

*How many here have heard of the new "MemRI" machine? It uses Functional Magnetic Resonance Imagery to replicate mental images and thoughts on to a screen or monitor.*

What does it actually do? Well, that's the cool part. This headset is attached to a monitor. And at the end of a 12 hour period, you can put on this machine, and it will scroll your mental images on the screen. So, your family for instance, can literally see what is on your mind, at least what has been through the day.

A few questions come immediately to mind:

- 1) Who wants one? Would you want one in your home to show your thoughts and also see theirs?
- 2) How would that go for you? Would it make for pleasant evenings with the spouse?
  - a. I'm not insinuating it would go poorly. In fact, it may go wonderfully. She watches his thoughts and sees how at lunch he was thinking of dinner with her. He watches as she reminisced about a recent vacation they had taken.
  - b. But more than likely, each of them would have a lot of explaining to do!
    - i. His thoughts about another woman he saw at work that day.
    - ii. Her thoughts of ringing his neck when he drops his muddy boots in the hall.

I anticipate the workplace and homes will have a lot more apologizing and asking forgiveness than ever. Or explaining how "it was only for a second" or "it really didn't mean anything."

*Certainly we would know each other in ways like never before and that may not be as exciting as it sounds!*

More than that, I suspect there will be a total renovation in how we think each and every day, knowing those thoughts are no longer going to be hidden from the people around us.

I surmise a lot more discipline will be outlined for what goes on between the ears, don't you?

Well, I have two important pieces of news for you:

- 1) The MemRI machine is not real, not in the least. I swiped some random net pix and made it up!
- 2) The MemRI machine is quite real, and has existed since the beginning of time, and still today.

God, our ever-present Father sees plainly before Him every thought we have:

- i. **Psalm 139:2** – "You understand my thoughts from afar."
- ii. **Matthew 9:4** – "Jesus, knowing their thoughts said, Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?"
- iii. **Hebrews 4:12** – "For the Word of God is living ... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

So then the big question must be asked: *IF we would need to make changes, instill discipline and be more humble if our spouse and friends saw our thoughts every day, how much more so should we make such changes, knowing that the God who judges the living and the dead sees our thoughts every day?*

It may be easy to surmise: "God understands. God understands that it is hard to control your thoughts. God understands that there is a difference between what we think and what we do."

**I Peter 1:13-16** – His very will for us says otherwise. Not to say we will never fail in mind, but God has the expectation that His people will persevere towards and expect of themselves: **Mental Holiness.**

God has not left us without guidance. He has not commanded a sober mind and then gives us no means by which to achieve it. The Bible is filled with perfect plans for mental holiness.

*On such 3-part plan He has given us is found in **Philippians 4:4-9**, and will serve as our text this morning.*

I. **"Rejoice in the Lord Always" (v4)**

- a. A rejoicing, optimistic, positive, grateful mind sets the tones for all the images that follow.
- b. I read a few articles on how to control personal thoughts, and consistently a top step was to be POSTIVE. And listen, this is a choice, and is not dependent on circumstances:
  - i. Paul had gone through much turmoil and was now imprisoned, and yet:
    1. **Philippians 1:12-14, 18-19; 2:17-18** – What a tremendous state of mind?
      - a. He was thankful for what he had!
      - b. And positive about what could come from his present situation!
- c. The truth is, when we dwell on negative things, and lose our optimistic outlook, our thoughts and mental images follow us on a downward spiral.
  - i. If instead of rejoicing in blessings, I dwell on what others have that I don't.
    1. I can think greedily, selfishly and imagine ways to get ahead at all costs.

- ii. If instead of rejoicing in God, I negatively question is all this is worth it.
  - 1. Thoughts of frustration and entertaining life without this follow.
- iii. If instead of rejoicing in who I am, I am depressed by who I am not .
  - 1. Escapism can lead to thinking about immoral things or godless things
- d. So, be positive, optimistic, and grateful for the good things God has done for you AND for the good things that can come from whatever circumstance you are in!
  - i. *I try to start every day thanking God for: life, wife, kids, home, job, Christ, Bible, Heaven!*

Somebody may say: *“Okay, this is just unreasonable. Life has too many problems to be able to rejoice in it every day. My mind is often too burdened and weighed down by life’s troubles.”*

## II. **“Be Anxious for Nothing” (v6-7)**

- a. Well that settles it. We are not to carry things in our minds that burden. This word “anxious” is sometimes translated “take thought,” that is, to let stay on your mind!
- b. Prayer is not just a time to rejoice in what we have that is good, but also to give over to God the things that we have in our lives that aren’t.
- c. **Matthew 6:25-26, 31-34** – Jesus told us not to worry and to trust God to care for us.
  - i. It reflects a lack of trust in God, but much more, it blocks what should be there!
  - ii. **V33** – Can you put the kingdom first? Not if anxiety and fear rule our hearts!
- d. In a sense, it is hard to explain how this works. Paul said, “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”
- e. But in another sense, it is easy to see how it works:
  - i. *I have thoughts of depression and visualize future trouble... until I lay those burdens at God’s feet and imagine Him carrying them away. Now I move forward and upward.*
  - ii. *I feel like life isn’t what I want it to be, but instead of escaping to lustful or otherwise ungodly thinking, I tell God how that feels and ask for his help, clearing my head.*
- f. Listen, your mind was not built to carry burdens AND produce good and healthy thoughts. But it was built to carry confidence in God and hope for the future as a result of prayer.

*“Okay, these tips may help during small portions of the day when I pray and in the minutes afterward, but practically speaking, how do I keep my thoughts and mental images holy?”*

## III. **“Dwell on These Things” (v8)**

- a. Sounds a little too obvious, right? Just do it! Think only on things that please God.
- b. But there is more here than meets the eye, you see, it emphasized there is a CHOICE!
  - i. You don’t have to hold defeated, immoral, selfish or greedy thoughts.
  - ii. Sure, false, dishonorable, wrong, impure, hateful, despicable things are out there, but so is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely and reputable, excellent things!
- c. And let’s be clear, God expects you, built you, to make the right mental choices!
  - i. **V9** – He expects us to learn and practice these things, not fail repeatedly.
  - ii. And He will hold us responsible for those choices
    - 1. **Matthew 5:28** - Lust / **Ephesians 4:26-27** – Anger
- d. But is it up to you and me to make it a priority to monitor what is coming in, not just going out. We often judge holiness by what we SAY or DO, but those are just reactions to the way we think, feel and mentally picture things. Take responsibility for your thoughts and fill your mind, through prayer, Bible study and daily meditation with wholesome things.
- e. **II Corinthians 10:5** – “Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!”

**Conclusion:** When you interrogate your infant thoughts to determine if they belong, ask:

- 1) *Can I think on this in the name of the Lord?*
- 2) *Will this feed my spirit or my flesh?*
- 3) *Where will this thought lead me next?*
- 4) *Does this support my claim to godliness?*
- 5) *How would this thought play on the Dowlen Road screen?*

The MemRI machine would change the world as we know it. But would it change you? Would you need to think differently and discipline your mind knowing others will see? If so, know that 1) God sees and 2) others are affected by what your thoughts produce. Turn to God for help and God’s people if you needs us.