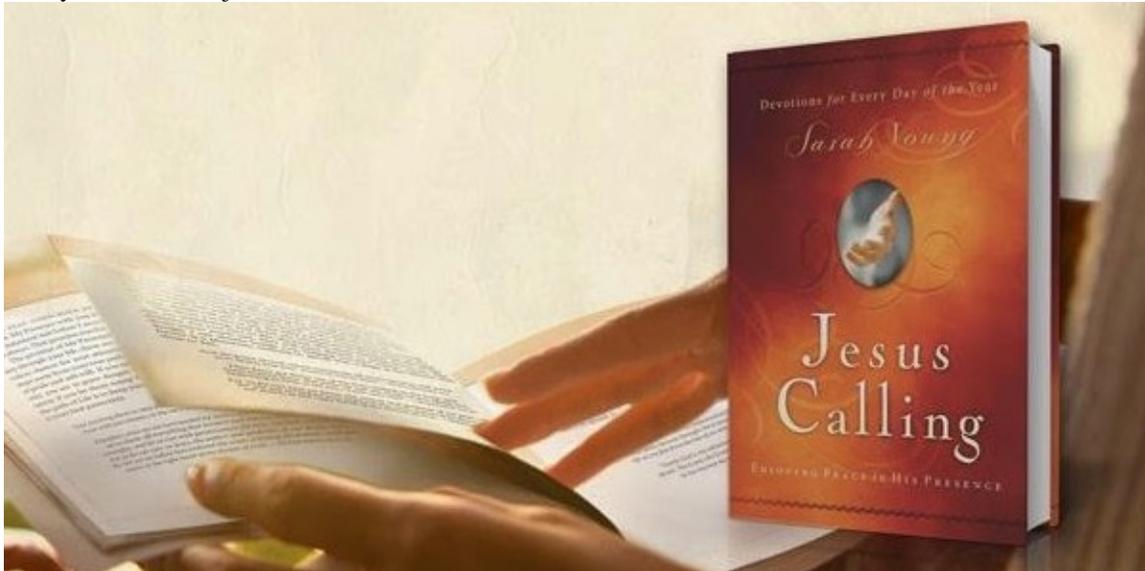


Top Christian bestseller accused of heresy

Former New Ager alleges 'Jesus Calling' is harmful to believers

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Read more at <http://www.wnd.com/2014/05/top-christian-bestseller-accused-of-heresy/#mxL8meZCjIrhSzWm.99>



A runaway bestseller in the Christian book world is generating controversy as charges of unbiblical and New Age influences are leveled by watchdog groups and individuals.

“Jesus Calling,” a top-selling inspirational Christian title, is authored by Sarah Young and currently ranks No. 1 on numerous lists.

Young, who lives in Australia, where she helps her husband plant churches, has a philosophy degree from Wellesley College, a counseling degree from Georgia State University and a master’s degree from Tufts. By all accounts, she is stunned by the success of her book, which has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide in the decade since its launch.

Various editions have been published by Thomas Nelson, the world’s largest Christian publisher. The Nashville-based publishing house was bought by News Corporation in 2011, and is now a subsidiary of NewsCorp-owned HarperCollins.

Christian author Warren Smith, who left the New Age movement in 1984, has serious concerns about much of the material in “Jesus Calling,” and has written a book – titled ““Another Jesus’ Calling” – critiquing Young’s bestseller as well as other modern Christian movements and ministries in which he sees dangerous New Age influences.

