

Blessings *for the* Family Business



by
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Life in a family business is full of instances to give thanks for God's gifts and to ask for His help, to recall the contributions of the people around and before us, and to acknowledge and forgive those closest to us. The act of offering a blessing reminds us we are part of a larger story, that our time together is important, that our presence with one another is meaningful. The ritual of offering a blessing fosters appreciation and invites healing.

My inspiration for these blessings comes from the late Irish priest [John O'Donohue](#), and specifically his book [To Bless the Space Between Us](#). Here is one of O'Donohue's many thoughts on the concept of a blessing:

While we seem to have progressed to become experts in so many things—multiplying and acquiring stuff we neither need nor truly want—we have unlearned the grace of presence and belonging. With the demise of religion, many people are left stranded in a chasm of emptiness and doubt; without rituals to recognize, celebrate, or negotiate the vital thresholds of people's lives, the key crossings pass by, undistinguished from the mundane, everyday rituals of life. This is where we need to retrieve and reawaken our capacity for blessing. If we approach our decisive thresholds with reverence and attention, the crossing will bring us more than we could ever have hoped for. This is where blessing invokes and awakens every gift the crossing has to offer.

A blessing is a circle of light drawn around a person to protect, heal, and strengthen. Life is a constant flow of emergence. The beauty of blessing is its belief that it can affect what unfolds.

My goal is to offer a few words for hope, healing, or thanksgiving, along with a passage from the Bible, to help you reflect on, and be thankful for, the many aspects of your family and family business. The pictures are from a wonderful friend, thinker, writer, and photographer of people and places, [Dan Turello](#), who resides in Washington, DC.

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A Blessing for a New Year in the Family Business

The end of the year offers a period of reflection on the successes you enjoyed and the lessons you learned, along with a renewal of hope for the potential of your family members working together. This blessing for the new year in the family business reminds us of the opportunity to write a new chapter in the story of your family business.

*As we turn the page on another year
In the story of our families, in the record of our businesses*

*As the numbers are tallied, as comparisons are made
We recollect unexpected blessings and count newfound opportunities.*

*Also with us are painful experiences, and difficult goodbyes
What we allow to linger sets a tone for the new year*

Our abundance is shaped by the blessings we remember.

In the months ahead, may you

Recall wisdom gleaned from this past year

Restore relationships meaningful to your future, and

Rekindle your passion for your family and your business.

**You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. (Psalm 65:11)**



A Blessing for Letting Go in the Family Business

A key challenge in family business succession is the senior generation's transition to a different role, or to a partial or full exit from the organization. Not only must they "let go" of what they've done (and perhaps even a little bit of who they are), they also must "grab hold" of a new role or new activities. They must conceive of their future contribution in a different way. This blessing is for them.

*A new dawn emerges
And you begin to realize
What once was easy is no longer so
And that working harder is not the answer.*

*Moving as quickly becomes a challenge
Peaceful rest is elusive
Aches curiously appear where before there were none
You feel the morning chill more deeply in your bones.*

*Your spirit senses other sounds
New hopes from a distant place
Intimations from an earlier time
Whispers from a still small voice.*

*Beckoning you to climb a different kind of mountain
Similar in shape but different in substance
A calling to nourish your spirit and connect with others
This is the business of your soul.*

*May the sacrifices you made in your early business life
Now create an appreciation for values beyond the financial.*

*May the mistakes you made in your early business life
Now provide wisdom for future generations.*

*May the successes from your early business life
Now help you define your best contribution.*

*And may your family appreciate your many gifts
Even those you did not intend to give.*

*May you be blessed with the courage, strength, and vision
To enthusiastically embrace your next chapter
And gracefully turn the page from your current family business role.*

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

A Blessing for the Next Generation's Return

We are often uncertain about whether our children will return. We face difficult questions and mixed emotions: Does our children's interest reflect their will, or their attempt to meet our expectations? What happens if they go away to gain experience and decide not to return to our company? What if they come back and it doesn't work out? Will they have what it takes to elevate the business to the next level? As you consider the next generation's return, this blessing is for them.

*Years ago your birth illuminated our lives
Helping us see beyond ourselves
Swaddled in blankets of faith, hope, and love
You were a true gift from God.*

*As you inherited the backstory of our family and business
We saw you as a potential steward of our legacy
While we were outspoken in our desire for your happiness
We silently hoped your vocation would merge with our life's work.*

*You grew in age, body, mind, and spirit
People and experiences refined your character
We witnessed the arc of your life taking shape
Your interest in returning crept into our conversations.*

*Now, as you return, may you come to understand:
Your family name can be both asset and liability
Your power and authority and wealth can be used to help, but can also do harm
Being humble and self-aware matter more than you might imagine
And that leadership does not require a title.*

Bless our transition to partners in business

*Bless our coming experiences of success, celebration, failure, and fracture
Bless the passion, curiosity, energy, and ideas you bring, for which we are so grateful
Bless our patience and understanding as you challenge what we know and how we work.
Most importantly, bless this family bond between us; may it flourish beyond any business endeavor we choose to undertake.*

For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever. (Philemon 1:15)

A Blessing for Rest in the Family Business

Life in the family business — life in general — can often feel overwhelming. You have recurring seasons of high-stakes work and the constant pressure to perform. But at some point the need for rest enters in. It might appear unexpectedly with a gap in your schedule, or be forced upon you by medical issues. It may be a long-planned excursion from your daily routine. Whatever the case, rest affords an opportunity to reconnect with ourselves and others, and to God. To think deeply about our lives. To ponder the next chapter. Rest can be a wonderful gift.

