

How do you write an Ethical Will?

Writing an ethical will need not be difficult.

Here are three recommended approaches:

- Use an outline with items to choose from
- Use an outline and guided writing exercises
- Starting with a blank sheet of paper

Below are some resources that can help.

This may be one of the most cherished gifts you can give to your family and community.

Print Resources

Books

Albom, Mitch, *Tuesdays With Morrie* Doubleday, 1997

Baines, Barry K., M.D., *Ethical Wills: Putting Your Values on Paper*, Perseus Publishing, 2001.

Callanan, Maggie and Kelley, Patricia, *Final Gifts*, Bantam Books, 1997

Covey, Stephen, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Simon and Schuster, 1989

Remen, Rachel Naomi M.D. *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, Riverhead Books, 1996.

Riemer, Jack and Stampfer, Nathaniel *So That Your Values Live On*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991

Schacter-Shalomi, Zalman and Miller, Ronald *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, Warner Books, 1997

Booklets and Workbooks

Baines, Barry K., M.D, *The Ethical Will Writing Guide Workbook and The Ethical Will Resource Kit*. Order from Brochin's Book and Gift Shop (MN). Call 952-926-2011 or toll-free: 1-877-827-7323 or Amazon.com

Internet Resources

WWW.ETHICALWILL.COM

The only web site devoted exclusively to the topic of ethical wills. More than twenty modern ethical wills are posted on this site.

Software Resources

Putting Your Values on Paper™:The Ethical Will Writing Guide, by Barry K. Baines, MD and Wm. Bradley Rouse. Computer software to help you complete a draft copy of an ethical will. Available directly from www.ethicalwill.com

Ethical Wills

Preserving A Legacy of Values for Your Family and Community

What is an Ethical Will?

Most people are familiar with the concept of a "last will and testament". It is the means of distributing our accumulated assets to our loved ones and favorite charities, and to effect other important decisions at the time of our death.

But...have you ever considered writing an ethical will?

An ethical will is a way to share your values with your family in the same way that a will of inheritance provides instructions for bequeathing your valuables.

Ethical wills are not new. The Hebrew Bible first described ethical wills, which were transmitted orally. Later they were written and attached to legal wills and shared after death. Today, they are most often written as a separate document and shared with family members while the writer is still alive.

Why create an Ethical Will?

There are many personal reasons for writing an Ethical Will. Here is a partial list:

- We all want to be remembered, and we all will leave something behind
- It helps you identify what you value most and what you stand for
- By articulating what we value now, we can take steps to insure the continuation of those values for future generations
- When you write an ethical will, you learn a lot about yourself
- If we don't tell our stories and the stories from whom we come, no one else will and they will be lost forever
- It helps coming to terms with our mortality by creating something of meaning that will live on after we are gone
- It provides a sense of completion in our lives

When Might You Write an Ethical Will?

Ethical wills are being written by people facing challenging life situations and at different life stages. Some people find it easier to write a legal will or living will once they have written an ethical will. They are also being written as a foundation for estate planning to help articulate goals that are important to us.

Here are some people who could consider writing an Ethical Will:

- Betrothed Couples--for establishing a common base of values
- Expectant and new parents--to provide a framework for child-rearing
- Growing families--for teaching values to our children
- Middle age and beyond--converting life experience into wisdom and passing this on to future generations
- End of Life--adds the transcendent dimension to our lives