

## LIFE & DEATH DECISIONS

When a person faces the possibility of being incapacitated and unable to express their wishes about critical medical care, the subject of a “Living Will” often surfaces. As a result, many people of retirement age, as well as people facing major surgery, have made one. However, there is one drawback with a Living Will; it must be in the hands of a medical care provider before that provider is called on to be of service to the individual.

A close “cousin” of the Living Will is the “Medical Power of Attorney”, a document which delegates the responsibility for making medical care decisions to a trusted friend in the event that a person should become unable to express their own wishes. These too are often drawn up prior to major surgery, or at a time of major change in a person’s life.

Unfortunately, more often than not no such documents are drawn up, and the responsibility for making critical medical care decisions, life and death decisions, simply falls to the spouse by default at a time of great emotional trauma. Since many couples have not found the time to discuss this issue, we thought it would be good to do so in this Marriage Care session.

**Exercise: If you are unable to make decisions regarding your medical care, life and death decisions, and your spouse is forced to decide for you, what do you want your spouse to know about your philosophy regarding medical care and end-of-life issues?**