



A
PASSION
For *Purity*
(including A Practice of Purity)

Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life.
PROVERBS 4:23

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A Passion For Purity

Proverbs 4:23

Pastor Ben Farrell

Passion is “a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something.” So, what are you passionate about? What winds your clock, moves your meters, and floats your boat? For many it is sports; for some it is health and fitness; others are all about their hobbies. There are those who are passionate music and art lovers. It could be that you’re passionate about your family or even animals.

What should be the passion of a Christian? What should make a Christian energetically and enthusiastically live life? Generally speaking, our primary passion as a believer ought to be the glory of God. That means the over-arching goal of my life ought to be giving the right opinion of who God is and what He is like. For instance, because God is love, I want my life to show and share God’s love with those around me. Because God is truth, I want to walk in integrity before Him. Because God is gracious, I want my life to evidence the grace of God despite the circumstances around me. And because God is holy, I want to live with a passion for purity.

That is easier said than done, for we live in a toxic society that daily bombards our senses with that which is vile, wicked, and godless. How can we live G-rated lives in an X-rated world? We must understand that purity is not only an external action, but an internal attitude. Purity of heart yields purity of hand, and an impure mind will produce an impure life. Wise King Solomon understood this truth. He writes the book of Proverbs to reveal God’s way to health, wealth, and wisdom. In the first few chapters, Solomon emphasizes the value of fearing the Lord, warns of the corrupting influence of wrong friends, explains the priority of seeking after wisdom, and demonstrates the necessity of trusting in the Lord. Now in the final verses of the fourth chapter he passionately pleads with his son to “keep thy heart will all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

The word “heart” is used over 800 times in Scripture. In some cases it refers to the vital organ that pumps blood through our bodies, but in the majority of instances it is used to identify the inner man. The “heart” is the totality of a man-his mind, will, and emotions. In this passage the emphasis is on the mind and one’s thinking! You could read it, “Keep your mind and thoughts with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

A passion for purity begins by understanding...

1. The Value of Your Mind

We see the value of the mind through several key words in this power-packed verse. The first is “keep” – “guard, watch over carefully, protect.” Things that have value are guarded, watched over with care, and safely protected. And your mind has great value. The second key word is “diligence” – it pictures a soldier at his post or a guard at a prison. We are to diligently guard our hearts and minds like the military guard who knows that his life and the lives of the men within the fort walls depend on his diligence of looking out for the enemy through the night watch, like the prison guard of by-gone years who would be executed if his captives were to somehow escape. This is the kind of priority guarding our minds and hearts should receive!

Why should I “keep my heart will all diligence?” Because “out of it are the issues of life.” The word “issues” points to the source, the fountain head, or the well-spring. The heart is at the source; therefore, it determines what we are and ultimately what we do.

a. It determines your character (what you are).

Proverbs 23:7 – “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!” You have heard the phrase, “You are what you eat.” Biblically, God says, “You are what you think!” As one preacher put it, “You are not what you think you are. But what you think, you are!”

Our society would like to blame the environment around us for man’s ungodliness. But the prophet Jeremiah reminds us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart! Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What lies behind you and what lies before you are tiny matters compared to what lies within you.” The mind and thoughts determine the character of an individual.

b. It determines your conduct (what you do).

James Allen has said, “Good thoughts bear good fruit. Bad thoughts bear bad fruit. And man is his own gardener.” Your heart determines what kind of life you will live! It is your thought life that controls your attitudes. And attitudes lead to actions. So the heart leads to the attitude, and the attitude leads to the action, and the action leads to the achievement. Your character and conduct are directly related to your way of thinking.

The thought is the father of the deed, and yet few people are aware of the danger of the mind out of control. Someone has said, “If you sow a thought, you will reap a deed. If you sow a deed, you will reap a habit. If you sow a habit, you will reap a character. If you sow character, you will reap a destiny.” It all begins with your thought life. Satan knows if he can get you to think wrong, eventually he can get you to do wrong! That is why Solomon says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” If we pollute that wellspring, the infection will spread; before long, hidden appetites will become open sins and public shame. We must beware of “stinking thinking!” Guard your heart and mind — it is valuable!

2. The Violation of Your Mind

The fact that our text commands us to “keep or guard” our hearts implies that another must be seeking to steal it. Scripture reveals to us that there is a spiritual battle raging today. It is a battle for the mind! Peter warned us that Satan, as that roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour. His desire is to pollute your mind, divide your loyalties, and destroy your family. There is an all out attack on the mind by our enemy, the Devil.

