

## Farewells and “Ethical Wills”

Jesus said, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

The 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Chapters of the Gospel of John are the “Farewell Discourse of Jesus.” It was an important custom in Jesus’ time to prepare a farewell speech or document, letting one’s family, friends or followers know what one considered most important in life.

This custom has been revived recently, and many people are leaving behind a document that has special importance. It might be a few precepts by which a person lived a life, it might be a family recipe or two, it might be advice.

Here are some sources for information about Ethical Wills:

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### Creating Your Own Ethical Will

Susan Turnbull, founder and principal of Personal Legacy Advisors, a firm that advocates non-binding personal legacy documents as a component of estate and philanthropic planning, offers the following tips:

#### **START TODAY**

If you were not here tomorrow, what is the most important thing you would not want left unsaid? It might be as simple as saying, “thank you” in your own words. Write it down – you’ve begun.

#### **RELAX AND BE YOURSELF**

You are not trying to write for the Pulitzer Prize. What you create is a gift of yourself, made for those you love, not for an imaginary panel passing judgment on your life or your writing.

#### **ASK YOURSELF**

What do I want to make sure my loved ones know and have in writing? What messages, feelings and information do I want to endure beyond my life?

#### **CONSIDER IT A WORK IN PROGRESS**

Start small and add to it over time if you wish. It’s natural to expect that what seems most important to share might grow and change as you and your audience age.

#### **BE CAREFUL, BE LOVING**

The reach of your words is unknowable.

## **MAKE IT EASY TO FIND**

Keep it in an accessible file, so you can add to it effortlessly. Keep it with your legal papers or refer to where it can be found. Make sure your words find their intended audience.

## **CONSIDER SHARING IT DURING YOUR LIFETIME**

Even as you know you may augment or change your document over time, think of the rewards of creating a monologue that will promote dialogue.

### **Please see the following:**

<http://www.agingwithdignity.org/>

<http://www.agingwithdignity.org/forms/5wishes.pdf>

[BARRONS.com - Bequeathing Smart Strategies](http://online.barrons.com/news/articles/SB50001424052970204883804575483921684638904)

<http://online.barrons.com/news/articles/SB50001424052970204883804575483921684638904>

<http://celebrationsoflife.net/ethicalwills/>