

# If You Struggle in Social Situations, Here's a Christ-Centered Cure

Have you ever struggled with social anxiety—the fear or dislike of being seen by others? Many of us do. In fact, says psychologist and author Dr. Barbara Lowe, “There are a significant number of people who feel nervous around other people. Most of us, in fact—almost all of us—have anxiety around public speaking.”

This anxiety, Lowe tells listeners to “Dr. Barbara’s Whole Life Podcast” on the Charisma Podcast Network, has a strong connection to our personal history. “For some of us who grew up in dysfunctional families, we looked in our parents’ eyes, and we didn’t always see what we needed to see. We might have seen a parent who was checked out ... or a parent who reacts with anger in ways that aren’t predictable or aren’t reasonable and rational.”

“God has put in us this survival mechanism, where through mirror neurons, when we see in our parent’s eyes that fight or flight, our nervous system gets in a habit of scanning eyes and ratcheting up, not even based on normal triggers. This is especially true for those of us, including me, who grew up in homes with addicts. You don’t know what’s going to fall apart, so you’re always ... scanning for threat, and so are your eyes.”

This is the reason, Lowe says, that so many people must fight to overcome social anxiety, whether they’re aware of it or not. But what can we do?

First, Lowe says, “the Scripture obviously talks to us about taking our thoughts captive. And that is so important.” But, she adds, we must also deal with our nervous system, which processes faster than the speed of light. “We can begin to use

our imagination in some healthy ways to begin to heal. ... When we use our imagination the way God intended it, to think about what is lovely, what is pure—as Philippians talks about—what is praiseworthy. When we think about those things, it's like we're taking that nurturing and we're bringing it on the inside."

To learn more about Dr. Barbara's godly solutions for social anxiety, listen to this podcast. {eoa}