

# Changing “Jesus Calling” — Damage Control for a False Christ

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## **Publisher Problems**

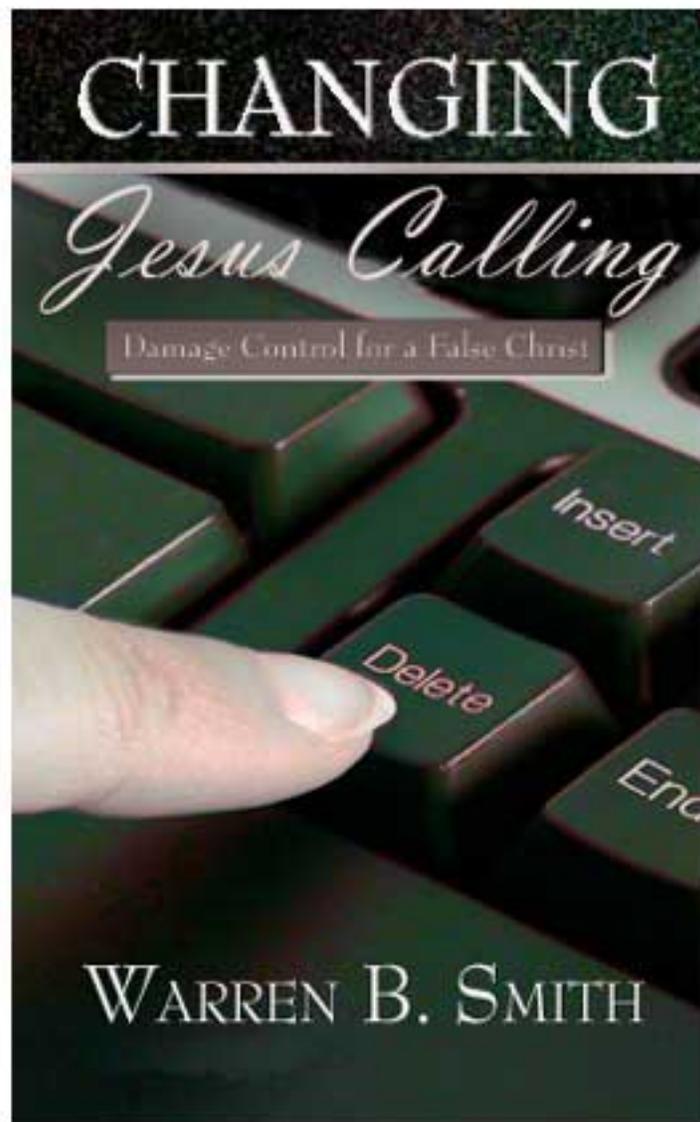
What if you are a major publisher like Thomas Nelson and you suddenly discover that your mega best-selling book Jesus Calling was inspired by a channeled New Age book? And what if you find out that some of the “messages” your author “received” from her “Jesus” weren’t really from Jesus because they contradict what the real Jesus Christ says in the Bible? And what if your best-selling author has introduced a host of other problems in her book that your usually sharp editors had somehow overlooked? What do you do given these issues are already in the pages of ten million previously published books? If you want to be fair to your readers, you deal honestly with these problems as they are brought to your attention. However, if you are more interested in protecting your product rather than in protecting the truth, you do everything in your power to make these problems disappear. One thing is for sure. Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson have made some of their problems suddenly disappear in recent editions of Jesus Calling—most especially in a special 10th anniversary edition of Jesus Calling released on September 30, 2014.

## **Like the Watergate Tapes**

Perhaps taking their cue from the missing eighteen-and-a-half minutes from Richard Nixon’s Watergate tapes, Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson have been systematically deleting controversial material from Jesus Calling. Adding,

subtracting, cutting, pasting, and completely eliminating problematic words, sentences, and even whole paragraphs, Young and her editors do not hesitate to put words in the mouth of their “Jesus,” even as they take others away. But like the Watergate tapes, the missing evidence and their in-your-face tactics are doing more to expose their problems than cover them up.