*In the midst of a hectic and quickening life
Between the porous borders of business and family
The list of have-to's and should-do's grows ever longer
And many good intentions go unaccomplished.*

*Bound by conflicting priorities
Beset by cascading problems
Buffeted by contrarian partners
Exhaustion and fatigue set in.*

*Then a calling for rest emerges from deep within
Your spirit requires a more relaxed rhythm
It beckons you to slow, to spend time differently
To consider the measure of your days.*

*In the quiet stillness of morning
In the early darkness of evening
You contemplate both the hope and the challenge
Of working together with those you live with and love.*

*Now, as you rest
May you exhale the rush of prior seasons
Learning from, then releasing what was difficult
Holding fast to glimpses of grace in your life.*

Now, as you rest,

*May the warmth of family and friends surround your thoughts
May their shoulders lighten your burden of leadership
May God bless the renewal of your spirit in the work of your family business.*

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
(Matthew 11:28)**

A Blessing Upon the Passing of a Family Business Member

When a family business member passes away, it can feel doubly painful because we have lost someone who was part of two overlapping families: our extended family and our work family. The person who has died – whether they started the enterprise, maintained it, or if they were the future of the business and died prematurely – leaves a large gap. The theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted that God leaves the gap "unfilled, and in this way he helps us to maintain our true communion with our loved one, even though it is painful." Here is a blessing when a beloved family business member passes away.

*Your leave-taking from this life has been hard on us
Mingled feelings of sadness, celebration, relief, and regret
Our past, present, and future shaped by your spirit
In this enterprise we recognize as both a blessing and a burden.*

*We treasure the gifts you left to us
Not simply money or property or personal effects
But a true wealth of stories, of values, of sacrifices
Molding the foundation of our own character*

*We did not always agree or act kindly toward one another
We regret what we said in anger, or what we should have said but didn't
We missed chances to heal some wounds before they became scars
Yet all are important in the ties binding us together.*

Now, as we recall your life with us,

*May any peace that eluded you in this life be found in the next
May any pain you carried in your mind, body, or soul be healed
May our recollections of our time with you cause us to smile
May God's presence connect us until we see each other again.*

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

A Blessing for a Family Business Gathering

Gatherings of family or family business members can be at times taken for granted and at times intentionally avoided: “We’re always together” or “We never meet.” Roles or proximity might require frequent interaction, while past conflict or personal struggle cause people to shun attendance. But, there comes a time when you and your family business partners will be in the same room. It might be a meal, a meeting, a party, or a funeral...something brings you together, setting the stage for interaction.

A family gathered together can be sacred space, where your bonds are strengthened and your relationships nourished. Consider using this blessing as a welcome to a family business gathering, a meeting invocation, or a prayer before a meal, and make it your own by adding or deleting specific hopes and acknowledgements.

As we come together this day

May our hearts be filled with goodwill toward each other

Honoring this kinship rooted in a shared history, experience, and geography

Recognizing a common future that will outlast any business endeavor

Let us not take our time together for granted, for it is truly a gift

Help us to look past annoyances and irritations, for we all stumble in many ways

Let us leave our personal worries for a brief time, so that we can focus on the other

Help us transcend the awkwardness of past conflict, so that we glimpse the potential for peace between us

May we see one another with a refreshed vision of our strengths

May we hear each other’s spoken words with positive intent

May we empathize with the emotions that frame conversations

May we call forth the joy experienced during our best times together

Now, may this gathering of our family members and business partners restore our relationships, create new connections, and honor the image of God in each of us.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

A Blessing for Your Estate Planning Efforts

Estate planning involving a family-owned business is a difficult endeavor. You are contemplating the future of the business you built, which is a big part of your legacy. You are thinking about your long-term employees, taking into account your children, and perhaps even grandchildren, some of whom may work in the business. You are trying to be fair with those you love, knowing that equality is elusive and many assets are illiquid. You are attempting to legally protect what you've created while simultaneously managing multiple levels of taxation. It's no wonder people avoid the process or get stuck. Planning for your demise is hard work!

Done well, however, effective estate planning can be a blessing to many people both in and beyond your family. Consider the following blessing if you are beginning, or working through, the eventual disposition of your estate.

*There was a time when having more
seemed necessary for your family's survival.
A time when more customers, products, land, or locations
Would equate to financial stability and independence.*

*You were striving to succeed
Solving problems and serving others
Pursuing goals fueled by your passion
And along the way you built an enterprise.*

*You created financial margin in your life
Your work indeed provided for your family.
Yet having more created a new set of challenges
A level of wealth for which you had no training.*

*How much is enough for tomorrow?
How much should we give away today?
How might our children best be helped, and not hurt, by our wealth?*

*Now, as your resources have surpassed your needs
The time has come to gift to others the fruits of your life's work.
As you plan for your estate*

