

NOTE TO THE READER

IN APRIL 2013, I received a phone call just prior to traveling to Canada to speak at a prophecy conference. Two women from the La Crete, Alberta conference were concerned about a best-selling book titled *Jesus Calling*. The author, Sarah Young, had published personal messages she said she received from Jesus Christ. The two women had an uneasy feeling about the book and wanted me to look into it. I was aware of the book but didn't realize it had become so popular. So the next day when I went to our local Christian bookstore, I was surprised to see *Jesus Calling* piled high in two stacks on the floor in front of a shelf where it was already fully stocked. It was obviously *very* popular.

I noticed that *Jesus Calling* came in a variety of sizes and styles. There was the standard compact, rust-colored, hardcover edition that I held in my hands. A small egg-shaped picture of an inviting outstretched hand was in the middle of the front cover. The title read, *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence*. And a line at the top of the front cover read, "Devotions for Every Day of the Year." Another edition of the same book had what

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was called a “leather look,” while another had a genuine cowhide cover. There was a sage-colored version, a pink-colored version, a special edition for teens, as well as a *Jesus Calling (Bible Storybook)* for children. Prominently featured on a display rack were numerous copies of the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*. Off to my left were more Sarah Young titles—*Dear Jesus*, *Jesus Today*, and *Jesus Lives*. I would later discover there was a *40 Days with Jesus* booklet and a *Jesus Calling Devotional Calendar*. The copy of *Jesus Calling* I was holding in my hands informed me that the book was “now available for the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, and all Android devices.” It was also available on an audio CD. When I asked the clerk how many copies of *Jesus Calling* they had sold, he replied “thousands.”

I said, “Really?”

He said, “Really.”

The copyright page informed me that *Jesus Calling* was originally published in 2004, and I would learn that over time it eventually became the number one best-selling book for Christian retail in 2010. It has already sold over nine million copies. And as I write, it continues to be the #1 best-selling book in Christian bookstores, as well as #3 on the *Wall Street Journal’s* best-seller list for *all* non-fiction books—secular and Christian.

In the “Introduction” to *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young said she had been inspired to receive personal messages from “Jesus” after reading a book called *God Calling*. I remembered *God Calling* because it was a book I had when I was involved with New Age teachings. I found it troubling that Sarah Young had been inspired by a metaphysical book like *God Calling*. So that afternoon after purchasing *Jesus Calling* at the Christian bookstore, I also bought a copy of *God Calling* at a used bookstore. I would later find out that *God Calling* was being featured along with *Jesus Calling* in another local Christian bookstore.

The following day while traveling to Alberta, I started reading

"ANOTHER JESUS" CALLING

Jesus Calling. I learned that Sarah Young, the daughter of a college professor, majored in philosophy at Wellesley College and later earned her master's degree in counseling and biblical studies at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. Young related how she and her third-generation missionary husband served two four-year terms in Japan doing church planting work. Returning to the United States after the second term in Japan, she obtained a further degree in counseling at Georgia State University while her husband was employed at a local Japanese church in Atlanta. Later, after moving to Australia and while also continuing her counseling practice, Young assisted her husband in planting the first Japanese church in Melbourne. It was in Australia that she first read *God Calling*.

By the time I arrived in Northern Alberta, I had finished reading both *Jesus Calling* and *God Calling*. Because of my concern about what I had just read, I made *Jesus Calling* the subject of one of my talks at the prophecy conference. I later felt that my concerns needed to be covered more completely, which is why this book was written.

Because *Jesus Calling* contains personal "messages" that Sarah Young says were given to her by Jesus Christ, it is important to determine if these messages were really from Jesus. Are they consistent with the teachings of God's Word? Is anything new or questionable being subtly introduced? In short, can we trust *Jesus Calling* as a godly devotional book?

Having been formerly involved in the New Age movement, I became immediately concerned when I read the book. It was troubling for me to see a number of New Age practices and concepts being presented as completely normal for Christians. Even more troubling, there were no warnings or disclaimers about what was being introduced. By the end of the book, *Jesus Calling* and its "Jesus" had subtly and not so subtly introduced occult/New Age channeling, spiritual dictation, creative visualization, meditation,

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divine alchemy, co-creation with God, and *practicing the presence* like it was everyday Christian fare. New Age terms and concepts were brought into the messages like they were no big deal. And added to this were indirect references to a pantheistic poet and two classic New Age books, along with a hearty endorsement of *God Calling*—the channeled book that inspired Sarah Young to try and receive her own personal messages from Jesus.

The unusual use of language by the “Jesus” of *Jesus Calling* was also disturbing. It seemed to run the gamut from “everyday Joe” language to strange word choice, unwarranted flattery, worldly clichés, repetitive phrases, disparaging comments, and not-so-subtle mockery. All in all, *Jesus Calling* seemed to be an obvious attempt by our spiritual Adversary to get an even further foothold inside the Christian church.

While I was surprised that Sarah Young’s devotional had become such a huge best-seller in the Christian marketplace, I was not completely surprised. Deceptive occult/New Age teachings are swallowing up much of what calls itself Christian these days.

In this book, I have done my best to raise some of my questions and concerns. I am sure my conclusions will upset a great many people who are devoted to *Jesus Calling*. Obviously, what you do with these conclusions is completely up to you. But I couldn’t imagine not bringing what I discovered to your attention. Hopefully, you will consider what I have presented here.

WARREN B. SMITH

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