Read booklet tract below:



## ***Changing “Jesus Calling”—Damage Control for a False Christ***

**By Warren B. Smith**

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What if you are a major publisher like Thomas Nelson and you suddenly discover that your mega best-selling book *Jesus Calling* was inspired by a channeled New Age book? And what if you find out that some of the “messages” your author “received” from her “Jesus” weren’t really from Jesus because they contradict what the real Jesus Christ says in the Bible? And what if your best-selling author has introduced a host of other problems in her book that your usually sharp editors had somehow overlooked? What do you do given these issues are already in the pages of ten million previously published books? If you want to be fair to your readers, you deal honestly with these problems as they are brought to your attention. However, if you are more interested in protecting your product rather than in protecting the truth, you do everything in your power to make these problems disappear. One thing is for sure. Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson have made some of their problems suddenly disappear in recent editions of *Jesus Calling*—most especially in a special 10th anniversary edition of *Jesus Calling* released on September 30, 2014.

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### ***“Another Jesus” Calling***

In the fall of 2013, my book *“Another Jesus” Calling* was published by Lighthouse Trails Publishing. I was not the first person to express concern about *Jesus Calling*, but not much had been written up to that point. As our concerns were publicized, Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson obviously became aware of our objections. Without a word of explanation to anyone, significant alterations have been made to recent editions of *Jesus Calling*.

With “now you see it, now you don’t” editing, some of their major problems suddenly disappeared from the pages of *Jesus Calling*. To illustrate the lengths to which Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson have gone to protect their book and their multi-million dollar *Jesus Calling* industry, I will provide five specific examples—and there are many others—to demonstrate how readers of *Jesus Calling* are being managed and manipulated. Make no mistake about it—damage control is in full swing at Thomas Nelson, and it is especially evident in their special 10th anniversary edition of Sarah Young’s book.

## **Five Problems**

### **(1) *Jesus Calling* was inspired by a channeled New Age book**

*Jesus Calling* was inspired by the book *God Calling*.<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network, author Sarah Young said that her journey with *Jesus Calling* began with the book *God Calling*. She stated:

My journey began with a devotional book (*God Calling*) written in the 1930s by two women who practiced waiting in God’s Presence, writing the messages they received as they “listened.” About a year after I started reading this book, I began to wonder if I too could receive messages during my times of communing with God. . . . So I decided to “listen” to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I sensed He was saying.<sup>2</sup> (parenthesis in original)

But Sarah Young and her editors somehow missed the fact that *God Calling* is a channeled New Age book. *God Calling* is a collection of channeled messages presented in the form of a daily devotional. The messages were channeled through two English women in the 1930s and could easily have been titled *Jesus Calling* because it was reputedly dictated by “The Living Christ Himself.”<sup>3</sup>

The *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, published by Harvest House Christian publishers, specifically describes *God Calling* as a channeled New Age book. In their lengthy chapter on channeling and spiritual dictation, authors/apologists John Weldon and John Ankerberg explain that channeling is a form of New Age “mediumship” and according to the Bible it “is a practice forbidden (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).”<sup>4</sup> Under the subheading titled “Impersonations of Christianity,” the authors describe *God Calling* as a New Age book “replete with denials of biblical teaching”<sup>5</sup> as it “subtly encourages psychic development and spiritistic inspiration under the guise of

Christ's personal guidance . . . and often misinterprets Scripture.”<sup>6</sup> Yet Sarah Young wrote that it was *God Calling* that inspired her to receive her own messages from “Jesus.” In her original introduction to *Jesus Calling*, Young praised *God Calling* as “a treasure to me”:

During that 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 first person, with “I” designating God. While I was living in Japan, someone had mailed this book to me from the U.S. I had not read it at that time, but I had held onto the book through two international moves. Six or seven years later, **this little paperback became a treasure to me**. It dove-tailed remarkably well with my longing to live in Jesus’ Presence.<sup>7</sup> (bold added)