The Great Wall of China is the longest man-made structure in the world. It was designed to keep the Mongolian nomads out of China. During its construction, the Great Wall was called “the longest cemetery on earth” because so many people died building it. Reportedly, it cost the lives of more than one million people. The Wall stretches over some 4,000 miles, stands 25 feet high in places, and has a width of between 15 and 30 feet. The Chinese thought it was impregnable, and yet the Mongolians invaded China three times in the first 100 years after its completion. “How?” you might ask. They did not go around it, they did not go over it, nor did they break through it; no, the Mongolians found a way to march right through the front door by bribing the gatekeeper.

It would seem that many believers have allowed easy access for the enemy to their homes and families through the avenue of the entertainment industry. Satan infiltrates your thinking through what you see and what you hear. Even in the Garden of Eden, Satan used these two senses to lure Eve, and ultimately Adam, away from God and into sin. She “saw the fruit that it was good to eat,” and she listened to and believed the lie of Satan. The Devil hasn’t changed his enticements in thousands of years! He just has more high-tech ways of delivering them. One of the main avenues in which Satan is polluting and corrupting the minds of believers and non-believers alike is through the media!

Now please understand: technology is not the enemy – Satan is! Technology is a tool that can be used properly and improperly. I am not saying that if you own a TV, smart phone, iPod, gaming system, DVD player, and have internet access that you are a backslidden, compromising sinner. What I am saying is that we need to be aware of the pollution that is found in today’s media so that we can be armed and protected against the enemy’s attacks. It does not concern me that you own any or all of these electronic devices. What concerns me is that you would be ignorant or indifferent to the potential spiritual pitfalls that accompany the technological age we live in. So let me take a few minutes to inform and encourage each of you to passionately pursue purity even in the area of technology and media.

In case you haven’t noticed, ours is an entertainment driven society! Most Americans are addicted to entertainment! As a nation, we spend nearly \$500 billion a year on it. Globally, entertainment is a \$2.1 trillion business. Our young people are growing up in a technological age, and they live media-saturated lives! A recent study has deemed this Generation M². The “M” stands for media; it is squared to denote that many within this generation multitask with their media (i.e., utilize more than one device at a time).

A national survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that “with technology allowing nearly 24-hour media access as children and teens go about their daily lives, the amount of time young people spend with entertainment media has risen dramatically. Today, 8-18 year-olds devote an average of 7½ hours to using entertainment media across a typical day (more than 53 hours a week). And because they spend so much of that time ‘media multitasking’ (using more than one medium at a time), they actually manage to pack a total of 10½ hours worth of media content into those 7½ hours.”

Let’s do some math together. If today’s youth spend 50 hours a week being entertained multiplied by 52 weeks, that equals 2,600 hours per year. That is 2½ times the amount of hours a young person will be in school that year and over 6 times more than if they were faithful to their local church every Sunday and Wednesday. By the time most youths turn 20, they will have spent 6 whole years being entertained with media. And we wonder why we often lose the next generation to the ways of the world?! The prophet Jeremiah declared, “Mine eye affected my heart.” What we see and hear does influence our thinking, and as we have already seen, our thinking influences our character and conduct.

The world understands the power of media. One secular author wrote, "Today's entertainment industry has the potential to influence your child's worldview and behavior much more than you do." If you don't believe that, then ask the advertisers why they will spend \$4 million for a 30 second commercial during this year's Super Bowl.

Listen to what those in media have to say about media. Filmmaker Oliver Stone said, "Film is a powerful medium. Film is a drug. It goes into your eye. It goes into your brain. It stimulates. And it's a dangerous thing." Ted Turner has been quoted as saying, "You know that everything we're exposed to influences us. Films influence us, and the TV programs we see influence us."

TELEVISION

Television is still the number one source of entertainment and media influence today. Most homes have more TVs than people in them! One study found there are more TVs in America than actual people. It is reported that the average household receives over 100 channels, and we still complain that there is nothing to watch. It is estimated that the TV is turned on for more than 1/3 of the day in most homes (8 hours and 14 minutes to be exact). One current author stated, "Living rooms, family rooms, dens, and bedrooms across America have become television temples." Television has been called the "plug-in drug."

According to the A.C. Nielsen Co., the average American watches more than 4 hours of TV each day. That adds up to 28 hours per week or 2 months of nonstop TV-watching per year, which means that in a 65-year lifespan, that person will have spent 9 years glued to the tube. That is just television viewing. It doesn't include the 6 million videos that are rented daily in the US, plus video games, web time, etc. It is estimated that 7 out of 10 young people (ages 8-18) have a TV in their room. Nearly 40% of those have cable or satellite connection and another 20% have access to the premium channels. If that is not troubling enough, stats say 43% of 4-6 year-olds have a TV in their room and 30% of 0-3 year-olds have one. What is being seen and heard is severely detrimental to their spiritual health!

