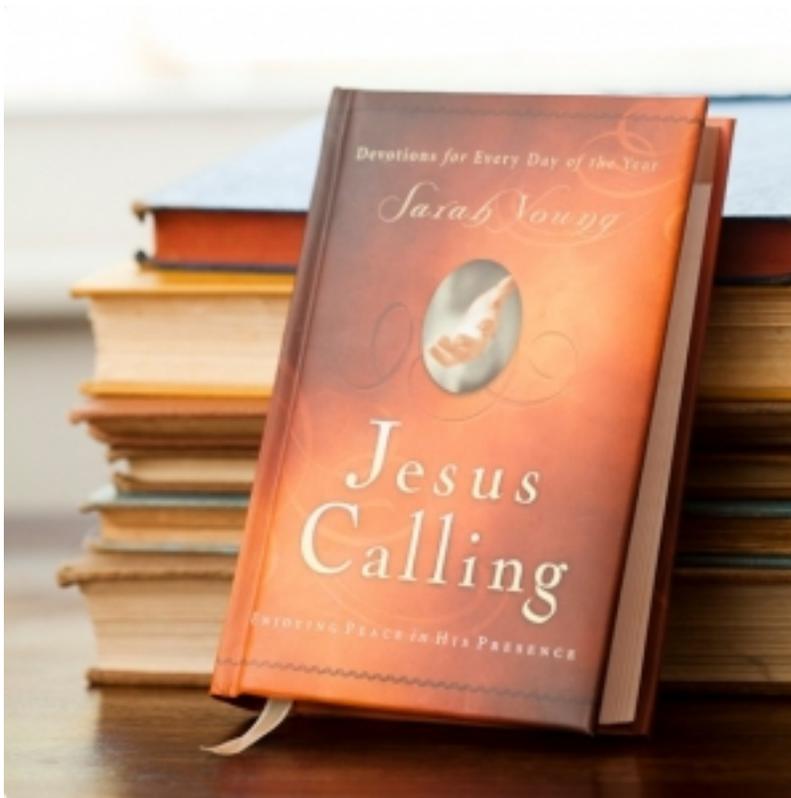


A precautionary review by Pastor Mark Barrett of *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young

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Recently, a woman came up to me on a Sunday and asked if I had ever read the devotion book, *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young. Admittedly, I had never heard of Mrs. Young or her popular book. I told her I would take a look, and I did.

What became apparent to me very quickly was that this book is written primarily for women. That was clear by the emotionally-charged language and the overzealous and abundant use of adjectives. So I certainly understand the emotional and relational aspects of *Jesus Calling*; it is clearly a devotional book. It is important to note that my reading of this book was not motivated by any personal devotional aspirations, but was purely a theological query.

First, let me say that I am highly suspect of any book (outside of the Bible) that claims that its contents have been received directly from God, as is the

case in *Jesus Calling*. Mrs. Young writes, “During the same year, I began reading *God Calling*, a devotional book written by two anonymous ‘listeners.’ These women practiced waiting quietly in God’s Presence, pencils and paper in hand, recording the messages they received from Him. The messages are written in the first person, with “I” designating God.” She goes on to write “Six or seven years later, this little paperback became a treasure to me. It dovetailed remarkably well with my longing to live in Jesus’ Presence. The following year I began to wonder if I, too, could receive messages during my times of communing with God.” She continues, “I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more.” (Introduction, pages XI, XII).

There are a few things happening here that need to be addressed. First, is the method by which Mrs. Young received this book. It is important to note that the book that inspired Sarah Young i.e. *God Calling*, is occultic, and the method by which this book came into being is dangerously occultic. “Automatic handwriting” is a very ancient practice used by occultists to receive messages from other-worldly entities, which the Bible clearly identifies as demons. John Weldon, author and Christian expert on the occult, remarked: “*God Calling* is spiritistic literature; a demon makes the ranks of evangelical best-sellers!” What is Mr. Weldon saying? *God Calling* is demonic.

The practice of automatic handwriting is absolutely foreign to scriptural instructions on how we hear from God and communicate with God. This alone should make any biblically literate Christian leery of Sarah Young’s book. The means by which Mrs. Young received these “messages” is exactly the same as the two anonymous “listeners” who wrote *God Calling*, and this is alarming.

The following statements, made by one of the “two listeners” in *God Calling* should cause a Christian reader concern because this is the source of the information that inspired Mrs. Young’s book: “We were being taught, trained and encouraged day by day by HIM personally, when millions of souls, far worthier, had to be content with guidance from the Bible, sermons, their churches, books and other sources... So to us this book, *God Calling*, which we believe has been guided by our Lord Himself, is no ordinary book.” If God really did speak to these two “anonymous listeners,” we should be concerned because the implications are diabolical, i.e. extra-biblical revelation is being received today

Books like *God Calling* and *Jesus Calling* contain the “actual words” of Jesus, and the occultic practice of automatic handwriting is considered a valid way of hearing from God. This is dangerous and is the logical consequence of New Revelation theology. Now understand that, based on Sarah Young’s own words, the method (automatic handwriting) by which the book *God Calling* was transmitted, a book she calls a treasure, was channeled in the same method by which *Jesus Calling* came into being. That is occultic.

The second issue that needs to be dealt with is her statement, “I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more” (Introduction page XI). This is a direct assault on the doctrine of **Sola Scriptura**, that scripture alone is sufficient for all matters of faith and conduct. While Mrs. Young admits that scripture is inerrant, her “yearning for more” implies that scripture is also insufficient. This kind of declarative statement stands in stark contrast to Paul’s writings in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) when he writes, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” The greatest attack Satan has ever unleashed on the minds of believers is that Holy Scripture is not enough to combat and navigate the issues of life.