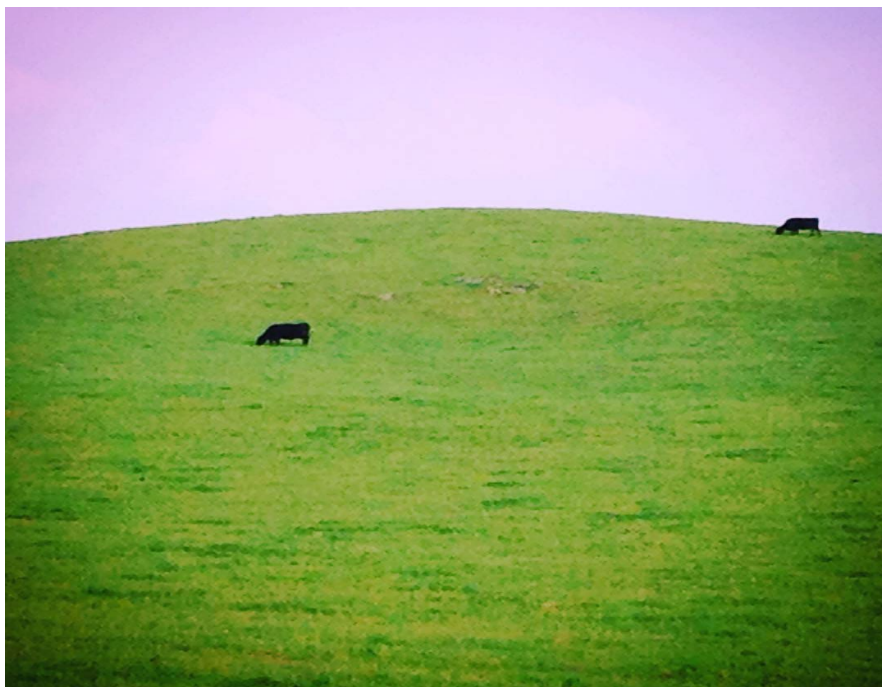
*May God grant you wisdom as a discerning steward of your family's prosperity
To know what others value, and when and how to bestow such gifts upon those you love.*

*May you aptly convey the many sacrifices that marked your success as a leader
While asking your children to forgive your mistakes and faults as a parent.*

*If continuing the business, may future generations find fulfillment together as partners
Or if not, may you now provide the tools to help them amicably end their business
affiliation.*

*Finally, may you encourage future generations to use your family's resources to bless
others
By offering people meaningful work, by sowing generously, and by giving cheerfully.*

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)



A Blessing for Those Estranged from a Family Member

Think of your own family, or families you know, where someone has cut ties. The pain people feel in not seeing or connecting with their children, siblings, parents, grandparents, or grandkids can be overwhelming. In a word, estrangement can be agonizing. And in a family-owned business, where the dynamics of legacy, power, authority, loyalty, marriage, vocation, wealth, and family relationships are in motion all around you, it seems that the prospects for, and effects of, estrangement are multiplied tenfold. This healing blessing is for those experiencing estrangement and hoping for reconciliation with their loved one.

*This seemingly unbridgeable gap between us
years in the making
crystallized in a decision to say,
“I’m done with you.”*

*A recurring slight, a repeated injustice, a revisited abuse
actual or perceived,
informs a life now lived
in avoidance of any relationship.*

*The soreness of rejection, the shame of failure, the simmering anger
leaving either an inability
or an embarrassment too great
to speak of our situation.*

*Now, years beyond the incident that broke us
we aren’t sure how
or if it’s even worth
the arduous effort it will take to reconcile.*

As you pray for the healing of estrangement from a family member, may God grant you

*The courage to act on your desire for a different future
The capability to hear the pain beneath your family member’s complaint
The empathy to understand your family member’s feelings
And the humility to identify and convey your own mistakes.*

May God bless both of you with

*Endurance for the long journey of reconciliation
Sure-footing to avoid the minefields of the past
A vision for a life together tomorrow
And the will to discover a peace that lasts.*

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

A Blessing for Grandparents in the Family Business

My grandparents, on both sides of my family, had a significant influence on my life. One set of grandparents fostered my interest in agriculture, and, through our family's struggles and challenges, inspired my current work helping closely-held businesses with succession and transition. The other set of grandparents offered wonderful examples of serving and loving others, dealing with disappointment and change, and glorifying God.

As a privileged observer and helper of family businesses around the country, I can attest to the profound effect of grandparents. Their experience, wisdom, connection to tradition and history, and even their mistakes, are instructive for future and active members of the family business. What impact did your grandparents have on you and your family business?

*When we awoke to the world, you were already wise
A living history, connecting our family through generations
Harkening back to those who inspired the work we do today.*

*As we learn about life, you keep our traditions
Offering rituals that shape our identities and form our character
Fueling our interests and passions from the earliest of ages.*

*As we make our way in the world you are deep wells of wisdom
Guiding our decisions with valuable lessons learned in hard times – harder than we can imagine
Encouraging us, or gently admonishing us, by keeping visible what we cannot always see.*

*As we hunger for belonging you refract the light of love
Offering gifts of patience and presence that elude us as parents or siblings
Demonstrating the potentiality of that long obedience in the same direction.*

*When you are gone from this life we wish we would have known you better
To have captured more stories of experience, to have learned more from your mistakes
But we are grateful for the time we had, and as we celebrate your life and role in our family business, we give thanks:*

Thanks for the continuity you represent in our lives and in our work, and for the influence you bring to bear on who we are.

Thanks for the values you esteem and practice in our presence, and for your reminders about that which is important, especially when we are confused by the urgent.

Thanks for the chapters you've written in the story of our family business, and may God bless your legacy in the future of our community and family.

Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children. (Deuteronomy 4:9)

A Blessing for the End of a Family Business Partnership

Ending a family business partnership may not seem like a situation that qualifies for a blessing. Feelings of disappointment, guilt that you are letting down prior (or future) generations, or a nagging sense of failure, can inhibit even the most necessary of endings. Yet anyone who has felt stuck or trapped in a business partnership — a union either not of their choosing, or with people with whom they no longer wish to conduct business — feels a sense of relief at the end.

This blessing recognizes that there is a season to every business partnership, that sometimes it is best to let go and move on. In every dissolution there is an inauguration, when considering the long arc of multiple generations and their business endeavors.

*There comes a time in every family enterprise
When what brought us together no longer binds
When our visions and goals no longer align
And we know, down deep, this chapter must end.*

*Feelings of anger, guilt, and sadness suffuse
What was built over generations must now be taken down
The tools required to dismantle feel utterly foreign in our hands
And the time, energy, and emotion it takes push us repeatedly to the brink.*

*But once you see the end in your sights
The future unfurls in previously unimaginable ways
Offering new space to dream, to plan, to move forward
The next story in your family begins to take shape.*

*Yes, you've come to inherently know
This deliberate division of our business is the right move
The act of termination may even repair, a little,
Some of the relationships we damaged along the way.*

As you wind up your current family business partnership, may God grant you

*Vision, for the next phase in your family and business life.
Patience, as disentangling always takes longer than expected.
Discernment, to choose advisors who offer wisdom and understanding.
Forgiveness, for family members who hurt you throughout the process, and
Healing, for family relationships injured over the years.*

**The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
The Lord is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:17-18)**

A Blessing for a Sibling Partnership

Sibling relationships in a family business can be both a strength and a weakness. The trust that is often implicit between brothers and sisters can be a powerful force in the division of labor and in the agility of the enterprise. Siblings united often seem unstoppable.

But siblings divided can sink the ship. The cost of unmanaged family conflict affects colleagues and customers. It stresses the entire system, and can be one of the biggest risks to the continuation of the company. This offering recognizes the origins and power of sibling relationships, and seeks a blessing for a successful partnership between brothers and sisters in the family enterprise.

*This bond as siblings
Begun as children in innocence
Fostered through time shared in work and in play
Resulting in admiration and affection, though not always expressed.*

*This bond as business partners
Begun as adults in hope
Based on complementary skills, strengths, and trust
With the goal of creating, or continuing, a successful business.*

*This bond between us is often tested
By our children, our spouses, our customers, or our staff
By our own egos and our different goals and styles
And the ties between us can begin to fray.*

*At times we let each other down
We find ourselves working, but not together
We say or do things that hurt one another
Or we remain silent, when a kind word would mean so much.*

As we look to the future, we ask God to bless us with

*A commitment to simply talk with each other
The care, patience, and skill to listen to one another's concerns
The wisdom to offer help, or a challenge, at the right time
And the humility to know when to apologize and reconcile.*

For if we face the world arm-in-arm as siblings, our accomplishments will be a blessing upon our families.

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:10-11)

A Blessing for a Family Member Recovering from Addiction

I often wish it all felt the way it looked, that I could actually be living the life everyone thinks they see. But it feels like a rigged show, one loose cable away from collapse.

--- Bill Clegg, Portrait of an Addict as a Young Man

Substance abuse and addiction is all too common in family businesses. Whether addiction has appeared in each successive generation, or is new to a family company, the consequences are far-reaching. The family business may or may not be the cause, but there is no doubt that being in business with family members shapes the trajectory of addiction. Stressful relationships, childhood experiences of trauma or conflict, and difficult financial or business circumstances — combined with an addictive nature — create a threat to both lives and livelihoods. My good friend Troy, a therapist, reminds me that addiction “isolates you from the ones who you love the most, and the ones who care about you in the smallest of ways.”

Recovery from addiction is an incredibly difficult path. This blessing is for both the one who is recovering from addiction and the family business members who are trying to help.

*This powerful force grips you, grabs you, and won't let go
Offering temporary but false respite
From the past, the stress, the guilt, or the shame
A mirage of support for an unbearable weight.*

*This addiction, even when behind you
Is still always and forever nearby
Bidding you come, beckoning you try
To erase the pain, to return to the lie.*

*The difficulty in shaking free of this substance
Seems impossible for your family to comprehend
We're unaware of the shadow-places you've searched
For a remedy, for a rescue; for a connection, for amends.*

*But you are still loved by us
Even amidst your, and our, disappointment.
You are still loved by us
Even if our business relationship is over.*

*You are beloved by God and by us
And our family can still choose the hard work of healing.*

As we recover together, we ask for God's blessing:

*To help repair our family's fractured foundation
To help gain power over the roots of this addiction
To help us ask for, and receive, your forgiveness for our role in your pain
To help demonstrate, in the best way possible, our love as a family, and
To help us collectively walk a new path together.*

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (1 Peter 5:10)



A Blessing for the Next Generation's New Business Venture

Family businesses, and the industries in which they operate, mature over time. A company that began in survival mode becomes stable. Revenue increases. Customers grow. More opportunities arrive. But at some point the business, or your energy, begins to plateau. You sense that a shift in your approach is needed to continue your growth trajectory.

And therein lies the beauty of a “family” business. The next generation shows up with passion and excitement, with the energy to propel the company to new heights. Often they bring a new idea, approach, or new business venture to help start the next climb. This blessing recognizes the success of the senior generation's endeavors, denotes a sense of impending change, and expresses hope (and caution) for the next generation's efforts.