The profanity that punctuates today's programs continues to increase and has become more and more harsh. In 1972, the late George Carlin famously asserted in a comedy routine that there are "seven words you can never say on television," yet today, all seven of those words have aired unedited on broadcast TV during prime time viewing hours.

Hollywood's "creative" elite constantly demonstrate their contempt for religion by deliberately portraying God as the subject of ridicule and followers of organized religion as oppressive, fanatical, hypocritical, and hopelessly corrupt. In television's "creative" circles, calling a series or movie "irreverent" receives the highest praise. Mockery of God is far too often the brunt of the joke on today's so called "comedies." We have come to expect this from the unbelieving world around us, but what should cause us great concern is that many believers will sit hour after hour to watch, listen, and even laugh at this mockery of God!

There is an overwhelming amount of violent acts being portrayed on screen. One study found that by the time the average U.S. child starts elementary school, he or she will have viewed 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on TV. Much of the violence has been glamorized, sanitized, and trivialized to make such acts seem "normal."

Sensuality and promiscuity have become staples on many shows. The data is too overwhelming, so let me try to put it into perspective. In a recent analysis of prime time broadcast TV Family Hour programming, the stats revealed an average 12.5 instances of violence, profanity, and sexual immorality per hour. This is equivalent to one majorly objectionable element every 4.8 minutes of viewing time.

Columnist Richard Reeves has accurately written, "If TV is producing trash, guess what it considers its waste dump? That's right, your living room, your brain, and your soul." What was once appalling to us has now become amusing to us! Our minds are being polluted by the entertainment industry.

VIDEO GAMES

Not only is television a large source of entertainment, but video gaming has also grown exponentially over the past 30 years. According to one study, 97% of young people play video games regularly. It is a big business! In 2013, the video game industry cleared over \$76 billion in sales. The graphics on the most recent systems are incredibly life-like. The problem is that many of the top selling video games contain brutal violence and filthy language. USA Today just listed the top 10 video games of 2013 – the top 5 were all rated "M" for Mature (17+). Stats say that 87% of boys play M-rated video games and 78% say M-rated are their favorites.

It is the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) that screens these games and produces these ratings. Keep in mind that this board is not made up of conservative pastors and youth pastors across America. Here is how they articulate what a mature rating means, "Content is generally suitable for ages 17 and up. May contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content, or strong language." The activities that are seen, heard, and participated in through these M-rated games are simply ungodly! Most include virtual blood splattered all over screen, bonus points for certain types of kills, harsh profanity, not to mention the sexual innuendos and immodesty. Someone will say, "It's only a game. Come on, it's just rated that way for violence." I would encourage you to read Genesis chapter 6. There you will find the context of the worldwide flood. Did you realize that one of the primary reasons God

destroyed mankind was because, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11). Ask yourself, “If I have a passion for purity, is this the type of content that I should be entertaining myself with?” Keep your heart!

INTERNET

The internet has been called the information super highway, and it can be a phenomenal tool. It is estimated that 96% of young people surf the web with regularity. The worldwide communication can be a major blessing, enabling people to stay in touch with one another around the world. Powerful search engines give instant answers to questions. I mean, who needs a brain when you have Google, right? The most popular things to do online are social networking, YouTube, and online gaming.

However, too many families are logged on but tuned out! Many of our children are becoming road kill on the information super highway! The World Wide Web has ensnared far too many lives. According to one study, nearly half of internet users visit an adult website. Stats further say that 9 out of 10 children ages 8 to 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet. In most cases, these explicit sites were accessed unintentionally when a child, often in the process of doing homework, used a seemingly innocent sounding word to search for information or pictures. Did you know that the average age of children exposed to pornography today is 8 years old?

The pornography industry generates \$12 billion in annual revenue. That is larger than the combined annual revenues of ABC, NBC, and CBS combined. And it is aggressively seeking to attract and addict you, your spouse, and your children to pornography. And it is not just men who are being enslaved by this — 1 in 3 visitors to pornographic sites are female. According to an article by *Today's Christian Woman*, “One out of every six women, including Christians, struggles with an addiction to pornography.” If all of this isn't scary enough to you as a parent, keep in mind that with a smart phone your young person has ready access to all of this, 24/7, in the palm of his/her hand.

With the tsunami of corruption engulfing us, it is easy to lose hope and want to give up. A school boy was asked to complete this proverb: “Cleanliness is next to _____?” His response was “Cleanliness is next to impossible.” We sometimes feel that way in this day and age. But there is a way, there is hope, and there is victory that can be achieved! By God's grace and through His power we can have victory for the mind!