### **The Damage Control**

In recent editions of *Jesus Calling*—including the 10th anniversary edition—the preceding paragraph regarding *God Calling* has been removed from the author’s longstanding introduction. No explanation. No apology. Nothing. Suddenly and completely gone is any mention of *God Calling*—how it had inspired her to receive her own “messages” from “Jesus” and how it was a “treasure” to her. Her previous praise of *God Calling* had become problematic as it had drawn obvious New Age comparisons to her own book. It had also become apparent that her original endorsement of *God Calling* was helping to popularize this New Age book among believers! While Christian leaders have been strangely silent about *Jesus Calling*, it was the secular media that took Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson to task for changing and deleting problematic material in their best-selling book. Ruth Graham, writing in *The Daily Beast*, a popular online American news reporting and opinion website formerly associated with Newsweek magazine, wrote an article questioning the changes being made to Sarah Young’s original introduction. Graham wrote:

The latest edition of *Jesus Calling* includes some important changes. The paragraph about *God Calling* has been deleted, and references to received “messages” have been changed to the less mystically inflected “writings and devotions.” In a passage in which Young recounts her early attempts to write down what God told her, the new version characterizes this as “focusing on Jesus and His Word, while asking Him to guide my thoughts.” Thomas Nelson refers to the book as “Sarah’s prayer journal,” emphasizing that

Young is not claiming to speak for Jesus. A skeptical reader, comparing the two introductions, would see an effort by a publisher to bring an increasingly controversial but lucrative best-seller into line with mainstream evangelical orthodoxy.<sup>8</sup>

In that same article, Ruth Graham also questioned the explanations offered by Thomas Nelson publicist Katie Powell:

In an email responding to my questions, the book's publicist at Thomas Nelson, Katie Powell, wrote that the reference to *God Calling* was never meant as more than "a nod," and it was deleted because it had "created some confusion." "The book's theology has always been sound," she wrote. "The changes were made to make the introduction easier to understand, especially since *Jesus Calling* is now being read by such a wide variety of people." Thomas Nelson did not call attention to the changes, Powell wrote, because the introduction's "content did not change" between editions. But it's hard to square that with the similarities between Young's book and *God Calling*—right down to the title.<sup>9</sup>

Graham's skepticism was right on target. And contrary to the statement by the Thomas Nelson publicist, the content of the introduction has changed in recent editions. The unexplained changes have caused many former supporters of *Jesus Calling* to stop using the devotional. Christian online newspaper *WorldNetDaily* (WND) picked up on the controversy and published two articles, "Top Christian Bestseller Accused of Heresy"<sup>10</sup> and "Is Hit Book '*Jesus Calling*' Pushing New Age?"<sup>11</sup> *Charisma* magazine followed up with a similar article that noted the growing controversy. It was titled "Critics Accuse '*Jesus Calling*' of Mixing Truth With New Age Error."<sup>12</sup>

**Note:** For Sarah Young to not have initially recognized *God Calling* as a New Age book should raise some serious red flags. For her to praise *God Calling* as "a treasure to me" should raise those red flags even further. But for Sarah Young and her publisher to remove all references to *God Calling* without any explanation or apology to her millions of readers is perhaps the reddest flag of all. It is the height of spiritual irresponsibility for Sarah Young to pretend it is no big deal after her original endorsement of *God Calling* re-ignited the sales of this blatant New Age book, especially when *God Calling*—thanks to her—now sits alongside *Jesus Calling* in thousands of bookstores across the country—including countless Christian bookstores.

## **(2) Sarah Young originally wrote that she “received messages” from “Jesus” Himself**

Because of Sarah Young’s stated affection for the channeled “messages” in *God Calling*, the “messages” she was receiving from “Jesus” were immediately suspect.

### **The Damage Control**

In recent editions of *Jesus Calling*, all ten references to the words “message” and “messages” have been deleted from her otherwise longstanding introduction. What were originally described as “messages” she “received” from “Jesus” are now being described as “writings” and “devotions” that she “gleaned” in her “quiet moments.”

