

A Review of Sarah Young's book, *Jesus Calling*  
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I was introduced to Sarah Young's book, *Jesus Calling*, because it was beginning to create controversy in the church I pastor. My wife began to read the book and take notes and also gave me copies of some of the reviews that have been posted online (see links at the end). These were helpful, but most were short or tended to focus on the influences on Mrs. Young that were coming from "higher life" writers, mysticism and a channeled new age book, *God Calling*. Since we were already getting resistance in just asking some of the ladies that had read it to critique it, I knew it would take more than just handing people critical reviews of the book to help them see for themselves the dangers of the book.

I, like most pastors, do not read devotionals written for women. I was attending a pastor's conference while reviewing this book, so I asked many other pastors if they knew anything about *Jesus Calling*. Only three had heard of it and only one was familiar with its content because he had dealt with it at his own church. I also asked many Christian ladies both within and outside the church I pastor if they had read it and what they thought. I was amazed at how many of them knew about it and had read it. If they had read it as a devotional, they invariably said it was "helpful," "encouraging," "comforting." I read through the entire book in three sittings. It was a bit eye opening for me to read the flowery and very emotional language that had little substance. It was so vague that it would easily allow the reader to be helped, encouraged and comforted by what was already in the reader's mind, and since these were Christian women, what was already in their minds were Biblical truths which they then assumed the author was referencing.

I developed a plan to have our church leaders and our Deaconesses review the book and discover its dangers for themselves. I reviewed this plan with another pastor and the result is the three pages (sections) of discussion questions that follow. These questions are presented in two sets. The first set only has the questions so that you might be able to easily use them yourself or in your ministry to help people think through the book. The second set contains the answers that we generated in our review of the book.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bless your diligence to be like the Bereans in Acts 17 and help others become likewise.

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1 Thessalonians 5:21 requires Christians to “*examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good.*” 1 John 4:1 requires the Christian to “*test the spirits to see whether they are from God.*” A book that is written as if Jesus is speaking certainly needs to be examined. This questionnaire is designed to help examine and evaluate the book. (Please use additional sheets of paper for answering questions as needed).

Section 1 - Positive Things about the Book

1) What did you find helpful about the book? Please be specific as possible

Example 1: Most Christians struggle with putting time aside to spend with God alone. The book advocates strongly that this needs to be a priority in the believers life.

Example 2: The book calls for believers to trust God in the midst of the troubles and turmoil of life.

2) How did this book give you a greater understanding of God, His nature, attributes and will? Please be as specific as possible.

Example 1) God’s presence in my life should be a source of comfort and encouragement

Example 2) I understand that God wants me to spend time alone with Him so that I can concentrate on Him without the distractions of daily life.

3) How has the book helped you to become more holy (Ephesians 1:4), more like Christ (Romans 8:29) and develop the characteristics of righteousness (Matthew 5:3-12)?

Section 2 - Understanding the book

- 4) What does the *Introduction* (pages VI - XIV) reveal about how Sarah Young came about writing the book?
  
- 5) What does the *Introduction* reveal about what Sarah Young hopes the book will do in your life?
  
- 6) The book is written as if Jesus is speaking. Do you believe it is Jesus speaking? Why or why not?
  - A) If you believe it is Jesus speaking, what authority does this book have on your life?
  
  - B) If you do not believe Jesus is speaking, then who is speaking?
  
- 7) The book uses some form of *My Presence* in 261 out of 365 daily devotionals (71.5%), so it is a very important phrase in the book.
  - A) What did you think this phrase meant as you read through the book?
  
  - B) How does Sarah Young define this phrase in the *Introduction*?
  
  - C) What are some of the things “*My Presence*” is supposed to be able to accomplish in your life? Includes January 2, 4, 23, 28, 29, 31; February 26; March 4, 8, 13,14, 17, 19, 24, 27; April 5; May 3, 8, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28, 29; June 16, 19, 24; July 1, 16, 18, 19, 28; August 20, 30; September 4, 30; October 5, 7, 8, 15, 22, 26; December 8, 9, 13.

