



LETTERS FROM YOUR FUTURE SELF

SUNDAY MESSAGE QUESTIONS

Vulnerability Over Protection

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OPENING

This week we are continuing our series called **Letters From Your Future Self**. All of us wish we could give our younger selves advice or wisdom or that our future self would correspond with us giving warnings of impending mistakes. But that is not realistic and, obviously, we can't go back and undo the past. But, we can decide to change the direction of our futures and become all that God desires for us to become – the decisions we make today will shape our tomorrows.

SCRIPTURE¹

Numbers 11:10-17 Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. He asked the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me – if I have found favor in your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin." The Lord said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone."

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

OBSERVATION

When God sent Moses to effect the release of His people from the Egyptians, the expectation was that the land promised to the Israelites was a two week walk away. Instead, it took forty years of wandering in the wilderness to prepare them to receive the gift of a land of their own. During that time they whined, argued, wanted to return to Egypt, and blamed Moses for their difficulties. When they faced hardship, such as lacking enough food and water, or encountering danger or tiring of eating manna, they blamed Moses. And so he finally talks with God and goes into full meltdown mode, basically saying, "This is Your fault! I can't do this alone. It is too much of a burden". Moses was discouraged, disillusioned, and full of despair until God gave him the power of the Holy Spirit and seventy righteous leaders to help.

Moses had a problem because he said yes to God's purpose for his life. He had been an Egyptian's son for forty years, a shepherd in a foreign country and virtually alone all of the time for another forty years, and finally the

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

leader of a group of grumpy wanderers for his final forty years. So he creates a story about his situation to protect himself: "I am by myself, no one will carry this burden with me, the people are blaming me for what they are going through, and God doesn't even care. Kill me now!" None of this was true but he used those excuses to protect himself and we do the same.

It's okay to ask God questions in our meltdown, and through Moses' story, we find He answers with power, understanding and alternative support.

Question: When have you said, "God, if this is the way you are going to treat me, I quit!"

Question: When have you felt overburdened with responsibility – a Moses moment? What did you say to God about that situation? What else did you do to resolve it?

APPLICATION

Many of us have been hurt by others in the past and so have built a shell of protection around ourselves to avoid hurt in the future. This makes us resist vulnerability in our present lives and thus we miss one of God's greatest gifts to us – trusted companions who are willing to help us carry our burdens.

Question: Tell us about a time when you were hurt by someone. What was your reaction?

When we suffer from a burden that seem to be too much for us, God usually doesn't take it away. That's what we want Him to do, isn't it, but if He did, we wouldn't grow in His kingdom. Instead, He provides strength for us to get through and people to share the burden. But it takes vulnerability on our part to admit when we can't go it alone and need help. Often this is what God is waiting for. Vulnerability means putting ourselves out there and risking being turned down, such as asking someone on a date, or sharing a secret, or telling of great sins in our lives. This takes courage. If we close ourselves off and reject solutions from others, this is protectionism. Learning to be **authentic to all and vulnerable to some** is a scary thing. It means being the real us with everyone – letting people see us as we really are – and being vulnerable and transparent with a few trusted people.

Question: Who are the people you can trust with anything in and about your life?

There are three myths about vulnerability that make us hesitate: **1) Vulnerability is a weakness.** We tell ourselves not to be vulnerable so we won't look weak. **2) We can't do vulnerability.** Yet we can't opt out of it either. We need others to lift us up, but they can't help if they don't know what we are thinking or experiencing. **3) I can go it alone.** This is our protectionism coming out. But God did not create us to be alone. **4) Vulnerability is disclosure.** There is a misconception that being vulnerable means oversharing, so we go in the opposite direction.

Question: Which of these myths is keeping you from being vulnerable?

Vulnerability is the courage to let someone else carry our burdens. Paul says that we must "carry each others' burdens for it is the law of Christ." And the law of Christ is to love people the way Jesus loves them. We can't carry the weight of everyone's difficulties, but we can carry someone's. Love covers a multitude of sins which means we can trust that love and the people who have it for others. Yes, we hurt people because we are imperfect, and there are times when they hurt us, because it is just a result of our brokenness, but love prevails in the end.

Question: Whose faith are you encouraging? Who in your life has the most marbles in their jar?

Question: What would your future self be telling you about your level of vulnerability and how you are loving others? What are you teaching your children/grandchildren about being authentic with everyone?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we have been so deeply wounded, but you did not create us to be alone. Help us to be open with love for others so they can help us and we can be trusted friends to them. Do Your work in us and give us Your Holy Spirit to empower us in this journey with You. Give us the gift of vulnerability as we respond to the purpose You have for our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.