

## Dear Sam Letters

Formatted much like a “Dear Abby” or “Annie’s Mailbox” column, members of your congregation are invited to write to an expert about their concerns or problems. “Sam” is not any one individual, but licensed therapists from our staff will share Sam’s pen. Each month, two or three letters and their responses will be shared with you for publication in your congregation’s newsletter. Depending on volume, we may not be able to respond to all letters. The following are some samples:

---

Dear Sam,  
I’m a divorced single dad of a freshman at Butterscotch University. I practically raised my only child Jennifer on my own. Her mother left once divorce papers were signed. Butterscotch is across the country; I miss Jen terribly. My sister Amy, who has been Jen’s “Mom,” helped me move Jen two weeks ago. Jen is very independent and doing well. Sam, I’m writing about me. I have a decent job and date a bit. But now my family is smaller. I’m not used to being alone this way. I’d appreciate any thoughts or advice.  
Sincerely,  
*Lonely but not losing it*

Dear Lonely,  
**You have a lot of strengths you may be overlooking. You and Jen seem to have a strong relationship. You’re close to Amy. Maybe Jen going to college will allow you time to consider all you’ve accomplished. Despite divorce, you date and have built a life that permits resources for new challenges. What can this time teach you about you and your life? Be curious about this transition. What avenues now open with Jenny at Butterscotch? The right friends, faith community, and activities can be building blocks for your next phase. As Jen builds the next phase of her life based on the blessings you imparted, listen to your life and apply these insights to find your deserved peace.**

**Sincerely, Sam**

Dear Sam,  
I come from a family with a proud military history. My father, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers served. My sister is in the Air Force. I grew up hearing their stories yet don’t wish to follow in their boot-steps. Am I rejecting our family values? How can I reconcile this with my religious views? Didn’t Jesus oppose violence? Wasn’t He “The Prince of Peace?” Our family attended Navy chapels from Norfolk

to San Diego. What should I do?

– *“Bad Kid or Bad Christian?”*

**Dear “Kid or Christian,”  
Our doubts don’t make us bad. We are known by “what” we do and “how” we do it. Let’s step back and think about how you see this! Many ponder God’s role in patriotism. Some will not enter the military due to their convictions; others’ beliefs require them to serve. The answers are as varied as those who ask how to blend patriotism and religion. As your family shows, many great people of faith have worn this country’s military uniforms. What impresses me is that you are eager and willing to define yourself and part of that includes “service.” This is a mark of character and calling. Spend time in prayer and meditation, as well as consultation with trusted others, about “how” you will serve. “Service” changes over time and so it may be likely your family will understand and accept. Be patient with yourself and them as you learn what it means to be your family! Will this approach work out, guaranteed? No, but to tell you otherwise would be dishonest. Yet as long as you are honest with yourself, while treating others well, then mistakes are part of Life. I wish you insight and clarity.**

– Sincerely, Sam

Dear Sam – I don’t really want to write. I’m angry at God. I don’t even know if I believe in God. I’ve probably not spent an entire weekend sober since high school and am almost forty. I’ve been asked to leave or been fired from so many jobs, relationships, marriages, you name it. I don’t know what to do or what I want. I want more than what I have and to be happy. I want to make sense to me. If this makes sense to you, let me know.

Signed

– *Searching and Not Yet Sober*

Dear Searching,

**Your honesty gives me hope. Most people spend much of Life trying to get the courage you show in a few lines. The quality of our lives depends on our willingness to ask good questions. I offer some beginnings-of-answers. Share them with trusted others then listen well. Healing comes through the right others. Right now, it is not so important to worry about God’s feelings – God can take care of God’s self. I care about you. If my math is right, you’ve been handling matters with alcohol for decades; those twenty years shaped “what” and “how” you feel. Getting sober is like learning a new language; it takes time. Seek one thing to be thankful for daily; appreciate it, don’t try to change it or yourself. Find and attend an AA meeting and as said above, be patient. Listen to yourself as you begin to recover. Have an honest discussion with a doctor! Share this column. Get her insights. This will give you practice in trusting, a skill addiction makes rusty. Be kind to yourself. You had the courage to knock on our door via keyboard. Change never comes easily, but to remain stuck means we cannot grow. The person who wrote me this letter clearly knows and feels he can and will improve the quality of his life.**

**With all good wishes for learning and seeing beyond today’s struggles, - Sam**

The professional therapists at the Samaritan Counseling Center share the pen of “Sam.” We invite your questions. Write to us at [DearSam@Samaritan-Counseling.org](mailto:DearSam@Samaritan-Counseling.org) or send a letter to Dear Sam C/O Samaritan Counseling Center, 17195 Cleveland Road, South Bend, IN 46635. We will do our best to reply to questions via your congregation’s newsletter