final Guidelines

1. Children honour parents more deeply when they experience that their voice matters. When parents listen before they lead, children learn that wisdom is not deaf. Then the ‘wisdom of greyness’ is not a wall, but



a shade under which a young person can rest.

2. Parents encourage children when their enthusiasm is not dismissed as naive, and when children experience that their parents actively listen to them. As James 1:19 teaches us: *Be quick to listen, slow to speak.*

3. Healthy relationships require humility on both sides - where parents acknowledge that they do not know everything and are still learning, and children acknowledge that they have not yet experienced everything.

The Essence of Wisdom

- When grey hair becomes humble, it becomes attractive.
- Wisdom must be shared, not enforced.
- Wisdom that is told is often resisted, but wisdom that is lived is often followed.
- Children respect not only what parents say, but especially how they handle conflict and how they acknowledge mistakes.



The golden principle is that relationships must be valued above being right, and where love is tangible, honour arises spontaneously. This is where the ‘*wisdom of greyness*’ and the ‘*virtue of youth*’ meet - not as opposites, but as fellow travellers on the same road.

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