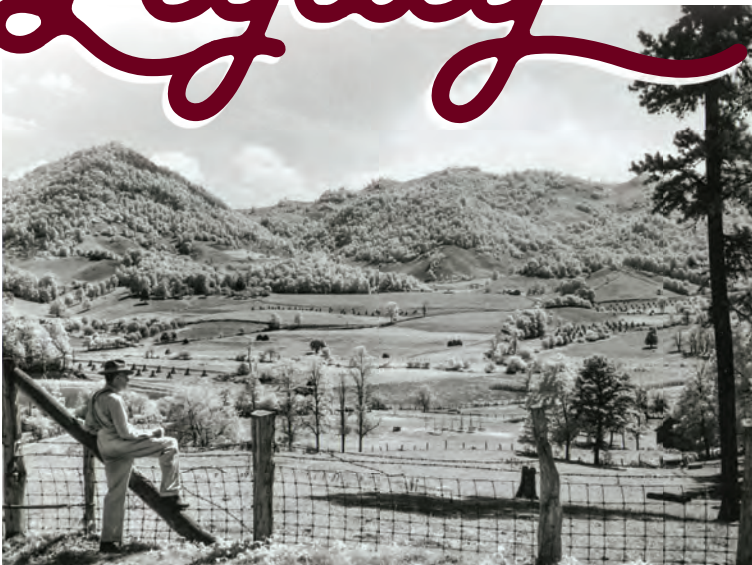




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# Leaving Your True Legacy

PROGRESSIVE FARMER ARCHIVES



**O**f the many things you intend to give the next generation, perhaps nothing has as much potential permanence as the principles and philosophies you leave behind. Land will eventually be sold, money will be spent or divided, and physical items will get lost or broken. But, the ideas and lessons you offer can be considered anew in each extension of your lineage, treasured by your kids and grandkids and their kids, and lived out for decades or even centuries.

To help communicate your thoughts and ideas to future generations, consider writing a letter to them. Call it a “legacy letter,” a document intended for a select group of people in which you share some of your life lessons and your personal story, your hopes and dreams for the future and, where appropriate, your expressions of love, forgiveness or desire to be forgiven. A letter gives you the chance to say what you would most want to communicate to future generations about your life and your values.

Start by choosing a few questions from the following list, and grab a blank journal and a few pieces of paper, or use a voice-to-text app on your phone. Capture a few bullet points as answers, or write a sentence or two that will trigger more thoughts later. Soon, you will have the makings of a letter you can give to your family members.

- ▶ What are some of the experiences in your family’s history (your parents, grandparents or prior) that shaped where or what you do today?

- ▶ What important lessons or principles were taught to you by your parents or grandparents that you want to pass on to your children and their children?

- ▶ What are a few of the personal experiences that shaped who you are today? Consider accomplishments as well as difficult experiences, failures or “wake-up” calls.

- ▶ How did you make it through difficult situations, conflict, disappointment or pain in your life? What role did your faith, friends or family play in helping you through those rough times?

- ▶ Who has been a good friend or mentor to you, and what did that person offer to you that made him or her special? What advice would you offer about being a friend or mentor?

- ▶ What jobs did you have as a young person? How did they lead you to your vocation? What did you learn about yourself and others from your early work?

- ▶ List a few of the values you have developed, or craft a short statement about your philosophy of life. If you had to put your philosophy on a billboard, what would it say?

- ▶ What roles did luck, hard work and skill play in the success of your business? What skills are most important when you think about success in life?

- ▶ What has been most important to you about your rural community and the local or industry organizations of which you’ve been a part? What advice or lessons about generosity and helping others can you offer to future generations of your family?

- ▶ What advice do you have about raising a family? What are some of the mistakes you felt you made? What did you get right? What are some of your fondest family memories?

- ▶ Is there anything in your past for which you would request forgiveness from your family members? Is there anyone to whom you would like to express forgiveness?

- ▶ What are the dearest hopes you have for future generations of your family?

A few minutes spent reflecting and writing on any of these questions will capture valuable nuggets of wisdom. I guarantee that future members of your family, some of whom are not even born yet, will appreciate your efforts. ///