

Chapter 3

HOW TO DECIDE

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live!” **Deuteronomy 30:19** (NLT)

Emotions come from where you focus your thoughts. Negative emotions come from focusing your mind on the world's input. Positive emotions come from focusing on God's input. Choosing where to focus your mind is a *decision* in the psychological area of your life.

Life is filled with decisions. You decide everything from what to eat for lunch to whether you will marry. A seemingly small decision can have long lasting ramifications.

Do you think God is interested in every decision you make? Is there a way to know whether you are making right choices or not?

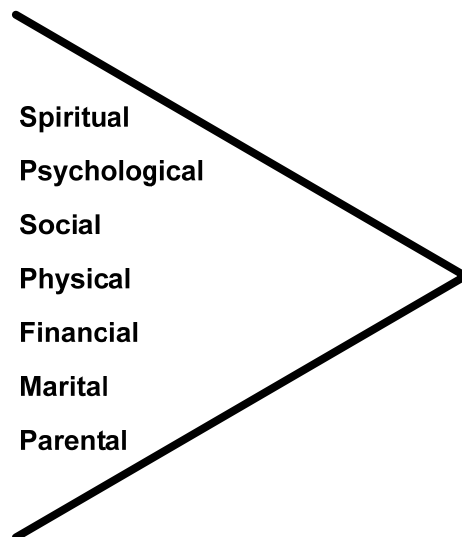
Let's step through the "decision making" process beginning with listing the areas of life that require decisions.

Seven Areas of Life

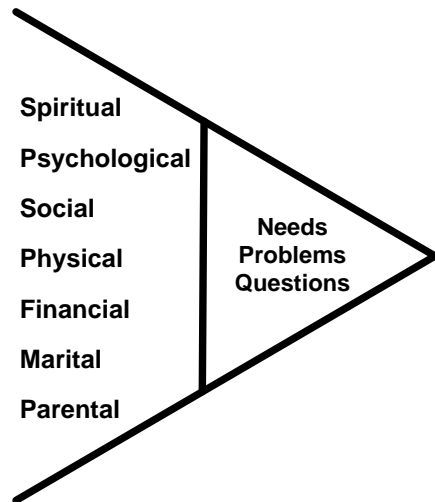
Life consists of seven different areas.

- **Spiritual area:** your relationship with God.
- **Psychological area:** your mind, will, and emotions.
- **Social area:** your relationships with others.
- **Physical area:** your body.
- **Financial area:** your money.
- **Marital area:** your relationship with your spouse (if you are married).
- **Parental area:** your relationship with your children (if you have children).

Every day you make numerous decisions. These decisions will take place in one or more of those areas. One decision might involve several areas. The seven areas of life are listed in the following diagram.



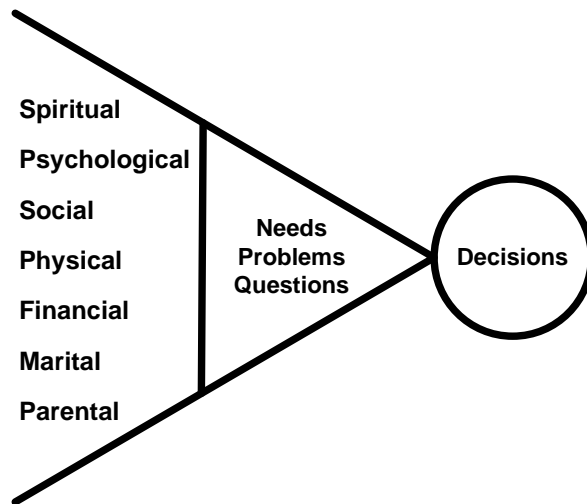
As shown next, you will eventually have needs, problems, and questions in these seven areas.



Q1. What needs, problems, or questions are you facing in the seven areas of life?

Decisions

Needs, problems, and questions lead to the point of having to make a decision.