My third issue has to do with the Christ of *Jesus Calling*. I want to go on record as saying that I did find some uplifting themes on the pages of this book, and I wholeheartedly agree with Mrs. Young’s obvious encouragements for the reader to have a closer walk with Jesus. However, my question still remains: Which Jesus? Paul tells us that there is “another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel,” none of which is positive. In 2 Corinthians 11:4 he writes, “For if someone comes and proclaims *another Jesus* than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a *different spirit* from the one you received, or if you accept a *different gospel* from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.” John writes in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, *do not believe every spirit*, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because *many false prophets* have gone out into the world.” It is my personal contention that the “Jesus” that dictated this book to Mrs. Young is not the Jesus of the Bible but is in fact a different Jesus.

While Mrs. Young may claim that Jesus spoke to her, the messages in *Jesus Calling* are more akin to New Age Eastern mysticism than that of the Bible. When I read lines like, “Suddenly *I felt a warm mist* envelope me. I became

aware of a lovely Presence, and *my involuntary response* was to whisper, ‘Sweet Jesus,’ ” or, “I *visualized* God protecting each of us. I picture first our daughter, then our son, and then Steve *encircled* by God’s protective Presence, which looked like *golden light*. When I prayed for myself, I was suddenly enveloped in a *brilliant light* and profound peace.” (Italics added by reviewer) I become concerned. Why? Words and phrases like *visualize*, *enveloped in a brilliant light*, and protected by a *golden light* are distinctly Eastern, finding their roots in Hinduism and Buddhism.

For example, on page 284 Mrs. Young writes the supposed literal words of Jesus, i.e. first person singular, “I am with you and all around you, *encircling you in golden rays of light*.” Or on page 277, “However, when the hope of heaven fills your thoughts, the *Light of My Presence envelops you*.” (Italics added by reviewer.) That may sound harmless enough, but is this distinctly Christian language? In the gospel, does Jesus ever promise to encircle you in golden rays of light? This type of language is replete in Mrs. Young’s book. Some may argue that Saul of Tarsus was circled by a brilliant light in Acts 9, but is that normative for every Christian? I think it is also safe to say it was not a pleasant experience for Saul.

By comparison, in the first chapter of the Buddhist text the *Sutra of Golden Light*, Buddha Shakyamuni, the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened, calls to anyone experiencing misery and affliction, bad health, poverty, loss, abuse, ill will, fear, nightmares, or other harms. He says to make the mind virtuous and to come and listen to come.” He writes, “To the sentient beings I shall reveal this sutra called Sublime Golden Light, which rids one of every harmful misdeed, and expounds upon the profound.” It is important to note that in many forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, the level of true enlightenment is achieved when the devotee is “enveloped in a golden light.” At the core of Hinduism is the teaching that the "real seat of Vishnu," then, dawns on man "as the form of light." Brahman (god) is seen as the light of an endless sphere. As we find in the Brahmarahasya Upanishad, Brahma is the Light of lights. He is Self-luminous. He is Supreme Light. He is Ultimate Light. He is an embodiment of Light. By His Light all else shines.”

http://www.adishakti.org/his_light_within/the_light_hinduism.htm#sthash.7KnMkQfb.dpuf

The scripture is not silent on this. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:14–15, “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So

it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.” This type of language is not confined to Eastern mysticism alone. We see the same language in Mormonism and many other pseudo-Christian cultic teachings. For example, in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith recounts his first meeting with the angel Moroni on the night of September 21, 1823. As Joseph said his prayers and settled in for the night, an angel, "glorious beyond description," appeared at his bedside: "While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor “(JS—H 1:30–54). Beloved, this is dangerous, and if you are reading *Jesus Calling* proceed with caution.

There is no refuting that many of the statements in *Jesus Calling* are inspirational. Scripture is quoted often in the book. But we must bear in mind the cultic groups love to quote scripture in their literature. Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, and Muslims often quote scripture favorably. Just because I read scripture in *Awake Magazine* or the *Christian Science Monitor* and am blessed by it doesn't necessarily legitimize the document in which I read it. The same goes for *Jesus Calling*. Anyone can read his or her presuppositions into the biblical text and be blessed by it, but that doesn't make the interpretation right. *Jesus Calling* is not a Christian book unless you read it with Christian presuppositions. Paul warns us of this in 1 Timothy 4:1–2 (ESV), “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.”

I am in no way saying that Mrs. Young's book is demonically inspired, but the parallels to *God Calling* and other Eastern mystical language is alarming, and anyone reading this book must do so discerningly. Some women in our church have assured me that this language is just Sarah Young being a woman seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus. If that is true, it means she doesn't actually mean what she wrote and I shouldn't be concerned by her wanting to receive “messages” from God in the same vein as the anonymous listeners of *God Calling*. Sadly, I don't think that is the case. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:21(ESV) to “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.” That's what I am attempting to do here as a pastor at Canyon Hills.

It is important to note that the Bible says in 2 Timothy 4:3–4 (ESV), “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” My personal feeling is that *Jesus Calling* falls dangerously close to this line of demarcation. Based on what I know about the occult and the occultic practice of automatic handwriting and much of the New Age language that is prevalent throughout *Jesus Calling*, I cannot in good conscience recommend this book.

So for those of you who are reading it, proceed with caution, pray for discernment, and understand the clear teaching of scripture in Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV) “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

God has spoken to us through His son. He is the living Word, the final spoken revelation of God, and His words are sealed and contained in the Word of God, the Holy Bible and nowhere else. *Sola Deo Gloria!*

With a shepherd’s heart,
Pastor Mark Barrett