

A Spiritual MRI

from Breathe Life Ministries (BreatheLifeToday.com)

*God, I invite your searching gaze into my
heart.*

*Examine me through and through; find out
everything that may be hidden within me.*

*Put me to the test and
sift through all my anxious cares.*

*See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on,
and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting
way—the path that brings me back to you.*

Psalm 139:23-24 (TPT)

This experiment from ***Breathe Life Ministries*** is designed to help you take a brief look at where you are right now. Set aside about 30 minutes to lean into the process. You aren't being graded, and you can't fail this test.

While the Spiritual MRI isn't complicated, the emotions and thoughts it helps you notice are often complex. This faith experiment will help you:

- 1) notice what is really going on inside you;
- 2) withhold judgment of what you discover and instead be curious, so that
- 3) you can share with your Great Physician what you find, so that
- 4) Jesus can address what you discover with grace and healing by his Spirit, so that
- 5) you can grow in faith and friendship, with Jesus, yourself, and others.

An MRI reveals things that are usually hidden below the surface so you can see them and discover more about them; in a similar way, a Spiritual MRI invites Jesus to reveal whatever he wants you to notice today so he can bring a little more grace and wholeness into your life.

A Spiritual MRI includes four stages. Move slowly and deliberately through each part of the MRI, giving yourself plenty of time to notice.

Stage 1: Prepare

Begin by cultivating a safe, restful space. Make sure the lighting isn't too harsh and the environment is free from distractions. Find a comfortable but alert position. Take two or three deep breaths. Become aware of God's presence with you. You may pray the Lord's Prayer, or make the sign of the cross, or invite the Holy Spirit to guide the process.

Stage 2: The MRI

Slowly scan your body, starting at your head, and noticing your experience. Pause as long as you need to at each location. You can scan your whole body more than once or focus on one particular area. Move to the next stage whenever you are ready.

MIND: Take note of your mind. What voice do you hear? Is it harsh or critical? Is it shaming? Is a taskmaster telling you to do more, to do it better, to do it right? Is your self-speak encouraging, or loving, or kind? Do your thoughts feel weighty or energized? What kind of voice are you hearing in your mind?

NECK/SHOULDERS: Notice your neck and your shoulders. How do your muscles feel? Are you tense? Do you feel knots, or pain? Are you shouldering a weighty responsibility all alone? Are you sore from bearing a heavy burden? Do your shoulders feel proud, or joyful, or brave? What do you notice in your neck and shoulders?

HEART: Notice your heart and how it beats. Your heart not only pumps lifeblood to your entire body, it catches and holds emotions. Do you feel sadness or grief? Have you lost something or someone important? Does your heart feel full to the point of bursting? Or empty and hollow? Do you sense joy, or pain, or both? How does your heart feel?

GUT: Notice your gut. Is it unsettled or in knots? Do you feel insecure, uncertain, or unsafe? Are you excited about your future? Do you feel butterflies or a sense of anticipation? How does your gut feel?

HANDS: Take note of your hands. Are they clenched or relaxed? Are you trying desperately to stay in control or hold onto something that is slipping away? Are you open and expecting to receive? Are your hands fists, balled up in anger and fear? Are they ready to work, anxious to get started, tingling with expectation? How do your hands feel?

BODY: Now just notice your entire body. Are you wound up for a fight, or are you exhausted and ready to collapse? Are you open and curious, or full of energy? Is your body telling you to run and hide, or are you ready to take on whatever's next? What is the predominant posture of your body?

Stage 3. Be Curious with Jesus

You will likely have a natural tendency to judge whatever you just noticed. For example, your first response might be: "Why am I feeling that way? That's dumb," or, "I hate when I think/feel that! Why can't I stop that?" or, "If I had stronger faith I wouldn't feel/think that way!"

Rather than judging what the MRI revealed, hold whatever you noticed in your hands as if it were a physical object. Is it heavy, or light? Does it have smooth edges, or rough edges, or even sharp edges? Is it full of color and life, or dull and lifeless?

Hold whatever the MRI helped you notice in your hands in front of you. Then envision placing your hands, still holding what you noticed, inside the strong hands of Jesus.

Now, tell Jesus everything you feel, think, and believe about what's in your hands. Nothing is off limits! Ask him any question. Pour your heart out to Jesus about it. Take as much time as you need. Feel free to write down any of what you share with Jesus.

Listen and watch. Does Jesus say anything in response? What posture does he have toward you? How does Jesus interact with you? What tone of voice does he use? What does Jesus look like as he listens to you? Take as much time as you need. Write down what you see and hear.

After you have said everything you have to say about this, and if you are willing, let go of the thing in your hands and leave it in the hands of Jesus. Then watch him. What does Jesus do with what you have given him? Ask him any questions you have about what he's doing. Ask Jesus what he wants to give you in exchange. Write down what you see and hear.

If you hit a "snag," try directing any question or confusion back to Jesus. For example, if you hear or see something that seems contrary to God's nature revealed in the Scripture—maybe Jesus seems to be berating you, or demeaning you, or giving you lots of to-dos—then turn that experience back into a question: "Jesus, is this your voice? Are you the one saying X, or is this not from you? Please help me hear you and you alone."

Or, if the picture or word is unclear, you can simply ask, "Jesus, what does X mean? What do you want me to know or learn?" If your questions persist, seek out wise and gracious Christian counsel from a family member, friend, pastor, or counselor. It's OK to have lingering questions; trust that Jesus will make things clear to you in his time.

Stage 4. Share Your Story

As part of the Spiritual MRI process, consider sharing what you noticed, and how Jesus responded, with a safe person—someone who values you and trusts Jesus. Telling your story to someone you trust can be powerful for you and for the person hearing your testimony. As you share what you learned from Jesus about the deep things of your heart and mind, feel free to investigate any "snags" you still have with your trusted friend. Another faithful perspective can confirm what you already heard or help you gain new confidence in God's promises.