- Q2.** List a *specific* decision you need to make in one of the seven areas of life.

Life and Death

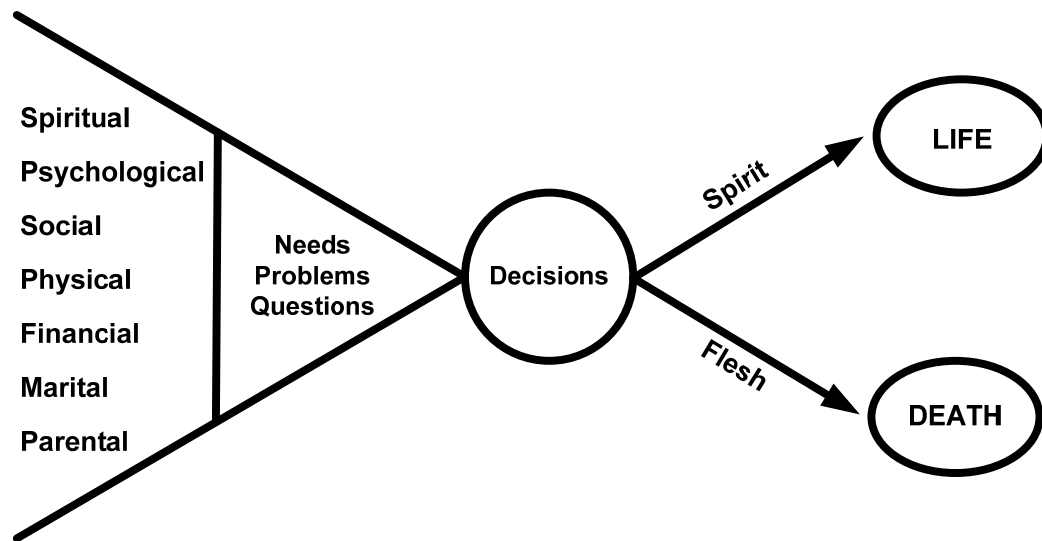
At this point, there are two paths you can take. One path leads to life and one path leads to death.

*“Today I have given you the choice between **life** and **death**...Oh, that you would choose life...”*

Deuteronomy 30:19 (NLT)

God’s desire is for you to choose life. Choosing life means choosing to do what God’s Holy Spirit wants.

Choosing death means choosing to do what your flesh wants. The “flesh” is the selfish desire to meet your needs apart from God and to get your own way.



You will experience life or death based on your decision.

The *life* you experience will be joy and peace. For example: If you follow the Spirit in the financial area of your life, the life you might experience is having enough money to meet your needs, give, and invest.

The *death* you experience will be frustration and loss. For example: If you follow your flesh in the parental area of your life, you might experience death in the form of a broken relationship with your child. If you follow your flesh in the physical area of your life, you might be enslaved to addictions.

*“For the mind set on the **flesh is death**, but the mind set on the **Spirit is life** and peace.” Romans 8:6 (NASB)*

Q3. Are you experiencing death in any area of your life? Explain.

No matter which area of life it is, God cares about the decision you make. God has given you a free will. His desire is that you use your will to choose to follow His Spirit and not your flesh.

