

c o m m o n

G R O U N D

by Joseph Tkach

The parents of the 19th century English poet Elizabeth Barrett were so violently opposed to her marriage to fellow poet Robert Browning that they disowned her.

For those whose high school English classes are a dim memory, Elizabeth Barrett was the author of the sonnet that begins, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.”

She certainly loved Robert Browning. So they married and ran off to far-away Florence, Italy. Yet several times a month, Elizabeth wrote loving, eloquent and moving letters to her parents, seeking a reconciliation. They never once replied.

After 10 years of letter writing, Elizabeth received a large box in the mail. She was heartbroken to discover that it contained all of her letters to her parents—*unopened*.

Those letters are some of the most beautiful and expressive in all English literature. Had her parents read them, a reconciliation might well have occurred.

We hurt *ourselves* when we snub the efforts of others to apologize and make amends for their offenses against us.

The apostle Peter asked Jesus, “Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

Rebuffing the efforts of others to reconcile with us cripples the soul and cuts us off from healing. Forgiveness is the key to freedom—from anger, hatred, bitterness and resentment. Is there someone you need to forgive? □