3. The Victory for Your Mind

I read that many years ago there were some soldiers at Fort Dix (Trenton, NJ) who were fighting a forest fire. As they were out in the midst of those flames, battling to stop the fires advancement, a plane flew overhead. Aboard was an unidentified pilot (nobody knows to this day exactly who the pilot was) but he flew very low over those men fighting that fire and began to drop weighted notes to them. Three times he did this. One of the men below received that note and read it to his fellow fire-fighters. It stated, “You are surrounded by flames, and you're going to perish in the flames unless you take immediate action. There is one narrow corridor and that is your only way of escape. You must hurry, because it too will be cut off before long.” As those men read the note, they chose to heed the pilot's warning, and it saved their lives! There was a message from above that was telling them something that they could not have known down there in the smoke, the furor, and the heat where they were.

That is very much like our society today. We are surrounded with the toxic fumes and lethal fire of our wicked world. And yet God is saying, “There is a way of escape.” He has given us a message from above – it is His Word! To read it and heed it will allow us to have victory for our minds. Through God's power we can live godly in the midst of ungodliness. We can live purely in an impure world. We can lead G-rated lives in an X-rated society! How is this accomplished? What is the way to victory for the mind? What are the steps we need to take?

Step 1 - Repent (confess and forsake)

Maybe you find yourself defeated in your thought life. You have succumbed to the enemy's onslaughts. Step one, my friend, is to repent. I John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The word confess literally means “to say the same thing.” It means “to agree with God, to take His side against your sin.” It is saying, “Dear God, You're right, and I am wrong. My entertainment is displeasing to you and greatly hindering my spiritual growth.”

Good news! When you confess your sin to God and agree with Him about where you truly are spiritually, He faithfully and readily forgives us. But more than just granting forgiveness, He goes another step and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. The word cleanse means “to purify.” The first step out of impure thinking and living is through genuine repentance!

True repentance not only includes confessing the sin before God, but also forsaking that sin.

Step 2 - Remove (radical amputation)

Do some radical amputation. Jesus said in Matthew 18:8-9, “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee, it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.” Jesus is not promoting self-mutilation, but rather He is teaching self-denial. There are times, in order to survive, that radical amputation is necessary.

On April 26, 2003, Aron Ralston was hiking through Blue John Canyon in eastern Wayne County, Utah. While he was descending a slot canyon, a suspended boulder he was climbing down became dislodged, crushing his right hand and pinning it against the canyon wall. Ralston had not informed anyone of his hiking plans, thus no one would be searching for him. Assuming that he would die, he spent the next five days slowly sipping his small amount of remaining water and rationing the two burritos he brought, while trying to extricate his pinned arm. His efforts were futile as he could not budge the 800 pound stone. After running out of food and water, the dehydrated and delirious Ralston realized that in order to survive, the only way to free himself was by amputating his arm. So he made a tourniquet and over the course of the next hour he performed the amputation with the dull two-inch knife from his multi-tool.

After freeing himself, Ralston still had to get back to his car. He climbed out of the slot canyon where he had been trapped, rappelled down a 65-foot sheer wall one-handed, and hiked out of the canyon in the hot midday sun. He was eight miles from his vehicle with no phone to call for help. However, while hiking out, he encountered a family on vacation from the Netherlands who gave him food and water and then hurried to alert the authorities. He was rescued six hours after amputating his arm. In a television interview several months later, Aron was asked, “How could you bring yourself to amputate your arm?” His reply was immediate and to the point, “Because,” he said, “I wanted to live!”

For some there may need to be radical amputation, a clean cut from the trash that has been filling your mind in order to free yourself from its bondage. It may mean destroying your filthy DVD collection, deleting that ungodly music from your iPod, disposing of those vile video games, or simply getting the TV out of your room. Get some accountability for your smart phone usage. If you are only half-hearted about living purely in an impure world, you will fail. There must be a wholehearted commitment and willingness to remove the opportunity to sin.

Step 3 - Replace (wrong with right)

Once you have taken the garbage out, put something in its place. Nature abhors a vacuum. Replace ungodly habits with godly habits. Turn off the secular talk-radio and tune into Scripture being read. Shut off the TV and read a God-honoring book. Delete the trash music and replace it with God-glorifying, Christ-honoring music. Develop a new taste — not a taste for the world, but a taste for the Word. Replace those impure thoughts with the purest of thoughts from God’s Word. One of the greatest weapons against impurity is hiding God’s Word in your heart! Scripture reveals the mind of God, and when your heart and mind are filled with Scripture, you are thinking God’s thoughts after Him.

One preacher said, “Many people remember what they ought to forget and forget what they ought to remember. Scripture memory helps you to remember what you ought to remember and to forget what you ought to forget! When you put the right thing into your mind, it will crowd out the wrong thing. Replace the wrong with right!” God made you in such a way that you cannot think two thoughts at one time. So, when you begin to think what is right, you will not be thinking that which is wrong. The way not to think wrong is to think right!