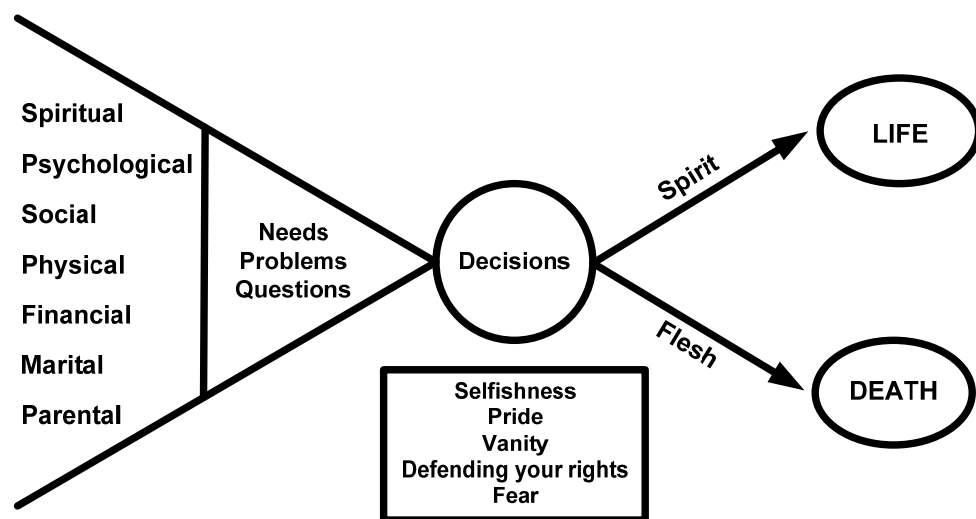
Flesh

No one wants to make decisions that end in death but that's what happens when you follow your flesh.

*“Don’t be misled. Remember that you can’t ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.” **Galatians 6:7–8** (NLT)*

It's important to understand and recognize the motives of your flesh.

The following diagram lists possible motives behind deciding to follow the flesh instead of the Spirit.



Mark the motives behind your past decisions.

___ **Selfishness.** Wanting everything for yourself or thinking your life (body, money, and time) is your own.

___ **Pride.** Being independent or thinking you are superior to others.

___ **Vanity.** Seeking praise, wanting to appear important or look good.

___ **Defending your rights.**

___ **Fear.**

When you make a decision based on any of these motivations, you are following the flesh.

- Q4.** Are there fleshly motives that are affecting your decision on Q2? Explain.

Spirit

Decisions based on what the Spirit wants will not be based on fleshly motives. The Bible is clear that your motives should not be selfishness, pride or vanity.

“Don’t be selfish; don’t live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself.” **Philippians 2:3** (NLT)

Furthermore your motives should not be based on defending your rights.

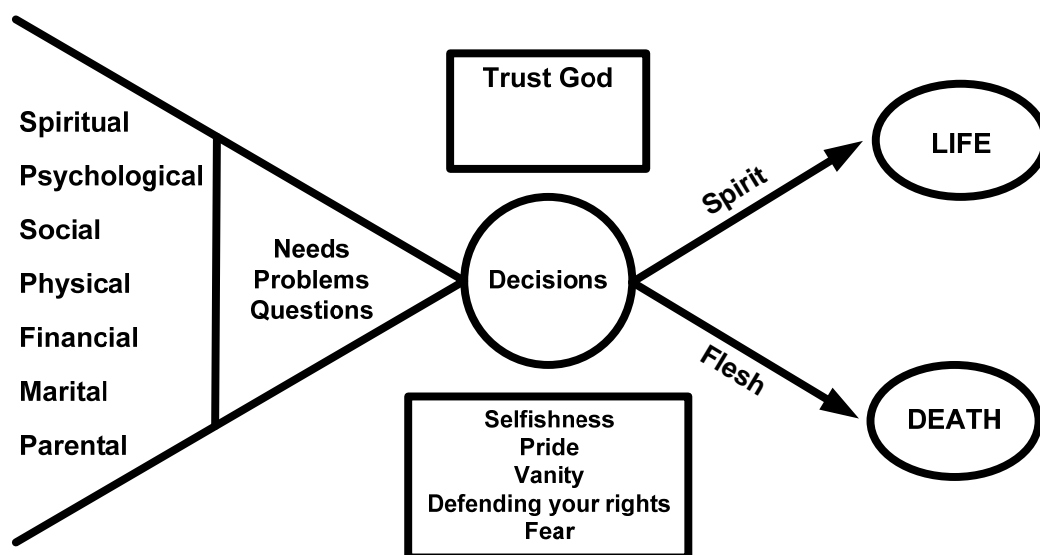
“Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.”
Philippians 2:5–7 (NLT)

Lastly your motives should not be based on fear.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear...”
2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJ)

Jesus is our example and He never made His decisions based on selfishness, pride, vanity, defending His rights or fear.