*Your longstanding work, embodied in this business
Has benefited so many of those around you
Your family, staff, customers and community
Have been blessed by your labor and commitment.*

*This business started by you, or perhaps passed to you
Has enriched you while concurrently opening doors of promise
Like a rope woven with strands of reputation and legacy
Holding you taut between the past and the future.*

*But you now sense the trajectory of your firm is shifting
Your mature business needs to evolve
New ideas, technologies, constraints, or shortages
Foster a ripening environment for change.*

*Ah, the next generation has arrived with their ideas, their hope, their energy!
Offering the rocket fuel you need for lift off
Although you wonder if they fully appreciate
The decades you spent building the platform for their launch.*

*The senior generation, with their wisdom and capital
Offers guidance and assurance,
but also caution and convention
Will they let go long enough to let this new bird fly?*

As your family company embarks on this new venture, may God bless you with

*A clear vision for how your efforts will make this world a better place
A solid strategy to navigate new territory and unfamiliar competition
A good match between each person's gifts and the roles they will play
Insight to see, and wisdom to learn from, the mistakes you will make
Success that allows you to share God's love with those you work with and serve.*

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. (Proverbs 16:3)

A Blessing for a Long-Term Key Employee

Many family businesses are blessed by long-term employees who care for the company as if it was their own. In fact, it sometimes feels as if their emotional and psychological ownership exceeds some family members' financial commitment. Some of those team members were present well before the senior generation transitioned out of the business. They have become as close as a brother, sister, or even parent, and their identity is fused with the organization in ways similar to that of a traditional owner.

Dedicated, long-term employees can also be challenging. It can be difficult for newer employees or younger family members to gain credibility with these key staff. They might resist necessary changes in the business, or passively (even aggressively!) attempt to shape the trajectory of the firm. But deep down, we know that their opposition is often born out of a deep love and care for the company.

This blessing recognizes the history, work, and dedication of a long-term key employee, acknowledges that they have become part of the family, and offers thanks for their time with the family business. I encourage you to offer this blessing to them.

*You entered our work-world as many others do
Seeking a place to be rewarded for your efforts
To us, what you knew was not nearly as important
As your determination, character, and attitude.*

*As your time with us lengthened
Our trust in you deepened
Our respect of you grew
As you skillfully fulfilled your role.*

*We cultivated this company together
Sweating side-by-side in labor
Celebrating successes and sharing a solicitude
For the challenges every family business must face.*

*We paid you with money and security
You paid us with commitment and care
Our relationship grew beyond the financial
To encompass a friendship, to become as family.*

*Someday you will depart
And we are ever so grateful for your work
We give God thanks, we are indeed blessed
By your many good years spent with us.*

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

A Blessing for Those Who Forgive Others in the Family Business

Forgiveness is a difficult but necessary element of being in business with family members. There is no doubt that living and working in close proximity will produce miscommunication, misunderstanding, and conflict. You will hurt, and be hurt by, those you love. Developing the capacity to forgive another family member for the wrongs committed against you will challenge you beyond any management, ownership, or operational business issue you face. Those who find a way to forgive are blessed indeed.

Tim Keller, a well-known pastor and prolific writer, died in May. The last book he wrote, *Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?*, offers a view of how forgiveness is seen in society today, and gives compelling arguments and reminders of why we, as Christians, are called to forgive others. The blessing below is for those in the family business who pursue the difficult work of forgiving those who have hurt them.

*There was a time before your relationship ruptured
A time when you felt a sense of cohesion
When your work together in the family business
Promised a future to which you both looked forward.*

*The breach appeared to happen all at once
But in reality was a long time coming
The other person's choice that caused you pain
Hurt deeply in ways foreign to your soul.*

*As time went on, you heard a whisper deep within
Reminding you that you had once been forgiven
You had been a receiver of such a gift, not a giver
Thus you could not fully count the cost of forgiveness.*

*As you walked the halls of the prison
Created by your anger, supported by your pride
You finally decided to cast away your desire for revenge
You decided to forgive.*

*Now, as you pay the price of the other person's debts,
May you be blessed and fortified by God's love of you.*

*As you demonstrate your forgiveness of the other person,
May you be blessed with courage to continue loving them.*

*And, when you attempt to reconcile,
May you both be blessed with a vision of God's sacrifice — Jesus
Given so that we can be reconciled to Him.*

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)



A Blessing for Those Who do not Return to the Family Business

When family members either don't come back to the family business, or they return only to realize that they need to move on, it can be bittersweet. On the one hand, you feel as if some piece of you is missing when not working alongside your loved ones. On the other hand, you wish for them to be happy, and seeing them develop a more independent life or a successful career can be deeply satisfying.

This blessing is for the family member who doesn't return to the business. While they are not part of the management team, they still have an important role to play. They might offer helpful advice from the perspective of being involved in a different industry or a non-family business. They can be a sounding board for difficult issues, or might make a good board member because of their trusted status. They may even help your "family" gatherings be a little less focused on the business. Consider sharing this blessing with them.

