



Friday, September 21, 2018

Do I Need a Will?

Todd Jacobs, Fremont Area Community Foundation

Todd Jacobs is the vice president and chief philanthropy officer at Fremont Area Community Foundation. He also serves on the Community Foundation's Professional Advisory Board.

The practical answer is, "Yes, yes, you do." For most of us, coming to terms with our own mortality certainly does not serve as motivation, nor does the idea of spending money on something that seems somewhat intangible. I remember thinking at a younger age that I did not own enough to need a will. A few years later, I had three pivotal life events that reinforced the importance of having a will.

The first two events were marrying my beautiful wife Tami and the birth of our first child. While Tami and I did not have much, it was important for us to take care of one another and our family. We wanted to ensure that everything we had would be left to each other and would provide for our family's success. We also had to confront what would become of our child if something tragic were to happen to both of us. Who would care for our son and future children? Our will expresses those wishes.

The third event was the unexpected death of my mom after a short illness at 49-years-old. It was a horrible time and we found ourselves grieving deeply.

My mom did not have a will, and while her estate was not large, it still added stress to an already difficult time. Fortunately John, her second husband, was not consumed with what was or wasn't his or hers. And my brothers focused on preserving our family and not on who would get what. But what was difficult was determining what Mom would have wanted. Who did she want to have "the ring?" The family heirloom that had been passed down for four generations? What should happen to her art glass collection? Her grandchildren were her pride and joy, but what did she want her legacy to them to be?

So when someone asks me if they need a will, I always say, "Yes. Yes, you do." Not because of the intrinsic value of what you have, but to ensure that your wishes are fulfilled and to avoid potential conflict between loved ones. Once you do create a will, I also encourage everyone to share those plans with your loved ones. It will give you and them peace of mind and ensure that your wishes and legacy are carried out.