



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

- When have you avoided doing something you knew you should—whether for God, someone else, or yourself—and why?

READ

Mt 11:28-30

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 turn our attention to the vice of **sloth**, asking the Spirit to reveal where our love has gone astray and to draw us toward the virtue of faithful, rooted presence.

The Vice: Sloth (Acedia)

Sloth is not mere laziness. The early church called it *acedia*—resistance to the demands of love, especially toward God and others.

It shows up in two masks:

- **False Rest:** passivity, drifting, avoidance, numbing or escape into comfort or distraction.
- **Restless Busyness:** constant activity, superficial engagement, running from the work of love, never committing.

Sloth is serious because it subtly resists the purpose for which we are made: to love God, people, and the world around us. But love always makes costly demands, and sloth resists them. Simply, **sloth is the refusal to become the person God created us to be.**

The Virtue: ‘Stabilitas’

Stabilitas, or stability, is the remedy the early church offered. It is a settled commitment to remain present to God, others, and to our calling. Practically, it looks like:

- With God: daily prayer, Scripture, worship
- With others: listening, forgiving, serving, showing up consistently.

It is ordinary faithfulness over time, trusting that growth happens in the slow work of love.

Reflective Questions

Q: Where do you see sloth celebrated in our culture?

Q: Where do you notice it in your own life?

Q: How do you tend to justify sloth as reasonable or necessary?

Q: What resistance do you feel toward stability and faithful presence?

Christ-centred Reflection

Jesus exposes sloth not to shame us, but to free us. He calls us to **come to him, take his yoke, learn from him, and find rest for our souls.** True rest is not avoidance—it is embracing love’s demands in step with Jesus. Following him reshapes our lives, gradually forming us into the people God created us to be.

Put it into practice this week

- **Notice:** In what situations or relationships do you tend to withdraw or avoid?
- **Practice:** Choose one simple act of stability—spend daily time with God in prayer and Scripture. Or commit to listening fully to someone you otherwise might avoid.

PRAY

- Confess where love has gone astray and shows up as sloth in your life.
- Thank God for grace already given.
- Ask the Spirit to form in you the steadfast love of *stabilitas*.

Closing Prayer

Triune God, where I have withdrawn or avoided, draw me near. Where I have resisted your call, teach me to take your yoke and walk with you. Shape me through daily apprenticeship to learn from you, and breathe your life into me so I may find rest for my soul. Root me in your love, and help me remain faithful to the life of love you call me to. Amen