

Dear Lord,

It's me, Sam. And I don't know where to begin. I want to know you, to follow you, to be one of your people, I think. But at the same time, quite honestly, I'm not so sure that I'm ready to give up everything in my life. I've become accustomed to a certain style of living, and, well, I like it. I'm comfortable.

Like, for instance, in my business – I know that there are a few things we do in my company that some would consider just a little bit ...shady. Alright, scratch that – I decided I was going to have an honest talk with you. So lets try again. There are some things we do in my business that are not exactly completely on the level. Oh, stop it. Let's try this: I'm cheating on the health benefits and I'm not paying the right amount of taxes. There, I said it. But don't you see Lord, how can I earn enough to run my business when Uncle Sam and Mr. Health Care are sucking away all my profits? I don't know how to do it? And I know other people that are doing the same thing as me, and it doesn't seem to bother them.

And then there's my living arrangements. Charlene and I, wow, we are a great couple. We get along so well. I might

even be ready to marry her soon. Things are working out beautifully. But, once again, I don't know how I could be so sure if it wasn't for the fact that we are, well, living like we're married when we're not. But remember Nancy. She and I were good together too, but she was so controlling -- so, self-centered. How was I supposed to live with that. And how would I have known if we didn't "test each other out" before taking the plunge. That's the way it works now, Lord. That's how we do things in the modern world. Can you live with that?

That's my issue with you, Lord. And that's why I'm here today. Are you a God who is just about rules and regulations? Or are you a God who cares about me and is ready to understand your people's needs? Do I have to fit into your mold, or can you fit into mine?

Oh, how awful that sounds. Will you fit into my mold?

Lord, what's bringing this all up, is Pastor Jackson's sermon last Sunday about the woman at the well. It sounded just like he was talking about me. He told how she really was thirsty for a meaningful relationship with God, -- which I am --

and yet how she had some dark corners in her life that were holding her back. Things that she didn't think she could give up. And that's where I'm at, Lord.

I haven't told Pastor Jackson about my living arrangements because I know what he'll say. He'll cite those statistics that he always does and tell me how your plan is better than my plan -- that your ways of living actually make sense. He might be right, I don't know, but, frankly, I just want to be like everyone else. And I'm not ready to go further.

And just thinking about me and Charlotte, and how that makes me feel guilty before you, makes me also think about all the other places in my life where I'm just not quite ready to "do it your way."

Too often I let myself drink to excess. Sometimes my language isn't all it should be. You know about my relationship to my sister -- how we haven't spoken since mom died. I don't worship You like I should. I kinda like hearing and contributing to the office gossip. And sometimes, when nobody's looking I well, You know about that. I don't have to say it.

All those things -- they're like black holes in my faith. Places where I know that there is an inconsistency between what I believe and how I live, but I choose to blank them out.

And so I come to church -- sing a few hymns, pray a few prayers, listen to a message, and pretend everything is okay.

But is it okay Lord? In truth, I know it's not. I'm not what I should be. And I'm not sure I want to change.

Can you help such a one as me?

Dear Sam,

Wow. What a moment for you. That's the first time you've prayed to me so honestly in years. The Holy Spirit must have been working overtime in your heart to get through that shell of indifference and denial that you've built up around yourself.

But today you looked into your heart and saw how you rationalize those inconsistencies between your faith and life. You saw how adept you are at convincing yourself that you can't possibly live by my guidelines because your circumstances are different or your situation unique.

You bury your guilt under a veneer of excuses. "My business won't survive." "I can't know if my girlfriend and I are compatible." "I only drink to excess sometimes." "I only swear when I'm really angry." "My sister deserves my anger after what she did."

You're just like that Samaritan woman. Thirsty.

(Thirsty?)

Yes, thirsty. She thought she was just thirsty for water from the well. And you think that you're just trying to survive in this "dog-eat-dog" world. But the reality was that her whole spirit was parched -- dried out from her constant tugging against the right thing. And you can be the same way.

You see, she kept thinking she'd find happiness -- she kept thinking she'd find joy -- she kept thinking she'd find peace, prosperity, and everything else her soul longed for by going after the dream.

(The dream?)

The dream that if she gave in to her passions and feelings that she would somehow find the magical formula for living water -- that is, that she would discover fulfillment, love and security.

Unfortunately, she couldn't find it because, without being solidly grounded in her relationship with Me, her sinful self kept getting the better of her. Man after man -- relationship after relationship -- each time she thought that she had the magic answer to her emptiness -- that she could quench

her thirst. But the reality was that the water she was drinking was like drinking salt water. For a quick moment it felt good, but in the end, it was sucking the life out of every cell.

But notice who comes to sit by her side. Notice who breaks all the common boundaries to visit with her and share a word of life. It was me.

Jewish societal rules said that a Jewish man did not associate with the supposedly “faithless” Samaritans -- especially the women. But that didn’t stop me. I could see her emptiness, her pain, her struggle. I could see that she was in a cage of her own making. And I wanted her to know that it didn’t have to be that way -- that she could find fulfillment, love and security.

But it would only be found when she was ready to stop searching in all the **wrong** places, get off the throne of her life and allow her God to step in.

At first, when we talked, I could tell that she was putting up all of her defenses. She didn’t want to confront her sin. So

she tried to engage me in theological debate and esoteric discussion.

But eventually she let me share with her about the living water that could be hers through faith in me. I told her how I am the Messiah and how I want to build a bridge between her and the God who created the universe. Despite her sin, despite her excesses, despite her immorality I came to save her -- to win her back -- to give her a new life.

“Could God really love me,” she thought.

And in our conversation she came to believe that I was the answer to that question. I was there to be her Savior -- and I would be there to help her straighten out her life.

Next thing you know, she’s running around telling all of her Samaritan friends that Jesus is Lord, and that He came not only for the Jews but for all sinners who are ready to step off the throne and let Him be the King of their lives.

I think you’re ready too, Sam. It’s going to mean some hard changes for you, perhaps. But in the end, you will know

that my way is for your best and my way will lead to the well
of living water.

(Thanks Lord, I am ready. But give me strength, give
me courage, and give me faith.)

I will Sam, I will.