The following diagram shows what the Spirit wants when you are making decisions based on your *needs*.



Trust God

God wants you to **trust** Him when you face **needs** in your life. However in the midst of a need, it's common to forget how able God is to meet your needs.

*"And my God shall supply all your **need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* **Philippians 4:19** (NKJ)

Trusting God is learning to wait on God to meet your needs. God is waiting for you to trust Him.

"But the LORD still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the LORD is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for him to help them." **Isaiah 30:18** (NLT)

- Q5.** Are you waiting on God to meet your needs or are you getting impatient? Explain.

Many people are so impatient that they don't want to trust God. They make decisions just so they don't have to wait.

God is all wise and all powerful. God knows the best plan and the best possible timing. The best thing you can do for yourself is choose to trust God.

"...He [God] is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope." **Ephesians 3:20** (NLT)

Q6. What would it look like to trust God with all your needs?

God wants you to trust Him with your needs *and* with your problems.

Thank God

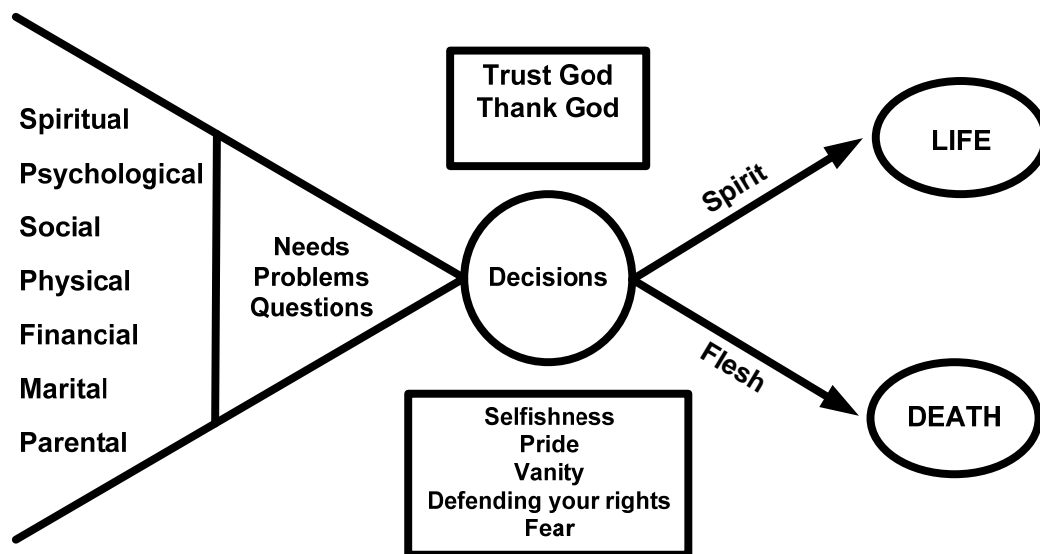
When God does great things for you, what should you do? Thank Him.

When you face **problems** in your life, what should you do? **Thank God!**

*"**Thank God** no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live."*
1 Thessalonians 5:18 (MSG)

Thanking God for the things you like is simply "good manners." However, thanking God for the things you don't like proves you know Him and trust Him. It builds your faith.

*"**And we know** that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."*
Romans 8:28 (NLT)



- Q7.** Are there problems you need to thank God for instead of complaining about them? Explain.

Focusing on God and not your problems enables you to thank Him. When you focus on your problems, they seem too big for even God to handle. However, when you focus on God, you realize there is nothing too difficult for Him.

Many people believe that their problems are making them depressed. However *everyone* has problems but not everyone is depressed. The following verse explains one cause of depression.