Step 4 - Resist (make no provision; saturate your mind with God’s Word)

Make it hard to get back into sin. Romans 13:14 says, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Having a passion for purity includes a choice. You have to choose purity. If you don’t choose it, you’re going to fail. Nobody is going to drift into purity these days any more than a boat just drifts into the harbor. You must choose your thoughts like you choose what to wear. What you need to do is put a guard on your mind. Develop your own “Department of Homeland Security.” Like the security check point at the airport, let nothing get through without a thorough inspection! And if anything dangerous is found, immediately remove it!

Practice Philippians 4:8 — “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of a good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Before you allow a thought to be entertained in your mind, ask — is it true? Don’t allow Satan’s lies to enter your thinking. Is it honest, honorable, and worthy? Don’t allow dishonorable thoughts in. Is it just? It should be straight and accurate, not crooked and perverse. Are you thinking straight? Is it pure? This means free from contamination. Is it something that would be used in the worship of God? If it is not fit for the presence of God, do not allow it in. Is it lovely? Does it cause me to love God more or sin more? Is it of a good report? Would it be something worth repeating? Don’t let others track mud on the carpet of your mind!

May I make another recommendation? Build some guardrails to keep from falling. In the Old Testament, God told the Israelites to build guard rails around the edge of the roof, so that no one would accidentally fall (Deut. 22:8). Let's apply that to protecting ourselves and our children from falling. We want to have homes that are as danger-free as possible for our children. So, we go to great lengths and personal inconvenience to childproof our houses. We install gates at the top of stairwells that we trip over. We place electric caps on the outlets and safety caps on the medicine bottles that nobody can get open. We do all this to keep our family physically safe. Should we not take the same precautions for their spiritual safety? I don't want to be guilty of negligence in the spiritual realm. So we ought to put up some spiritual guard rails.

What are some of those guard rails practically speaking? Get a good filter for your Internet access. Maybe put the computer in a public area in the home and shut down the Wi-Fi at bed time. Certainly make use of a filtered search engine. There are parental settings for your television — use them! Set a limit to the amount of viewing time for your children. Remove the TV from your young person's bedroom. Don't do dumb things with your Smartphone. Set up some accountability for yourself and your teens. You may be a well-meaning parent who is thinking, "I don't want to invade their privacy." Please understand, your responsibility as a parent supercedes any supposed right to privacy your child may have. Love them enough to protect them from the potential of technological pitfalls.

In conclusion, we have sought to stress the value of the mind, expose the way in which Satan through the avenue of media would pollute the mind, and express God's answer for victory for the mind. We have tried to give you some practical ways to protect you and your family from the attacks of the enemy. May I make one more vital recommendation? Cover your family with prayer! Pray for God's protection over your spouse, your children, and grandchildren. "Lord, keep them from the evil one!"

May I ask you? Do you have a passion for purity? Do you desire purity in your entertainment? A passion for purity begins in the heart and mind — understanding its value, guarding it from the enemy, and living in the victory provided by God. "Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." Have a passion for purity!

The Practice of Purity: Internet & Media Safety Pastor Keith Lewis

“**A**nd beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:5-8, 10b).

“Self-control,” the denial of self in submission to obeying Jesus, is an absolutely essential virtue in this area of purity, and it's one that we usually run to. And, well we should. When enticed by the lust of the flesh, we must simply say “no” to ourselves and “yes” to Jesus (Romans 13:14; Titus 2:11-12).

However, notice in this passage that the virtue of self-control is shown to be best cultivated within the context of a few other virtues. Peter teaches us that we should build self-control on top of a foundation of other virtues. That foundation includes:

- Faith — believing in Jesus Christ as your only Savior
- Virtue/Excellence — being committed to developing and displaying the character of Jesus Christ
- Knowledge — knowing the person, words, and ways of Jesus Christ

(For a fuller explanation of these virtues, see *Essential Virtues* by Jim Berg.)

This is a brilliant, inspired progression; and we are wise to keep it in mind when we consider this issue and begin talking about the practice of purity. We're being reminded, as we just learned in the first portion of this booklet, that purity must begin in the heart. Without a heart committed to excellence and knowledge (i.e., commitment to magnify Jesus and the knowledge of how to do that), any practical aid of accountability, filtering, or monitoring can breakdown into mere fear of man, legalistic discipline, or godless moralism. Used unwisely, apart from the cultivation of excellence and knowledge in our faith, these practical aids might actually help us avoid sin, but apart from an increasing submission to and love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, as we consider these practical tools for purity, please remember to apply them within the context of excellence and knowledge, for “if you practice these things, you will never fall”!