- 8) Psalm 46:10 is quoted several times in the book as a foundational premise (page XIII). What is the actual context of this verse and what does it mean?
- 9) In several of the daily devotionals, there are specific absolute statements made about various things - the greatest, the most important thing, the best way, the only means, etc. While it could be argued that these could be statements that are only true of Sarah, there are other statements that stated as universal truths. Are those statements true? Explain  
These include 2/23, 2/27, 4/2, 5/8, 6/30, 7/16, 7/17, 8/29, 9/12, 9/14, 10/11, 10/15, 12/31
- 10) What topics concerning living the Christian life are absent from the book? What aspects of developing a righteous character are missing?
- 11) Does Mrs. Young believe in the sufficiency of Scripture? Explain (see 2 Peter 1:2-4, 19-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- 12) Do you see anything dangerous in the book? Please be specific.
- 13) Should this book be commended / recommended, ignored, warned against? Explain.

Answers to the Discussion Questions  
for reviewing *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young  
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1 Thessalonians 5:21 requires Christians to “*examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good.*” 1 John 4:1 requires the Christian to “*test the spirits to see whether they are from God.*” A book that is written as if Jesus is speaking certainly needs to be examined. This questionnaire is designed to help examine and evaluate the book. (Please use additional sheets of paper for answering questions as needed).

Please note: Comments made by myself (Rev. Scott L. Harris) or those who took part in the review will be in Arial typeface. Quotes from the book will be in *Times Roman Italic*

**Section 1 - Positive Things about the Book**

1) What did you find helpful about the book? Please be specific as possible

Example 1: Most Christians struggle with putting time aside to spend with God alone. The book advocates strongly that this needs to be a priority in the life of a believer.

Example 2: The book calls for believers to trust God in the midst of the troubles and turmoil

Comments during review session

\*It helped in the midst of a struggle.

\*It was put “skin” on the presence of God

\*The Scripture at the bottom of each devotional was very helpful & encouraging

\*She writes well for women to understand

2) How did this book give you a greater understanding of God, His nature, attributes and will? Please be as specific as possible.

Example 1) God’s presence in my life should be a source of comfort and encouragement

Example 2) I understand that God wants me to spend time alone with Him so that I can concentrate on Him without the distractions of daily life.

Comments during review session

\*There was nothing new for those who have been believers, but it was nice to get a reminder of great truths.

3) How has the book helped you to become more holy (Ephesians 1:4), more like Christ (Romans 8:29) and develop the characteristics of righteousness (Matthew 5:3-12)?

Comments during review session:

\*The book seemed more designed to comfort and encourage

\*I read more scripture - it was a jumping off point into the Scriptures and so I spent more time in the Bible

\*It put me in the right frame of mind to walk correctly before Him - witness, proper fellowship.

## Section 2 - Understanding the book

- 4) What does the *Introduction* (pages VI - XIV) reveal about how Sarah Young came about writing the book?

She had several experiences that led to her practice of prayer “listening”

First encounter, page VII - bottom paragraph. She has a mystical experience in Switzerland. “*Suddenly I felt as if a warm mist enveloped me. I became aware of a lovely Presence, and my involuntary response was to whisper, ‘Sweet Jesus.’*” She continues . . . “*I realized it was the response of a converted heart; at that moment I knew I belonged to Him. This was far more than the intellectual answers that for which I had been searching. This was a relationship with the Creator of the Universe.*” There is no mention of sin, forgiveness, repentance or anything else that should be associated with a “converted heart.” Why did she not know long before this that “*she belonged to Him*” if she had been a Christian before hand? If this was the beginning of her walk with Christ, from what was she converted since there is no mention of sin, repentance, faith, or her belief in Jesus in explaining who He is, what He has done, etc.?

Second encounter, Page VII - top paragraph. It is back in the U.S. and she has another encounter with “*the Presence of Jesus*” during the loss of a serious dating relationship while she was wondering “*whether being a Christian made much of a difference in the quality of my life.*” She read Catherine Marshall’s book, *Beyond Ourselves* - then as she knelt by her bed that night she “*felt an overwhelming Presence of peace and love come over me. I knew that Jesus was with me and that He sympathized with my heartache. This was unquestionably the same ‘Sweet Jesus’ I had met in the Alps.*” While questioning the reality of Christianity, she again has an experience which she takes as confirmation of reality - and again, nothing indicating new understanding of and application of Biblical truth - just a feeling.

