



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

- What's one app, show, or habit that always seems to pull you in longer than you planned?

[NOTE for SGs: Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, we recommend using this guide in same-sex discussions.]

READ

Mt 5:27-30

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. Today, we turn our attention to the vice of **lust**.

The Vice: Lust

Lust is not just wanting sexual pleasure too much. It is a self-centred way of seeing others that reduces them to objects for personal gratification. It begins in the heart, shaped by what we give our attention to, and grows as we nurture it. Over time, it distorts how we see others—not as persons to love, but objects to use. It promises satisfaction but leaves us restless, weakening our capacity for intimacy, joy, and connection.

The Virtue: Chastity (Purity)

Chastity is not the repression of desire, but its right ordering. It means:

- Honouring God with our bodies
- Stewarding the God-given gift of sex wisely
- Seeing others as whole persons, not objects
- Submitting our desires within God's design

Whether single, dating, or married, rightly ordered desire becomes a powerful witness to God's intention for love and human flourishing.

Reflective Questions

Q: Where do you see lust celebrated or normalized in our culture for both men/women?

Q: How has your pursuit of sexual pleasure caused harm in your life or relationships?

Q: What personal struggles with lust do you notice, and when are you most vulnerable?

Q: How do you rationalize or justify lustful thoughts or actions in your life?

Q: How can you cultivate chastity and self-control in the areas where lust tempts you most?

Christ-centred Reflection

What we need is not less desire, but rightly formed desire—to submit our sexuality to Christ's way of love: self-giving, faithful, and relational. Through his grace, Jesus not only forgives our sin but renews our hearts. As we fix our attention on Jesus, he will reshape how we see, desire, and love.

Put it into practice this week

- **Notice:** What are you giving your attention to that stirs unhealthy desire?
- **Practice:** Set boundaries around what you watch or consume. Invite a trusted friend into honest accountability.

PRAY

- Confess where desires have turned lustful and inward, away from love.
- Thank God for grace that forgives & restores.
- Ask the Spirit to put to death lustful desires and reorder your heart toward Christ.

Closing Prayer

Father, You created us with desires meant for love and life. Forgive us where those desires have become disordered.

Jesus, thank you for your grace that meets us in our weakness and calls us into freedom.

Transform our hearts and teach us to love as you love.

Holy Spirit, Guard our attention, renew our minds, and train our desires. Form in us purity, self-control, and deep love for others.

Amen.