STEP #1 — CHOOSE AN INTERNET FILTER.

OPEN DNS (opendns.com/home-internet-security)

- *Device* — installed directly on your home wireless router and monitors all devices using that router (i.e., protects your guests)
- *Features*
 - Users can block entire categories of content (over 50 of them), or just choose to block the individual websites that you know are problematic or unsafe (whitelist/blacklist). Or, for easier setup, you can choose a filtering level: low, medium or high.
 - Logs and statistics, but not email reports
 - Built-in fraud, phishing, and identity theft protection
 - Increases internet speed and reliability
- *Pricing*
 - OpenDNS Family Shield — Free
 - OpenDNS Home — Free
 - OpenDNS Home VIP — \$19.95/year

CIRCLE (meetcircle.com)

- *Device* — a purchased device (that pairs wirelessly with your home wifi router) that allows you to manage all your home’s connected devices; also complemented by a free app (currently only iOS; Android coming soon) to help setup and manage your Circle device
- *Features*
 - Establishes each device as a unique user and monitors it as such
 - With Time Limits you can customize how much time individual users spend on any given app, platform, or category, and even set a total online time limit for the day.
 - With Bed Time, you can set a time frame in which specified devices will disconnect from the internet.
 - Use its powerful and extensive Filter to set age-based, fully customizable filter levels for each family member (includes defaulting “safe search” on Google and blocking ads).
 - With the press of a button, you can Pause the Internet, disabling access to a specific device, individual, or the entire home.
 - With Insights, you can see web history reports, total time spent online, and where/when the activity took place.
 - Extensive notification options allow you to be alerted when a time limit is reached or when content is filtered, for example.
 - Automatically adds guests to the general “home profile” for a preset level of internet protection and notifies you about the addition
 - Allows for devices to be unmanaged
 - Good user support online forum
 - Industry standard security, including a backup battery so that it cannot be easily turned off, admin-only shut-down, and notification if Circle is removed from the home
 - High levels of privacy, including storing surfing history on the device rather than in the cloud
 - Pairs wirelessly with your home wifi, but can also plug in via ethernet, in the event that it slows down your wifi speed
 - Through its partnership with Disney, Circle provides access to Disney videos, games, characters, and other resources.
 - Coming Soon! Circle Go™ allows iOS users to enable Circle’s features anywhere, for any network your kid’s devices join (including 4G). At home or on the go, Circle settings remain in effect no matter where your family travels. Android availability will come later.
- *Pricing*
 - Circle device — \$99
 - Circle iOS app — Free
- *Review* — www.challies.com/resources/protect-your-family-with-circle

OTHER FILTERING PRODUCTS

- **CovenantEyes (covenanteyes.com)** — This service offers both filtering and accountability. See details below under accountability.
- **X3Watch (x3watch.com)** — This service offers both filtering and accountability. See details below under accountability.
- **Mobicip (mobicip.com)**
 - *Supported Platforms* — download to Windows, Mac (coming soon), and Chromebook (coming soon); then use the free Mobicip web browser for iOS* and Android
 - *Features* — installed on and monitors each device, linking it with a unique user; provides powerful and customizable filtering, app monitoring, time limits, access requests, notifications, browsing history reports; controlled via a web-based Monitor dashboard or a free iOS app (Android coming soon)
 - *Pricing* — two packages: basic (Free) or premium (\$39.99/year)
- **K9 Web Protection (k9webprotection.com)**
 - *Supported Platforms* — download to Windows and Mac; then use the free K9 web browser for iOS* and Android
 - *Features* — a free, comprehensive, and customizable filtering service (over 60 content categories) that includes time limits, reporting and logs, and protection from scams, spyware, and malware
 - *Pricing* — Free

OTHER PROTECTIONS

Parents, especially, should be familiar with the protections that cellular providers and smart phone companies are offering.

1. Device Restrictions / Parental Controls

- *Supported Platforms* — available on most laptops/desktops (e.g., Windows & Mac) and virtually all mobile device operating systems (e.g., iOS & Android); also available through most cell phone carriers (e.g., Verizon)
- *Features*
 - Prevent access to certain apps (e.g., web browser, camera, app store, music store, in-app purchases, etc.)
 - Restrict access to certain content (e.g., certain ratings in movie and TV shows, explicit music and podcasts, inappropriate books and websites, etc.)
 - Control certain features (e.g., privacy settings, account settings, volume limits, etc.)
- *Example* — Apple iOS (<http://bit.ly/175MsnS>), Mac laptops/desktops (<http://bit.ly/175OFje> [OSX Mavericks], <http://apple.co/1YmjT4Q> [OSX Yosemite], <http://apple.co/1TUgUq> [OSX El Capitan]), Android (<http://bit.ly/1YmkeEW>), Windows 10 (<http://bit.ly/1TUh2tw>)
- *Apple iCloud Family Sharing* — This great service offers an “Ask to Buy” feature: when a child initiates a purchase, an alert is sent to the organizer, who can review the download and approve or decline it right from the organizer’s device. This applies to both purchases and free downloads. (<http://apple.co/WFIFQ8>)

