

## it's all in the MIND

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by Florence MacKenzie

**Our thoughts matter.** They are a part of what it means to be human. They set the scene for our emotional responses. How we think and interpret situations affects how we feel. When our thinking is out of order, it doesn't take long before our emotions follow suit.

A dear friend clearly demonstrated this while vacationing with us. She needed to send a message to her office staff. Since no one picked up the phone, she left a voicemail message requesting a call back. When the call was not returned within a few minutes, her thinking turned to fantasy mode. She convinced herself that the call had not been returned because something unpleasant had happened in her absence, and she imagined that none of the office staff wished to convey this bad news to her. Her emotions quickly responded to the faulty thinking and, soon she was feeling extremely anxious and fearful. When a staff member eventually returned her call, she learned all was well. They had simply gone out to lunch.

Often we often don't give our thoughts the attention they deserve and, consequently, we become quite careless in our thinking. In the New Testament book of Philippians, we read this: "... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things" (Phil.4:8).

Sounds good, but what might this look like in practice?

**Whatever is true.** When was the last time you stressed out thinking things that you later discovered weren't true? Just because some of our thoughts have no basis in reality doesn't stop us from thinking them. If we make a conscious decision to test the accuracy of our thoughts, we can more effectively reject lies and focus our thoughts on things that are true.

**Whatever is noble.** A noble thinker focuses on positives rather than negatives. She refuses to indulge in uncomplimentary thinking. When my daughter was about five years old, she watched Disney's *Snow White* movie and, while not impressed with the scheming behavior of Snow White's step-mother, she remarked observantly, "But mommy, she does have nice lipstick!" Get into the habit of focusing on people's good qualities and thinking of ways to build them up.

**Whatever is right.** Right thinking is equitable thinking. It rules out unfair, discriminatory attitudes toward others based on gender, race, social status, appearance, or other worldly criteria. If we find ourselves developing a prejudiced outlook or ceasing to

be impartial in our assessment of another, we would do well to ask, "Is this right?"

**Whatever is**

**pure.** To think pure thoughts, we need to be careful about what we allow into our minds. You are no doubt familiar with the GIGO effect – *garbage in, garbage out.* This principle



also applies to our thought life. If we deliberately choose wholesome reading and viewing material, and we ruthlessly filter out junk, we will more likely think pure thoughts. The Psalmist answered his own question about how people can keep their lives pure: "By living according to (God's) word" (Psalm 119:9).

**Whatever is lovely.** Life is much more pleasant when we take time to think about things that are lovely. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 gives us examples of what it means to think this way:

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

Beautiful words like these can affect us in much the same way as listening to magnificent music or surveying spectacular scenery does. Why not identify at least one lovely thing to think about every day?

**Whatever is admirable.** Whenever we celebrate worthwhile achievements, we engage in admirable thinking. A person who overcomes a bad habit or adopts a good one is demonstrating behavior worthy of our admiration. Look for things that you can commend in others.

**If anything is excellent or praiseworthy.** Finally, godly thought content is, indeed "excellent and praiseworthy", albeit challenging. How about joining me in my desire to "think about such things" (Phil.4:8).

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