

Chase Down the Decision

The decisions we make today matter. Every decision points us in the direction we are about to travel. No decision is an isolated choice. It's a chain of events. So we've got to get good at chasing down our decisions. We need to look ahead to see where they will take us—and make sure that's really where we want to go. It's wisdom that comes straight from the book of Proverbs:

A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences. (22:3 NLT)

To get an idea of what it looks like to apply this principle even in the small decisions of everyday life, read the personal story Lysa shares below. Use the story as reference for the questions that follow.

Chasing Down Lattes

The other day one of my friends asked me if I wanted to try her caramel-crunch-latte-love-something-fancy-with-whip-on-the-top. Yes, please. I would very much like to try that. But I didn't. Why? Because I know myself very well. I won't crave something I never try. But if I try a sugary delish, I will crave said sugary delish. I will not just want a sip. I will want a whole one to myself. And then I will want a whole one to myself several times a week. So, let me chase down this decision. I found out that drink has 560 calories. If I get in the habit of having three of those per week for the next year and change nothing about my current eating and exercising habits, I will take in an additional 87,360 calories. Thirty-five hundred calories equals one pound of fat. So, give or take how my body chemistry may process all this, according to math alone, I am set to gain about twenty-five pounds during this next year. When I chase down that decision, I refuse sips of drinks like these.

People laugh sometimes when I tell them this little process of mine and say, "Well, you're just a disciplined person." Not really. Did you catch that part about how a sip for me would lead to enjoying this treat three times a week? I'm not really disciplined. I'm just determined—determined not to go places I don't want to go simply because I didn't take time to honestly evaluate. I've felt the heavy weight of regret and I don't want to return there.

I recognize some things happen to us that are beyond our control. But there's a whole lot that happens simply because we don't know how powerful it is to chase down a decision.

In which of the following areas of life do you need to make a decision?

- **Physical** : food, exercise, rest, medical care, etc.
- **Financial** : earning, giving, saving, spending, debt, margin, etc.

- **Emotional** : contentment, healing, peace of mind, etc.
- **Spiritual** : putting God first, time alone with God, prayer, study, etc.
- **Relational** : spouse, kids, extended family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc.
- **Other:**

Circle one of the items you checked and use it as a focus for the remainder of this activity.

Using the prompts below, chase down your decision. Write your responses in the designated places on the diagram that follows.

- **My decision.** Briefly identify a challenge or decision you face in the area of life you circled.
- **Identify potential dangers.** One of the first things Lysa did with her latte decision was to consider the potential dangers—in this case, her self-defeating tendency to crave a sugary delish. What self-defeating tendencies or other potential dangers are you aware of in connection with the situation you identified? Face facts . Next, Lysa gathered some facts, specifically, the calorie count of the latte. What are the facts you know or could research about the situation you identified?
- **Add it up.** Once Lysa had the facts, she chased down her decision by adding them up. Imagine making this same decision over and over. Adding up the cumulative impact of this decision will help you see its compounding effect.
- **Take precautions.** After adding it up, the final step is to take precautions. For Lysa, that meant not taking a sip of her friend’s latte. What precautions might you need to take to avoid negative consequences in your decision?
- **Get perspective.** Now that you see where this decision will take you, answer this question: Is this really where you want to go? If not, back up and change your course by changing your decision.

When you are done with your diagram on the next page, ask God for the additional guidance or strength you need in order to take the next step with your decision.