

## ***Planning Ahead***



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## **Preserving Your Legacy**

Legacy is not just about leaving your family money or property. And it's not even really about death. It's about who we are, living our lives in a way that reflects who we are and passing our life experiences and meaning we have found in life to the next generation. One way to preserve our legacy is to make an "Ethical" Will.

An Ethical Will is not a legal document that says "who gets what," but is more like a memoir, a letter to the next generation to share your life stories, your personal beliefs, and hopes and advice for the future. The Ethical Will is a complement to the legal estate plan documents of your Last Will and Testament and Living Trust.

There is no prescribed format for an Ethical Will. It could take the form of a letter and is sometimes referred to as a "Legacy Letter." President Obama's Letter to his daughters written just prior to his inauguration as President in 2009 is an example. (<http://parade.com/37592/parade/barack-obama-a-letter-to-my-daughters/>)

If you are thinking of writing your own Legacy Letter or Ethical Will, it might be helpful to give yourself the structure of covering set topics such as your life history, stories and memories of your family, memorable life experiences, your values and beliefs, and hopes for the future. You can include family photos or even recipes such as Helen's Jell-O Salad, to pass on to the next generation.

Another way to preserve your legacy is to join StoryCorps' "The Great Thanksgiving Listen (TGTL)." This month, over Thanksgiving Dinner, plan to sit down with family to ask important questions and record the conversation. High school students across the U.S. may be participating in TGTL as a school project and submitting their recorded conversations to the StoryCorps archive in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. You can learn more about TGTL, including a list of questions to jumpstart the creation of your own oral history (legacy) at [www.TheGreatListen.org](http://www.TheGreatListen.org).

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