

## Extroverts—Fearless or Fearful?

By Sheila Johnson

Hi, my name is Sheila. I am an extrovert by a trick of nature and I meet no strangers; they see me coming and run fast! Therefore, I only meet people from a previous life who seem to already know me.

My childhood days were spent mostly with friends and family sitting at my feet learning whatever it was I thought they should know—because when we are children we think we know everything.

Moving into puberty (and surviving it), I was a royal pain in the derriere for my brothers: one six years my senior, and one six years my junior. I was the only girl, Daddy's girl, Grandpa's angel, a blueprint of my mother and grandmother, and so of course, I thought I *must have been* everyone's favorite in the family. No one ever told me differently, because most extroverts don't take kindly to objections or contradictions. We are *mostly* humane in our responses, retorts, and tantrums, but it's almost impossible for us to shut up or simply "let it go."

In my high school and college days, I morphed into a social butterfly and quickly learned how to gain the trust and protection of my introverted friends who had, no doubt, been blind-sighted by my fluttering wings. Life was good, free, spirited, and SAFE. Fear had absolutely no place in my life.

I scoffed at those who believed the millennium would usher in devastation, death, and the end of the world. Some even thought Jesus would make his appearance. Even my friends of the cloth forgot what Scripture says about the signs of the end days. My neighbors stockpiled weapons in their basements, stored dry goods and water, accumulated batteries, and purchased broadband radios.

But the year 2000 was just a premonition of what was to come in 2001. Two days prior to our son's engagement party, I received the devastating news that my mother had a brain tumor. I was *afraid* that she would die soon. I was *afraid* to remain in Denver and *afraid* to go to El Paso where she lived. I had to choose between life and death; I chose life and my mother died one day before I was scheduled to leave and see her living one last time. As there was no clergy present in the city from our faith tradition, I eulogized my mother, and I was *afraid* that I did not do her justice. Exactly one month later, September 11th shook the world while our family was out of the country preparing for our son's wedding. I was *afraid* for the safety of our nation and its leaders. We waited for our soon-to-be daughter-in-law's family to arrive, as they sat on the runway for several hours. I was *afraid* they would not come at all, and they did not. I was *afraid* there wouldn't be a wedding, and there was not. I was *afraid* to fly home when the flying ban was lifted. I was *afraid* of the militant protesting found in the various airports where we were redirected in route to Denver. I was *afraid* to let my family see me being *afraid*. I was *afraid* of what my friends and family would think of me choosing life over death in return for

unspoken nuptials. But mostly, I was *afraid* of fear itself. Fear is a monster that is hard to slay, and it does not come from God. Only faith in God can kill it.