*We sensed that your passion
Did not fit with our business
Or that our business
Did not need your gifts.*

*Perhaps we were blind
To your innermost wishes
Or we were biased in ways
We still cannot see.*

*Maybe our inability to hear each other
Or the assumptions we each make
Keep us from discovering
A harmony in our daily work.*

*For these or other reasons
You have not returned
And our relationship today
Is not centered on labor.*

*Your absence creates questions
About legacy, fairness, and inheritance
But in reality those same questions exist
No matter the circumstance.*

*Please know that your happiness elsewhere
Brings us happiness here (at times hard to admit)
And that just as many blessings will arise
from not being partners in business together.*

As you pursue vocations and relationships elsewhere

May you be blessed with discernment.

As our business continues without you

May your wisdom gleaned from afar be a blessing to us and others.

As our relationship matures outside of the business

May God bless the time we spend together.

And, as you meet new opportunities and unexpected challenges

May you receive God's blessing and feel His care.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:29)



A Blessing for a Couple Transitioning the Family Business

The transition of a family business to the next generation is a wonderful opportunity to continue your legacy, but it presents challenges to your relationship as a couple. Most of your life together has been defined by the growth of the business and your roles in the company or family. And it has flown by!

But, as your children take over, or leave to pursue different careers, as a couple you must redefine who you are in relationship to the business and to each other. You may not be ready to let go at the same time. You may have to move. You may have different visions for the next chapter of your life. Decades of your focus, on business or kids, is now not as necessary.

Figuring out the future together feels different, it feels harder, than it did years ago, when you started or took over the business. But it is just as important. This blessing is for the couple navigating the redefinition of their relationship as they transition the family business.

*Starting your life together, full of promise
You began to build a business
Unsure of how the story would unfold
You trusted in your determination and God's providence.*

*In those days happiness found you
Even amidst the struggle of a start-up
Raising your children in a culture of commerce
No boundaries between life and work and family*

*You settled into your roles and the company grew
Your kids-becoming-adults contemplated their return (so quickly!)
And you heard the faint signal, a call toward the future
Pointing to this day – when stepping away – would be expected.*

*This transition is difficult; it isn't just a different role
But to a new way of being present with your family
To a new way of relating as a couple
And it often feels fraught with frustration and false starts*

As you navigate the handoff of the family business, may God bless both of you with

The courage to let go of that which you've controlled for decades

The insight to recognize new and emerging directions

The time to rethink and rediscover the next chapter of your life's purpose

And the skill to reframe your best contribution to your family's business

May God especially grant you and your spouse the ability to redefine your relationship and recommit to your future, and thereby bless you with a renewal of your life together.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)



A Family Business Blessing Before a Meal

Family gatherings are special times. Meals, events, birthdays, memorial services, and graduations permeate life as an extended family. The occasions happen with some regularity, so it's easy to take them for granted, especially when you work together in the family business, see each other often, live in close proximity, and are rushing to get through the busyness of life. Yet each gathering is unique in time, place, and season in *your* life.

This blessing is intended for the family gathering, particularly one at which food is served. Pausing festivities for a blessing — for just one minute (I timed it!) — will help set the tone for a great event with your family.

*Bless our family gathering today
With a spirit of celebration
With an attitude of thanksgiving
And with hearts that are generous.*

*Bless our journey together as a family
The road behind us full of joys, and sorrows as well
Help us see how shared memories shape our lives
As the horizon, full of hope, beckons us forward.*

*Bless our relationships with each other
Always remembering those who came before us
Help us find ways to deepen our connections
And when hurting, find ways to heal.*

*Bless our family participation in business
Remind us of how it provides for and holds us together
Help us balance the family and the company
So that both remain a blessing to future generations.*

*Finally, bless these plants and animals that nourish our bodies
Bless those who grow, prepare, and serve our meal
Help us to not take for granted all of the sacrifices
Surrounding our celebration today.*

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

A Blessing for In-Laws in the Family Business

Marrying into a family business is an experience all its own. The expectations, language, unspoken rules, and assumptions about participation (or not) in both the family and business are often confusing and intimidating. The legal and financial implications can be both mysterious and overwhelming. Frankly, it can feel like the family business is another participant at the wedding altar, a third person in the marriage, bringing more than a little baggage to the journey.

G.K. Chesterton offered this insight about our relationships with in-laws: “Those nearest to our nearest may not happen to be the people who would have been our chief chosen friends, but they must be our friends; or memories are wounded and life made very ugly.”

As you engage with a son or daughter-in-law in your family business, consider this blessing for them.

*In joining our family
And by extension our family business
You brought us both joy and happiness
And, if we are honest, also concern and caution.*

*You bring an energy, a force, to our family
Opening a window to see a different way of interacting
Describing experiences much different than ours
Helping us understand the confines of our own family culture.*

*In the context of this family business
Which to you can feel like a second spouse
You've offered patience, love, and grace
Forgiving us for sins we'll never know we committed.*

*We know this overlap of family and business is not easy
Our constant discussion of commerce, the details of daily operations
This way we communicate: our unwritten rules, our unspoken dialect
You are listening, interpreting, trying to translate our family language.*

As we strive to love one another amidst a business partnership, may God bless and sustain your marriage. We give thanks for your gifts and for your love.