2. App Purchase History

- *Apple*
 - Go to the “App Store.”
 - Tap on “Updated” at the bottom right.
 - Tap on “Purchased” at the top.
 - Tap on “My Purchases.”
 - Scroll to find the app or pull down and type the name in the “Search” bar.
 - Even if you swipe to the left to “Hide” the app, it will reappear when you re-enter that screen.
- *Android*
 - Go to “Google Store.”
 - Tap on “Apps & Games” and then “My Apps & Games.”
 - The app history is under “All,” but the user can delete apps from this history on his phone. The permanent purchase history, however, should still be available on his online account.

3. Ghost Apps

- *Description* — In 2012, a study found that more than 70 percent of teens have hidden online activity from their parents. Today, many of them are hiding information on their mobile devices using “ghost apps.” These apps initially appear innocent, but allow the user to hide inappropriate material (esp. pictures) within them behind a passcode. Some of these apps even allow the user to hide other apps.

- *Difficulty* — These apps appear innocent on the app store, using names and key words like “audio manager” or “photo vault.” Their icons often look harmless like a weather, calculator, or music app. Their description will usually suggest the ability to “hide” information.
- *Discovery* — Check out new apps on your child’s phone, especially those that have access to the phone’s camera. Look for redundancy, like two calculators on a phone. Familiarize yourself with the different ways that users can hide content and apps (see links below).
- *Data* — <http://link.kdvr.com/1GPERkP>, <http://go.fox59.com/1GUavOI>, <http://wp.me/p6vrKb-sH>, <http://bit.ly/1NBKTmL>

Note — If you are not sure what inappropriate material may currently be on a device, consider erasing and resetting the device to its factory settings and then implementing these restriction

STEP #2 — CHOOSE AN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM.

ACCOUNTABLE 2 YOU (accountable2you.com)

- *Supported Platforms* — download to Windows, Mac, and Chromebook; then use the free Accountable2You web browser for iOS* and Android
- *Features*
 - Unlimited devices and unlimited accountability partners, with each device having its own accountability partners; accountability reports sent daily, weekly, or monthly
 - Real-time alerts sent to accountability partners for questionable activity (time limit alerts are added in the Family Plan) or when Accountability2You is turned off
 - Multi-lingual, adjustable, and customizable rating system per device for internet activity
 - Full activity reports for each Windows, Mac, Android, and Chromebook device (reporting for iOS is only within A2Y’s custom designed browser*) — These detailed, temptation-free, and user-friendly reports include private browsing activity, at-a-glance “questionable” or “highly questionable” flags, social media activity (including captions, but not actual images or videos), time usage information per device, and specific app usage information per device.
 - Industry standard privacy and security
 - Designed not to slow down your internet speed or interfere with your network settings
 - Does not include filtering
- *Pricing*
 - Individual Plan — \$4.99/mo (unlimited accountability partners and devices)
 - Family Plan — \$8.99/mo (some additional features)

COVENANT EYES (covenanteyes.com)

- *Supported Platforms* — download to Windows or Mac; then use the free CovenantEyes web browser on iOS* and Android
- *Features* — In addition to the primary features below, CovenantEyes offers many helpful articles, eBooks, workshops, and other online resources.
 - Accountability
 - Setup unique usernames in order to offer reporting across multiple devices
 - Unlimited accountability partners; accountability reports sent daily, weekly, or monthly
 - Powerful and understandable age-based rating system for internet content that can be customized for each username
 - Full activity reports for each username (reporting is limited on both iOS* and Android**), across all devices — These detailed and user-friendly reports include private browsing activity (and cleared history), at-a-glance areas of concern, search terms used, and time usage information per username.
 - Panic button that temporarily terminates internet access
 - Alert sent when uninstalled
 - Filtering (available to add to every platform except Android [coming soon])
 - Adjust the age-based sensitivity level for each user
 - Add websites to each user’s allow/block lists
 - Allow “override” rights to requested sites
 - Set time limits for each user
 - Initiate the “restricted” filter setting that only allows sites on the allow list
 - Some complain that the filtering adversely affects their internet speeds and device functionality