*“Yes, they knew God, but they **wouldn’t** worship him as God or even **give him thanks**. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became **dark and confused**.”*

Romans 1:21 (NLT)

“Dark and confused minds” sounds like depression, doesn’t it? Notice what behavior leads to a dark and confused mind. They wouldn’t worship God as God or give Him thanks.

Could it really be that simple? If you don't give God thanks, you will get depressed. Try thanking God for all things and see how much better you feel.

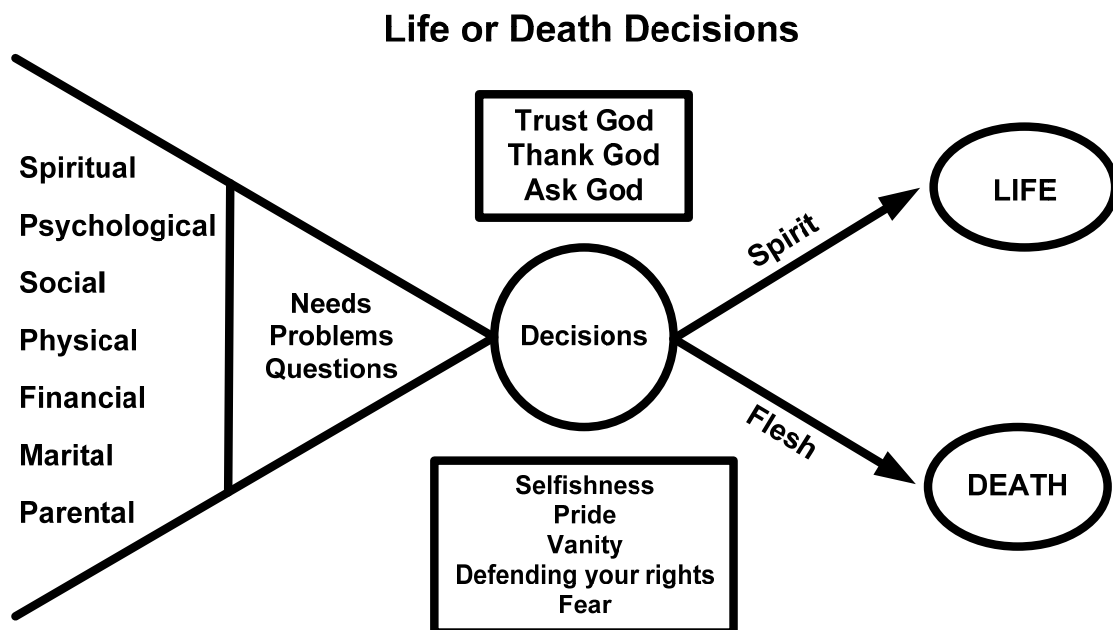
*"Giving thanks **always for all things** to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Ephesians 5:20 (NKJ)

- Q8.** Do you believe that God will eventually cause all your problems to work together for good? If so, are you willing to start thanking Him **now**?

Ask God

Trust God with your needs. Thank God for your problems and when you have **questions, ask God**.



How do you make a decision when you don't know what to do? If you are afraid to make a decision, your indecision is a decision motivated by fear. Sometimes you may not know simply because you haven't asked God.

- Q9.** Have you asked God for direction in your current decision? Why or why not?

*“If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – **ask him**, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.” **James 1:5** (NLT)*

When you acknowledge God in every area of your life, He will show you what to do.

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He shall direct your paths.**”*

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJ)

You will experience life when you do what He shows you to do.

Conclusion

Every decision you make is a life or death decision. Life comes from choosing to follow the Spirit.

Stop making decisions based on:

- Selfishness
- Pride
- Vanity
- Defending your rights
- Fear

Start making decisions by:

- **Trusting God** for your needs.
- **Thanking God** for your problems and everything else.
- **Asking God** for wisdom concerning your questions.

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6–7 (NLT)

Life or Death Decisions

Diagram

Notes