### **Sentences in Her Original Introduction**

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.** In many parts of the world, Christians seem to be searching for a deeper experience of Jesus’ Presence and Peace. **The messages that follow** address that felt need.<sup>13</sup> (bold added)

### **Replacement Sentences in Recent Editions**

This practice of being still in God’s Presence has increased my intimacy with Him more than any other spiritual discipline, **so I want to share some of the writings I have gleaned from these quiet moments.** In many parts of the world, Christians seem to be searching for a deeper experience of Jesus’ Presence and Peace. **The devotions that follow** address that felt need.<sup>14</sup> (bold added)

In the example immediately below, observe how “messages” again become “devotions” in the replacement sentence now found in recent editions. Also note how the phrase “with your Bible open” has been added to the original wording to make things appear more biblical.

### **Sentence in Her Original Introduction**

**These messages** are meant to be read slowly, preferably in a quiet place.<sup>15</sup> (bold added)

### **Replacement Sentence in Recent Editions**

**The devotions** in this book are meant to be read slowly, preferably in a quiet place—with your Bible open.<sup>16</sup> (bold added)

**Note:** In the not yet damage-controlled original introduction to *Jesus Calling: 365 Devotions for Kids*, Sarah Young makes it abundantly clear that what she calls “devotions” are in fact “messages” she has “received” from her “Jesus.” She writes:

Since then, I have practiced listening a lot. Usually I write His messages in a notebook, but sometimes I just spend time with Him for a while — and write nothing. The devotions in this book **are some of the messages** I have received.<sup>17</sup> (bold added)

**Summary:** Changing the “messages” she “received” to the “writings” and “devotions” she “gleaned” in her “quiet moments” attempts to counter any suggestion that Sarah Young might be getting deceived by a seducing spirit that is presenting itself as the real Jesus (1 Timothy 4:1, Matthew 24:4-5).

### **3) Sarah Young’s “Jesus” contradicts the Bible’s true Jesus Christ**

In two separate messages, Sarah Young was told by her “Jesus” that the last words he spoke after his resurrection and before ascending into heaven were “I am with you always.” But this statement made by the true Jesus Christ on the Mount of Galilee were not His last words before ascending into heaven. His last words were spoken from the Mount of Olives as recorded in Acts 1:7-9, 12. The two “messages” Sarah Young received from her “Jesus” contradict the words of the true Jesus Christ in the Holy Bible. What her “Jesus” said was totally unbiblical.

### **The Damage Control**

Since this unbiblical contradiction was brought to light in my book “*Another Jesus*” *Calling*, Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson have eliminated this obvious contradiction in their 10th anniversary edition. In other words, they had their “Jesus” correct himself. Compare the original January 28th and October 15th statements that have been in *Jesus Calling* for the last ten years, with the replacement statements now inserted in the new 10th anniversary edition.

### **January 28th Original Statement**

**I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS. These were the last words** I spoke **before ascending into heaven.** I continue to proclaim this promise to all who will listen.<sup>18</sup> (bold added)

### **January 28th Replacement Statement**

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS. **I spoke these words to My disciples after My resurrection.** I continue to proclaim this promise to all who will listen.<sup>19</sup> (bold added)

### **October 15th Original Statement**

TRY TO STAY CONSCIOUS OF ME as you go step by step through this day. My Presence with you is both a promise and a protection. **My final statement just before I went to heaven** was: Surely I am with you always. That promise was for all of My followers, without exception.<sup>20</sup> (bold added)

### **October 15th Replacement Statement**

TRY TO STAY CONSCIOUS OF ME as you go step by step through this day. My Presence with you is both a promise and a protection. **After My resurrection,** I assured My followers: Surely I am with you always. That promise was for all of My followers, without exception.<sup>21</sup> (bold added)

**Note:** One of the 250 “messages” Sarah Young included in her yet-to-be-corrected *Jesus Calling* Devotional Bible (NKJV) is the original October 15th “message” from *Jesus Calling*—“My final statement just before I went to heaven was: Surely I am with you always.” Given that this statement is clearly unbiblical, Young’s justification for her messages to be included “alongside the biblical text” falls a little flat. She writes:

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.<sup>22</sup>

### **Jesus Corrects Himself?**

Sarah Young might argue that because Jesus never contradicts Himself, she must have heard it wrong. But if that were the case, she had to hear it wrong on two separate occasions because the unbiblical statement is in two different messages. With this in mind, an important question must be asked. Who was Sarah Young listening to when she “received” these two “messages?” Obviously the real Jesus does not contradict himself—much less correct Himself in regards to His own words and actions.