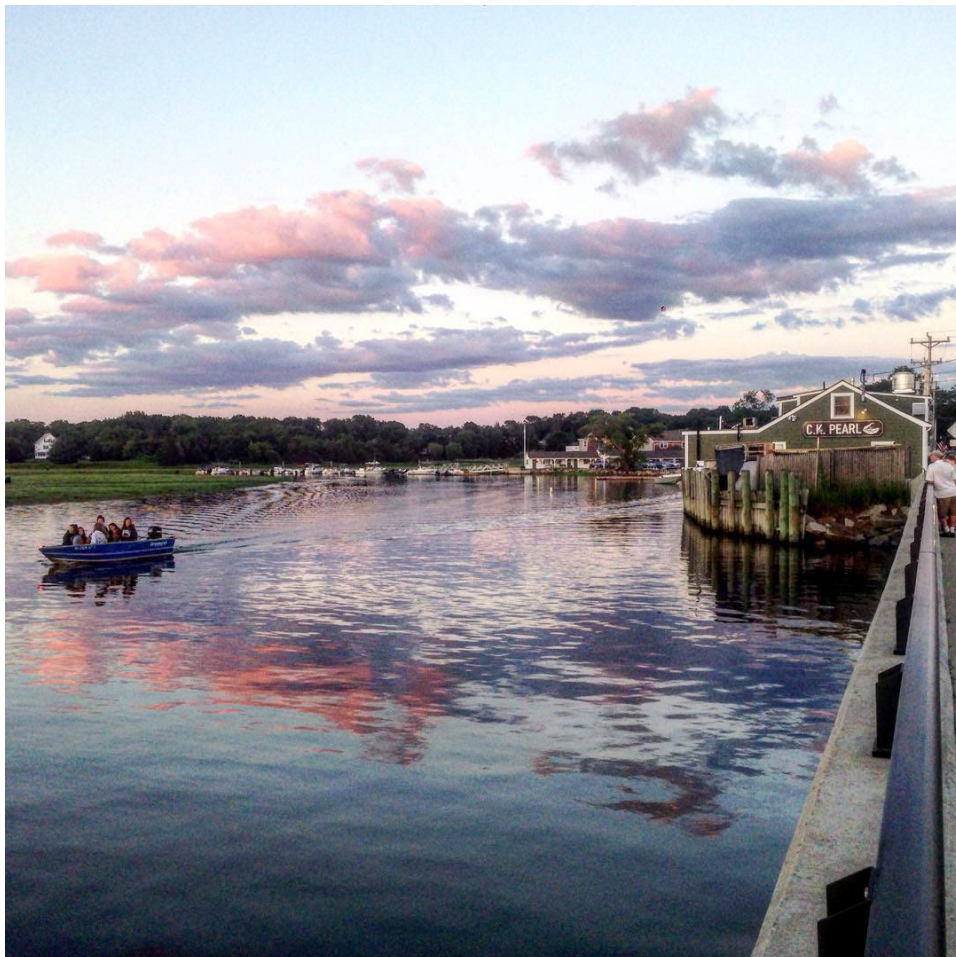
May God bless your attempts to communicate your needs, and give us the ability to listen with care.

May God give you the courage to confront what we cannot see, and guide us in responding with love.

May God provide clarity about important boundaries in our relationship, and grant us the wisdom to respect those limits.

May God bless your experience with our family, while offering grace as we foster a good relationship with you.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)



A Blessing for Those Between Roles in the Family Business

“Liminality” is a word that connotes a transition between roles, stages, or phases of life: When you’ve left a station, but haven’t yet arrived with a sense of certainty about your new place or purpose.

Such transitions happen throughout one’s time in the family business. For example, liminality might describe the time when a next-generation family member first returns to the family business but isn’t sure of their role in the company, or when a person moves from working in the business to managing or leading the organization, which requires a different perspective. Or perhaps when the incapacity or death of a family member requires one to fulfill a family leadership or administrative role they haven’t yet experienced. And there is definitely a period of liminality as an older family member begins the succession process of handing the business, and their role, to a younger family member.

This blessing is for those going through a time of transition from their current role to a future role that feels yet undefined, knowing that the future requires a different contribution to the family or business than what you’ve provided in the past.

*Now is the time when letting go is hard
When leaving is necessary
When life begins changing
From what was, to what will be.*

*The role you’ve played has oriented your life
Has given you purpose
Has reinforced your strengths
And has offered a stability easily taken for granted.*

*Deep down you know it is time
That to everything there is a season
For your health and spirit and happiness
You must find, and grab hold, of something new.*

*This liminal time is not just difficult for you, by the way
Others around you must also begin to change
Your transition is a fulcrum
Creating a necessary shift for others you work with and love.*

*As you acknowledge the need to move
From where you are, to where you need to be:*

May you recall the many ways you've been a blessing to others.

May you be assured that embracing this uncertain time will indeed bear fruit.

May God bless the new contribution you will begin making to your family and business.

**Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19)**



A Blessing for an Aging Parent in the Family Business

Henry David Thoreau wrote “None are so old as those who have outlived enthusiasm.” By this measure, if Mr. Thoreau looked inside a family business, he’d see very few old people. The senior generation is often as enthusiastic about the business, or more so, than they were in the early days.

But we still grow old. Once, as we walked laps around the park in Garden City, Kansas, my grandfather Roger told me, “Lance, the parts are wearing out!”

This blessing is for an aging parent (or grandparent) in the family business. They have often been around so long, and they are so woven into the fabric of the business, that their many gifts, and their internal struggles, can seem invisible. As you remember them, or celebrate with them this holiday season, may you recall this blessing for them.