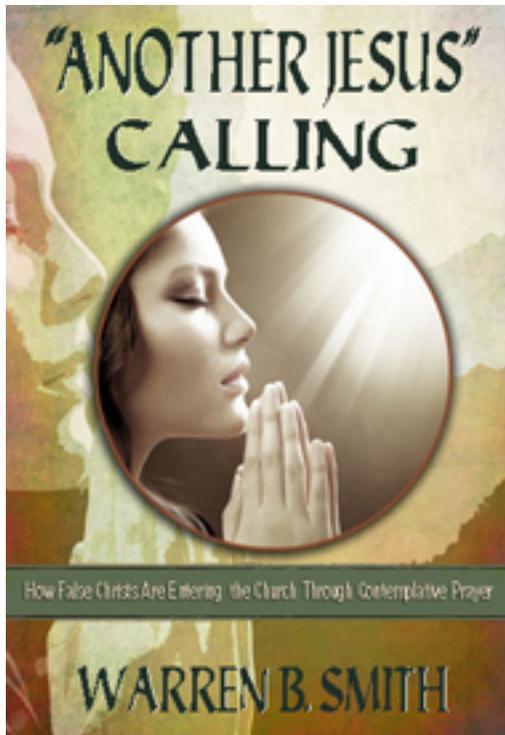
“We’re getting incredible response to my book,” says Smith, “because her book is indefensible!”

Laura Minchew, senior vice-president of publishing for Thomas Nelson, disputes the claims, and told WND the Sarah Young book has positively impacted countless lives.

“I will tell you that should anyone hint of New Age teachings in ‘Jesus Calling,’ they would be sorely misinformed,” she said.

“We are releasing a new 10th anniversary edition of the book in September. We have added an expanded ‘Author Note’ that looks back at how the book was published and includes stories from the thousands of comments we have received about the impact of this book on people’s lives.”

Minchew added: “Jesus Calling has been such a comfort and source of peace for so many. It helps readers spend time with the Lord. People’s lives have been touched for good by this book. I would ask that you not try to make a controversy that has no merit, just for the sake of readership.”



However, others in the Christian community echo Smith's concerns, including Chris Quintana, pastor of Calvary Chapel Cypress, in Cypress, California, who is alarmed by the book's success:

“‘Jesus Calling’ is just the latest fad to come through the church,” says Quintana. “Like ‘The Shack’ or ‘The Prayer of Jabez’ before it, when truth is mixed with error, then it becomes heralded as the new wonderful thing. The church embraces and promotes it because those who should know better ... don’t.

“The Jesus of Scripture would be appalled by the ‘Jesus’ of this book, and I am sure is grieved over the misrepresentation. There are some pages where nothing objectionable can be found, so people let their guard down. The book was given to them by a friend, or purchased through their church bookstore, etc. It then becomes trusted and they fail to see the error of the mystical ‘Jesus’ found therein.”

According to the Association for Christian Retail, or CBA, “Jesus Calling” ranks No. 1 in the category of Inspirational/General Interest. For May 2014, the children’s version ranks No. 2 in the Children’s category and No. 3 in Young Adult for the teen edition.

“Jesus Calling” has a staggering 5,451 reviews on Amazon, of which 5,050 are five-star. Only 73 are one-star.

Typical of the positive reviews are these three:

- “A beautifully written book of devotion. Sarah Young has a great deal of love in her heart for Jesus and the Christian faith.”
- “I was given this devotional while going through a difficult time, and it couldn’t be a better fit. Young writes from the voice of God, without sounding blasphemous or assumptive.”
- “Great devotional book, has changed my life! If you are looking for a closer relationship with God, this devotional book will help you on this journey.

However, one negative Amazon review clearly summarizes most of the main problems critics see with Young’s bestseller:

“There are several problems with this book. Here are just four:

- The obvious one is that the book puts words in God’s mouth.
- The author seems to depend on mystic experiences she’s had for her belief in God. Also, she wants something more than God’s Word in the Bible. It has a New Age feel to it.
- It’s a feel good book. It avoids the real problem of personal sin. It’s all about God filling the personal needs that you feel. It’s very self-centered.
- Dependence on experiences will lead to frustration and confusion in the Christian life because we need to have more and more experiences to be satisfied.

“In a nutshell,” adds the reviewer, “the book is misleading and is self-centered, rather than what Christianity teaches – to realize our sinfulness and look to Christ, and to serve God and others as a response to our salvation. I do not recommend this book.”

Despite warnings from Smith and others, “Jesus Calling” is highly visible in Christian bookstore chains and among ministries.