And for those who might argue that there is no longer a problem because this contradiction and other problematic areas have been corrected, several more questions must be asked. What about the ten million readers who have

trusted these unbiblical messages over the last ten years? Do you just pretend it never happened? Aren't they owed some kind of explanation as to how Sarah Young's "Jesus" could make mistakes of this magnitude. But perhaps most importantly, how can an author and publisher—or anyone for that matter—believe they have the right to put words in and out of the mouth of Jesus Christ like He is some kind of literary device—and most especially when it is for the purpose of damage control?

Regardless of whether Sarah Young has been listening to a deceptive spirit (1 Timothy 4:1) or to her own confused thoughts (1 Corinthians 14:33)—or a combination of both—she is deceived and is, in turn, deceiving others (2 Timothy 3:13) whether she realizes it or not. Believers must search the Scriptures to see if the things they are being told are really true (Acts 17:11), and they must test the voices they are listening to “because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

#### **4) Sarah Young's "Jesus" stated that Abraham was guilty of "idolatry" and "son-worship"**

Sarah Young's "Jesus" said that Abraham was a man of “undisciplined emotions” and was guilty of “son-worship” and “idolatry.” Many believers have recoiled at these strange, extra-biblical remarks.

#### **The Damage Control**

Sarah Young and Thomas Nelson have attempted to make this particular problem disappear by deleting all references to Abraham and Isaac in the August 23rd message in *Jesus Calling*.” As they eliminate Abraham and Isaac, they are simultaneously cutting, pasting, and inserting Jacob and Joseph in their place. Compare the original August 23rd entry with the one that has replaced it in recent editions.

#### **August 23rd "Message" in the Original Edition**

ENTRUST YOUR LOVED ONES TO ME; release them into My protective care. They are much safer with Me than in your clinging hands. If you let a loved one become an idol in your heart, you endanger that one—as well as yourself. **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.<sup>23</sup> (bold added and signifies material that was deleted)

### **August 23rd Replacement Message**

ENTRUST YOUR LOVED ONES TO ME; release them into My protective care. They are much safer with Me than in your clinging hands. If you let a loved one become an idol in your heart, you endanger that one—as well as yourself. **Joseph and his father, Jacob, suffered terribly because Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons and treated him with special favor. So Joseph’s brothers hated him and plotted against him.** Ultimately, I used that situation for good, but both father and son had to endure years of suffering and separation from one another.

I detest idolatry, even in the form of parental love, so beware of making a beloved child your idol.<sup>24</sup> (bold added and signifies material that was added)

**Note:** Sarah Young and her editors obviously made a determination that substituting a toned down Jacob and Joseph entry would be more plausible than the original Abraham and Isaac message. However, the obvious cut-and-paste damage control has resulted in bringing more attention rather than less to their extra-biblical problem.

### **(5) “Jesus” complains about the night of his birth**

Creating considerable controversy and confusion, the “Jesus” of *Jesus Calling* said he was born “under appalling conditions” in a “filthy stable” and that the night of his birth “was a dark night” for him. To many readers, this did not sound like the voice of their Savior—it sounded like the voice of a stranger (John 10:5) and that Satan—not Jesus—would be the one describing the night of Jesus’ birth as “that dark night for Me.”

### **The Damage Control**

Compare the original December 25th message with the one that has replaced it in the 10th anniversary edition of *Jesus Calling*. Notice how the controversial statement—“That was a dark night for Me”—was deleted and quietly replaced by the less controversial statement—“There was nothing glorious about that setting.”

