



EVERY NATION
CHURCH • G T A

Vices & Virtue

REORIENTING OUR LOVES

Lenten Devotional Guide

AN INTRODUCTION: Reordering Our Loves

Lent is an invitation into the wilderness, not for punishment, but for reflection and formation.

This guide accompanies our Lenten series, *Vice & Virtue: Reordering Our Loves*. Over seven weeks, we examine the classic vices—pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust—and consider the virtues that heal them. The aim is not self-improvement, but transformation.

In our cultural moment, we see the effects of sin everywhere. Yet the language of sin has largely disappeared. When it does appear, it can sound harsh, judgmental, or irrelevant. At its core, however, sin is more than isolated actions. It is a pattern of disordered love.

The early desert Christians recognized that beneath visible sins lie deeper dispositions of the heart. The church later called them “capital” vices, meaning source. Think of a tree: pride is the root, the vices are the main branches, and everyday sins are the fruit.

These vices are often misguided attempts to secure good things—love, security, recognition, comfort, approval—on our own terms. In other words, we pursue genuinely good things, but in distorted ways. Our loves become disordered.

This guide invites us to take sin seriously. Yet sin is never the final word. God’s grace is. And grace calls for our participation. We cannot put to death what we refuse to name. Paul describes this pattern clearly:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made

new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:22-24)

And as the nineteenth-century Scottish minister Thomas Chalmers famously said:

“The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the power of a new one.”

Transformation—the process of naming, confessing, renouncing, and repenting of our sin—happens as we cooperate with the Spirit, reordering our loves and lives around Jesus Christ.

Use this guide personally and in community. May this season lead you toward deeper freedom and new life.

A Lenten Prayer

Father,

You see our hearts clearly and love us fully. Where our loves are disordered and pride has taken root, bring us into the light of Your grace.

Lord Jesus,

You walked the wilderness and humbled Yourself for us. Teach us to put off the old self and to follow You in faithful obedience.

Holy Spirit,

Search us and renew us. Give us courage to name our sin and power to grow in Christlike virtue.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reorder our loves and lead us from wilderness to resurrection life.

Amen.

INTRO

- Do you remember the last time you were angry? What triggered it? How'd you respond?

READ

Jonah 4:1-9

REFLECT & RESPOND

The gospel invites us into Christlike formation: *putting off* the old self, *being renewed* in our minds, and *putting on* the new self in Christ (Eph 4:22-24).

Today, we bring our **anger** before the Lord.

The Vice: Wrath (Anger)

Anger is a human emotion. It rises when we sense wrongdoing, threat, or frustration. It signals that something we value or expect feels violated. At times, anger can be appropriate, alerting us to injustice and moving us to action. But anger easily becomes disordered. Wrath is anger that has turned inward and hardened. It becomes excessive, self-indulging, and vengeful.

In Jonah 4, the Lord asks a searching question: ***Is it right for you to be angry?*** That question probes us to go deeper beneath our anger: *What exactly am I angry about, and is it masking something deeper?*
Am I reacting too quickly, too intensely, or staying angry for too long?

When anger has this level of grip in our lives, it has become wrath.

The Virtue: Christlike Gentleness

Scripture repeatedly describes God as “slow to anger, rich in love.” In Mt 11:29, Jesus reveals his own heart as humble and gentle. Gentleness is not weakness but strength restrained by love. It is a settled confidence in God that frees us from the need to dominate, retaliate, or defend ourselves at all costs.

Reflective Questions

- Q: Where do you see anger shaping our culture?*
Q: When you are angry, how is it usually expressed: silence, sharp words, withdrawal, violently?
Q: How do you tend to justify your anger?
Q: What resistance do you feel toward gentleness?

Christ-centred Reflection

Jesus does not shame us for our anger, but he does search us: *Is it right for you to be angry?* On the cross, He absorbed human wrath rather than returning it. He entrusted Himself to the Father's justice. He overcame evil not with retaliation, but with self-giving love.

Put it into practice this week

- Pay attention to what triggers your anger. What are you protecting, valuing, or fearing?
- Practice restraint: when irritation arises, pause and pray: “Jesus, form your gentleness in me.”

PRAY

- Confess where anger has become resentment, harshness, or a desire to punish.
- Thank God for the mercy He has shown you, already given. “Those who are forgiven much, love much.”
- Ask the Spirit to form Christlike gentleness in you.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I bring You my anger. Where it has become hardened or self-protective, soften me. Where it has sought to wound, heal me.

Holy Spirit, continue Your quiet work within me. Reveal what needs forgiving. Restore what has been disordered. Form in me the gentle strength of Christ.

Father, complete the good work You have begun in me, conforming me to the image of Your Son. Amen.