- *Pricing*
 - Personal Plan — starts at \$9.99/mo
 - Family Plan — \$13.99/mo

OTHER ACCOUNTABILITY PRODUCTS

- **X3Watch (www.x3watch.com)**
 - *Supported Platforms* — download to Windows or Mac; then use the free X3Watch web browser on iOS* and Android
 - *Features* — good filtering and accountability features; setup unique usernames in order to have reporting across multiple devices
 - *Pricing* — \$6.99/mo or \$64.99/year

*Since Apple doesn't allow apps to run in the background on their iOS devices and monitor any other apps, a separate browser has been developed by these various filtering/reporting services and must be used with Safari disabled. This browser typically includes imported bookmarks, tabbed browsing, choice of search engine, the ability to check for copied URLs and open them in the app, a QR reader (some), and some sharing features. Utilizing this web browser will force the user to sacrifice many of Apple's cloud-based Safari features (i.e., reading list, iCloud tabs, iCloud bookmarks, shared links), sharing features (i.e., via Facebook, text, add to Home Screen), and direct link opening. Furthermore, since the browser filters and/or provides accountability only for activity within the app, inappropriate content can be accessed from other apps, especially if parental controls (see above) are not being utilized. While Android allows more background monitoring, some of these same limitations do apply to Android devices.

**CovenantEyes captures the websites visited on a growing number of apps and browsers (not fully comprehensive) and then provides a rating for each one. It also captures the time and date when the URLs (stories, images, etc.) were accessed. These URLs and their ratings are reported on the user's Accountability Report. CovenantEyes for Android also monitors what apps are used and the duration of their use. Since CovenantEyes on Android is not as comprehensive as it is on Windows, the Android user is recommended to utilize the app lock feature on his/her mobile device. Furthermore, filtering on Android is not yet available.

Product	Type	Filtering	Reporting	Accountability
OpenDNS	Download to router	Yes	Yes	No
Circle	Purchased device	Yes	Yes (for each device)	No (alerts, but not full, emailed reports)
CovenantEyes	Download to device; mobile app	Yes	Yes (for each user across all devices)	Yes (alerts & full, emailed reports)
X3Watch	Download to device; mobile app	Yes	Yes (for each user across all devices)	Yes (alerts & full, emailed reports)
Mobicip	Download to device; mobile app	Yes	Yes (for each device)	No (alerts, but not full, emailed reports)
K9 Web Protection	Download to device; mobile app	Yes	Yes (for each device)	No
Accountable2You	Download to device; mobile app	No	Yes (for each device)	Yes (alerts & full, emailed reports)

STEP #3 — ADD CONVERSATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

- Via email or texting, customize your own questions (pertaining to particular weaknesses or goals) and send them daily/weekly/monthly to preselected accountability partner(s).
- Set a weekly alert to remind you to send this report.
- Since it is easy to neglect sending this report (especially after a bad week), ask your accountability partner(s) to also set themselves an alert to remind them to ask for the report if they don't receive it.
- Furthermore, it is also easy to lie or withhold information on this report. Therefore, it is best to keep this accountability relationship personal (incorporating some "face-to-face" accountability), intentional, and conversational, with both parties engaging tirelessly in the discipleship responsibilities of Galatians 6:1-10.

STEP #4 — SAFEGUARD YOUR MEDIA INTAKE.

- *Personal & Family Standards* — Prayerfully and thoughtfully determine your viewing standards (including the amount of media intake), using principles from God's Word to inform, solidify, and enable our commitments.
- *YouTube Videos* — Use ViewPure (viewpure.com) to watch YouTube videos without comments, ads, related videos, or other distractions.
- *Movies*
 - *VidAngel* (vidangel.com) — VidAngel allows you to purchase any movie for \$1 (SD) or \$2 (HD) through a program called "Sellback." Then you can apply a comprehensive and customizable series of filters (e.g., language, sex/nudity/immodesty, violence/blood/gore, alcohol or drug use, other: also, sub-categories within these) to it and stream it on any device (Roku, Chromecast, AppleTV, Android, iOS).
 - *ClearPlay* (clearplay.com) — (1) Purchase the ClearPlayDVD/Blue-ray player. (2) Purchase a membership package (\$7.99/mo; \$79.99/year; special discounts offered throughout the year, especially at Christmas) in order to have access to a growing list of movies (over 4,500). (3) Customize a comprehensive list of filter settings (e.g., vulgarity, sensuality, nudity, violence, substance abuse, disrespect to parents, dishonoring the flag, etc.: set to off, low, medium, or high). (4) Watch a movie (DVD or Blu-ray) and enjoy the impact of the filters to silence inappropriate language, remove objectionable material, and skip entire scenes. Its ability to remove non-verbal material makes this product superior to TV Guardian and other similar services that only silences vulgarity. (5) ClearPlay Streaming works with movies rented (only) from Google Play.