*It is not easy to see you grow old
As your body and your mind begin to decline
At times together, at times unequally
Yet your interest, passion, and drive for work still hold.*

*My mind’s eye sees you as the stronger
The leader, the pace-setter, full of wisdom and help
Shaping who we are and how we do business
Laying the foundation for generational success.*

*But I know as you age, the picture is complex
You wrestle with issues of fairness for heirs
You second-guess past decisions you made
You struggle with our changes, and letting go of the role you once played.*

*In our family business we too easily assume
Your abundant gifts and your ever-present support
God grant us the grace to recognize, with honesty and honor
The contributions you’ve made, the intent of your heart.*

As you grow old with us, may God bless you with

*The vision to see how you may best serve others, and
The courage to finish the tasks you know need done.*

*The humility to embrace your anxieties, and
The ability to savor the fruit of a long life, faithfully lived.*

*The words to speak to us from deep within your soul, and
A feeling of peace over all the remaining days of your life.*

**Even to your old age I am he,
and to gray hairs I will carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save. (Isaiah 46:4)**



A Blessing for Those Inheriting a Family Business

When it comes to passing the business to the next generation, an awkward dance takes place. Parents are struggling with all kinds of issues: how to be fair, whether to be equal, when to gift assets or whether to sell the business to the next generation, how to keep a modicum of control, how to handle conflict among their kids, how to minimize taxes, how much is too much to give, what role charity plays in their estate, and the list goes on. And, by the way, the parents may not be in agreement about the answers to these questions, further complicating the effort.

Meanwhile, the next generation often doesn't feel good asking about their inheritance — and might have even been told, "It's none of your business!" Yet, if they have returned to the family business, if they are trying to raise a family and plan for the future, if they are trying to decide about their or their spouse's career, if they want to change the business at all, it helps to know some of the answers to the questions their parents are working on.

Knowing that the parent's intent is often to see the family business transitioned to the next generation, this blessing speaks to the history, hope, and challenge in the handoff.

*This business passed down
From generation to generation
From one family to another
Is much more to us than its financial worth.*

*Planted long ago, this business lives and grows
Decades of hope, promise, and service
Embodied in assets and relationships
Nurtured through trials, tended with care.*

*This labor of love we pray meets your calling
In a vocational succession
A parade of our family's passion
Shaping the future of your life's work.*

*Planning for transition creates such unease
The stakes are high; we have only one shot
Resulting in episodes of uncertainty for you
And points of disagreement between us.*

*And, while this business is a part of our legacy
We grant you permission to change
That which is helpful in making you happy
Knowing we will struggle with letting go.*

May God help you as you inherit this business:

*May this endeavor be a blessing in your life
And not a burden to your family.*

*May you have the confidence to lead
And hear the counsel of wise friends.*

*May you know our deep gratitude and pride
In your choice to carry this enterprise another day.*

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:22)



A Blessing for Communication in the Family Business

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

I doubt the author of that quote (often attributed to George Bernard Shaw) was referring to a family business, but the biggest issue most family companies face is communicating well. The history of relationships, of living together and growing up around each other, the patterns of informal and nonverbal family communication, and past experiences of disagreement and conflict, all work together to produce an astounding lack of discussion and an abundance of assumptions about the business, about each other, and about the future.

Communication is often lacking not just on little things, but also on big, strategic questions: Where are we headed as a family business? What role should we each play? When will transitions occur? How will the estate be divided? These are difficult questions to address, but not talking about them now will not make them easier to talk about later. So, this blessing is for those family business members embarking or continuing on the path of family meetings, discussion, and interaction.

*We know this talk between us
Is necessary and difficult, important and overdue
Yet can be helpful to us
even while being hard on us.*

*This talk between us can feel risky
Our differences, fears, and frustrations
Our unfulfilled expectations, the injustice we've suffered
Rush like flood waters over an invisible dam.*

*For years we've embargoed any discussion
On topics so important to our future
We've let the busyness of our lives dominate
And inertia has run its course.*

*Each day, however, brings a new opportunity
To consider how to engage differently
To begin answering the deeper questions
About our personal hopes and our future together.*

*It can even start small
Over a shared coffee or meal
With a short visit, even a greeting
That simply says “I want to talk and am willing to listen.”*

*As we work together in this family business
May God grant us:*

*The courage to begin a conversation
The stamina to stay at the table
An awareness of our emotions
And the ability to use our words wisely.*

*The skills to listen well and to show respect
Eyes to see the good in each of our family members
Help us to remember we are each doing the best we can
To navigate the future of family, wealth, and work.*

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:19-20)



A Blessing for the Gifts of a Family Business

This blessing is for the many gifts of a family business. The chance to build a lasting company with those you love, to convey your values and legacy by providing a product or service, and to impact employees, their families, and your community, is not easy but is incredibly special.

*This family business provides for us in so many ways
A gift to us, full of both inspiration and challenge
A source of much joy, yet not without pain
A rich and vivid blessing upon the story of our lives.*

*As the year closes and our thoughts turn to family
We remember those who inaugurated our journey
Those who sacrificed time and treasure yesterday
So that we could pursue our vocation in partnership today.*

*Working here was not for everyone in our family
Conflict is a part of our story, as well.
We too often take each other for granted
May God continue helping us find ways to heal.*

*As we plan the next chapter as a family in partnership
May God bless our time together.*

*As we work side-by-side
May God bless our relationships with one another.*

*And as we celebrate our success and move forward after failure
May God's Spirit remain ever-present in our lives and work.*

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)