### **December 25th Sentence in the Original Edition**

Try to imagine what I gave up when I came into your world as a baby. I set aside My Glory, so that I could identify with mankind. I accepted the limitations of infancy under the most appalling conditions—**a filthy stable. That was a dark night for Me**, even though angels lit up the sky

proclaiming “Glory!” to awe-struck shepherds.<sup>25</sup> (bold added to highlight what was deleted))

### **December 25th Replacement Sentence**

Try to imagine what I gave up when I came into your world as a baby. I set aside My Glory, so that I could identify with mankind. I accepted the limitations of infancy under the most appalling conditions—a filthy stable. **There was nothing glorious about that setting**, though angels lit up the sky proclaiming, “Glory!” to awe-struck shepherds.<sup>26</sup> (bold added to highlight what was added)

### **Jesus Corrects Himself Again?**

The complaints made by Sarah Young’s “Jesus” don’t square with Scripture inspired by the true Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us “to be content” in whatever circumstances we find ourselves (Philippians 4:11). Obviously succumbing to the mounting criticism regarding the “dark night for Me” remark, Sarah Young’s “Jesus” corrects himself—again—with no apology or explanation.

### **Summary**

Intrigued by the channeled messages of *God Calling*, Sarah Young was apparently not satisfied with the sufficiency of God’s Word. In her original introduction, Young stated: “I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more.”<sup>27</sup> While this statement—along with many others—has been deleted in recent editions, it is clear the author of *Jesus Calling* “yearned for more,” and more is what she got. As a result, she received “messages” from a “Jesus” that has proven himself to be one of the false Christs that the real Jesus Christ warned us to watch out for (Matthew 24:4-5, 23-24). Wanting a word from God more than the Word of God, Sarah Young ended up getting deceived. “Deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13), she has taken millions of *Jesus Calling* readers along with her.

The Bible describes those who love and respect the power and authority of God’s Word as those who tremble at God’s Word (Isaiah 66:2). The Bible also describes those who do not tremble at God’s Word but rather use and manipulate God’s Word for their own selfish purposes (2 Corinthians 4:2).

There is no nice way to say it. *Jesus Calling* is a gross affront to our true Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the self-serving effort by Sarah Young

and her publisher to cover up some of the many problems found in *Jesus Calling* is a gross affront to the body of Christ. It is one thing for Sarah Young to be deceived, it is quite another for her to be the author of deception herself.

The five examples provided in this booklet typify the unprincipled damage control that the author and her publisher have undertaken to preserve their multi-million dollar *Jesus Calling* industry—all at the expense of people who have put their trust in Sarah Young and her “Jesus.” To those who would argue that there is a lot of truth in *Jesus Calling* and that the book has comforted many people, former Moody Memorial Church pastor Dr. Harry Ironside warned that “truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous”:

Error is like leaven, of which we read, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or truth-and-error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.<sup>28</sup>

Jesus warned that great deception would characterize the time of the end and that the deception would come in His name. I am absolutely convinced that the “Jesus” of *Jesus Calling* is not the true Christ. Rather he is one of the false Christs that the real Jesus warned us to watch out for.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Matthew 24:3-5)

#### ENDNOTES

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6. Ibid., p. 104.
7. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), p. XI, (12 13 14 15 16 RRD 52 51 50 49 48).

8. Ruth Graham, "The Strange Saga of '*Jesus Calling*,' The Evangelical Bestseller You've Never Heard Of" (*Daily Beast*, 02/23/14). (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/23/the-strange-saga-of-jesus-calling-the-evangelical-bestseller-you-ve-never-heard-of.html>).
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23. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., p. 246.
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25. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., p. 376.
26. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*, 10th Anniversary Edition, op. cit., p. 376.
27. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., p. XII.
28. Dr. Harry Ironside, "Exposing Error: Is it Worthwhile?" (TBC Extra, April 2008, posted on The Berean Call website, <http://www.thebereancall.org/content/tbc-extra-30>).