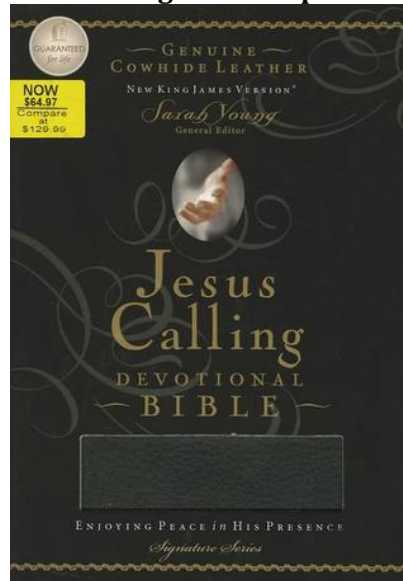


Jesus Calling Devotional Bible?—Putting Words in Jesus' Mouth—And in the Bible

By Warren B. Smith

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One of the many spin-off products from Sarah Young’s best-selling book, *Jesus Calling*, is the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*. It is a *New King James Bible* filled with “messages” Young claims to have “received” from Jesus Christ. In the original Introduction to her book, *Jesus Calling*, Young describes the nature of these messages:

My journaling had changed from monologue to dialogue. Soon, messages began to flow more freely, and I bought a special notebook to record these words. 1

I have continued to receive personal messages from God as I meditate on Him. 2

This practice of listening to God has increased my intimacy with Him more than any other spiritual discipline, so I want to share some of the messages I have received. 3

In the Introduction to Young’s *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, she describes the “joy of listening to Jesus with pen in hand”:

After many years of writing in prayer journals—and then discovering the joy of listening to Jesus with “pen in hand” — I believe all of this more than ever today. 4

She describes the difference that this “listening to Jesus” has made in her life. She writes:

What has made the difference? The practice of listening to Jesus and letting Him speak to me. This practice has done more to increase my intimacy with Him than any other

spiritual discipline. And the words of assurance and instruction that He has “spoken” to me over the years are what I have shared in my devotional books. 5

Young Believes that her “Messages” from “Jesus” Belong in the Bible?

Young’s personal “messages” from “Jesus” occupy some 250 separate full pages of her *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*. Young claims that the placement of her messages and writings alongside Scripture is a “natural place” for them — and that she feels honored to have them there.

Since my writings are rooted in the infallible, unchanging Word of God, having them appear alongside the biblical text would seem to be a natural place for them. It is an honor to have devotionals from two of my books, *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Lives*, included in this volume. 6

However, as I pointed out in “*Another Jesus*” *Calling*, many of Sarah Young’s “messages” in *Jesus Calling* are clearly not rooted in the “infallible, unchanging Word of God.” And now, a number of these problematic “messages” have been placed throughout the pages of her *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*.

Take, for example, [the bizarre account](#) she reputedly received from Jesus regarding Abraham and Isaac. This “message” has been placed “alongside” the actual Genesis 22 account, with her “Jesus” purportedly describing Abraham as an *idolater* and *son-worshiper*:

Remember the extreme measures I used with Abraham and Isaac. I took Isaac to the very point of death to free Abraham from son-worship. Both Abraham and Isaac suffered terribly because of the father’s undisciplined emotions. I detest idolatry even in the form of parental love. 7

But this *extrabiblical* “message” from Young’s “Jesus” is blatantly *unbiblical*. In fact, her publisher, Thomas Nelson, has removed it from some recent printings of *Jesus Calling* and related products. The original Abraham and Isaac August 23rd “devotion” has been cut and pasted and toned down to now read Jacob and Joseph rather than Abraham and Isaac. As mentioned in a [previous Lighthouse Trails post](#), Sarah Young and her Thomas Nelson editors have removed controversial materials from recently printed *Jesus Calling* items with no explanation, apology, or repentance to Young’s millions of readers. However—at least as of today—this original Abraham and Isaac account can still be found—unbelievably—in Young’s *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*.

Ironically, the *Jesus Calling: 365 Devotional For Kids* also keeps Abraham and Isaac in the August 23rd account. However, Young—with help from others—has cleaned up the original account to make it more biblical. The new sanitized version, according to the book’s title page, originated with Sarah Young. It was adapted by a woman named Tama Fortner and then further edited by another woman named Kris Bears. And now gone is

Abraham's *idolatry*. Gone are his *undisciplined emotions*. And instead of having *been* a son-worshiper, now he is only *in danger* of worshipping his son. This carefully paraphrased, adapted, and further edited version of "Jesus'" original "message" now reads:

Abraham had waited so long for a son. When Isaac finally came, Abraham was in danger of worshipping his son. I tested Abraham, and—as hard as it was—Abraham trusted Me to take care of Isaac. And I did.⁸

With all of this cutting, pasting, adapting, and editing away of problematic words and passages—all in the name of "Jesus"—one cannot help wonder if this is Thomas Nelson's attempt to stay one step ahead of unsuspecting readers and legitimate criticism. Responding truthfully and forthrightly about the many controversial questions surrounding Sarah Young's inconsistent "Jesus" appear to be less important than preserving her #1 best-selling book *Jesus Calling* and its many related products—like the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*.

Other Problems with the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*

Other problematic "messages" contained in the original, unedited *Jesus Calling* can also be found in Young's *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*. Perhaps the most obviously unscriptural is how Young's "Jesus" contradicts the Bible's Jesus in regards to the last words Jesus spoke before ascending into heaven. In the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, with Matthew 28:20 cited at the bottom of the page, Young's "Jesus" states:

My final statement just before I ascended into heaven was: Surely I am with you always. That promise was for all my followers, without exception.

But these were not Jesus Christ's last words. This Matthew 28:20 passage was uttered on a mount in Galilee (Matthew 28:16) while His last words were actually spoken later in Acts 1:7-9 on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12):

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and the true Jesus does not contradict Himself regarding His last words before ascending into heaven or any other matter. Nor does He put forth untrue, disparaging remarks about Abraham and Isaac. While it is not the purpose of this article to catalog all the concerns that arise when reading Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, these two examples alone should be enough to keep any sincere believer far away from the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*.

Bible Warnings

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. (2 Corinthians 11:4)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. (Galatians 5:7-9)

For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many. (Matthew 24:5)

Endnotes

1. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), p.XII in the original Introduction.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.XIII in the original Introduction.
4. Sarah Young (General Editor), *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible: Enjoying Peace in His Presence* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2011), p.V
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p.VI.
7. Ibid., p.37.
8. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling: 365 Devotions For Kids* (Nashville, TN: Tommy Nelson, 2010), p.246
9. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, p.1237.