

The Unopened Letters

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In 1806, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was born into a difficult family. Elizabeth's father was very domineering and for some unknown reason forbid any of his 12 children to ever marry. At the age of 15, Elizabeth became very ill, suffering from head and spinal pain which would plague her for life. Being mostly confined to her room, she developed a love for poetry. In the 1830s and 40s, she became a very popular writer and soon attracted a fellow poet, Robert Browning. Despite her father's strict rules, Elizabeth ran off with Robert and married him in secret and moved to Italy. Once the news was discovered, her father disowned her.

For the next ten years, Elizabeth tried to mend the relationship with her father. She used her polished writing skills to craft incredible, poetic letters to him. She never received a response. Finally, one year before her father's death, she received a box in the mail from her father. Her excitement soon turned to anguish. Every single letter she ever wrote him was in this box, unopened (Leighton, Angela. Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 23-4).

Today these letters are published and are considered to be among some of the most beautiful writings of classical English literature. It's tragic such incredible writings were never even seen by the one they were intended for. If Elizabeth's stubborn father would have just opened even one letter, perhaps his heart would have been softened just a little. But he didn't, and he was worse off because of it.

Perhaps there is another situation today that isn't all that different. With an outpouring of love, one party penned many different, beautiful writings. Through these words, there is a clear attempt to restore the torn relationships. However, as long as the other stubborn party refuses to read the letters, nothing will change.

The writer of these letters is God, and the stubborn person at times is us. If we would open the letters God has written to us, we would find a

dramatic outpouring of love (1 John 4:9-10). In fact, His love for us was so great, He even sent His own Son to deliver the message to us (John 3:16). And yet so many people still obstinately refuse to let the inner pages of these letters see the light of day. The Lord so badly wants to have a relationship with us. He is patiently waiting for us to respond to His letters (2 Peter 3:9).

The question is, will we let His precious, life-saving words collect dust (2 Timothy 3:16-17)? Or will we respond in obedience (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21)?