Third encounter, pages IX & X. Sixteen years later after two missionary tours, two children, and counseling courses at Covenant Theological Seminary and Georgia State - “*So I was ready to begin a new spiritual quest.*” She read, *The Secret of the Abiding Presence* by Andrew Murray. “*In the midst of those momentous changes, I began seeking God’s Presence in earnest. My days started alone with God, equipped with Bible, devotional book, prayer journal, pen, and coffee. As I waited in His Presence, God began to reveal Himself to me. An hour or two alone with Him seemed too brief.*” She is well prepared for a normal time for devotions, but she does not explain here what she means by seeking for or waiting “*in His Presence.*” This could easily appear to be normal devotions except for the uncertainty of what she means by that and what she means that God began to reveal Himself to her.

Fourth encounter, pages X & XI. They move to Australia where their family is subjected to *intense spiritual warfare*. She continues, *One morning as I prayed, I visualized God protecting each of us. I pictured 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 brilliant light and profound peace. I lost all sense of time as I experienced God’s Presence in this powerful way. I had not sought the experience, but I received it gratefully and was strengthened by it.* She is already practicing visualization in her prayers - a mystical practice, not a Biblical one.

In counseling a survivor of incest and satanic ritual abuse, she *realized that experiences of God's Presence were not only for my benefit but were also preparation for helping others.* This is the origin of the idea her experiences could have a wider purpose. (Pg XI)

She reads a copy of *God Calling* which is a new age book that was written by channeling. *"this little paperback became a treasure to me. It dovetailed remarkably well with my longing to live in Jesus' Presence."* This is the first solid evidence that her experiences are not aligned with Biblical truth, but rather with new age practices and experience. (Pg XI)

Fifth Encounter (pg XII) *"The following year I began to wonder if I, too, could receive messages during my times of communing with God."* This would not be a prayer journal. *"I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more."* The Bible was not enough for her. *"I decided to listen to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I believed He was saying. I felt awkward the first time I tried this, but I received a message. It was short, biblical, and appropriate. It addressed topics that were current in my life: trust, fear, and closeness to God. I responded by writing in my prayer journal."* (Pg XII). She states these were Biblical and appropriate - but who is the one evaluating that conclusion? She has continued to have these communications since then. Since the experiences are described as "dovetailing" with what is described in a new age book, it is very doubtful what was revealed was actually Biblical and appropriate.

On Page XII, she cites Psalm 46:10 - and badly takes it out of context stating that *"This is an enticing invitation from God to lay down our cares and seek His Presence."* This is the first concrete example that she is not proficient at proper Biblical interpretation. She is reading into the verse what she desires. Her method of Bible Study is eisegesis.

Conclusion: She came about writing the book through a series of mystical experiences over many years. She became heavily influenced by mystical writers, holiness writers and eventually New Age writers. She absorbed these ideas into her own practice and wrote the book in the belief others would benefit others if they followed the same practices she has - or at least be encouraged by what she had experienced.

- 5) What does the *Introduction* reveal about what Sarah Young hopes the book will do in your life? - Page XIII

She wants to share what she has experienced and encourage the readers to follow the same practice.

*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.*

*I invite you to keep a journal to record any thoughts or impressions you receive as you wait in His Presence.*

- 6) The book is written as if Jesus is speaking. Do you believe it is Jesus speaking? Why or why not?

No, this is not Jesus speaking because what he says in the book is inconsistent with Scripture. Here are a few examples:

January 3 - the speaker claims to be *“both with you and within you”* and then goes on to say *“there could never be another companion as devoted as I am.”* What happened to the Holy Spirit - John 14? Jesus is with us, not in us. The Holy Spirit is in us. Jesus would not make this error.

On January 24, the speaker states *“My Peace is the treasure of treasures; the pearl of great price.”* That is a Biblical reference to Matthew 13:46 which is a parable of the Kingdom, not a reference to Jesus' Presence. Jesus would not make this error.

January 30 - the speaker states *“Worship Me only.”* Jesus would not do this for though He accepted worship, He directed people to worship the Father.

February 1, the speaker applies Psalm 91:11 (*For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways*) to Sarah when the passage is specific to the Messiah (see Matt. 4:6). Jesus would not do this.

February 28, the speaker is emphatic is saying *“Stop Judging and evaluating yourself for this is not your role.”* This is contradictory to 2 Corinthians 13:5. Jesus would not do this.

July 3 - the speaker states: *“My children make a pastime of judging one another—and themselves. . .”* *“That is why I am highly offended when I hear My children judge one another or indulge in self-hatred.”* Jesus Himself commanded us to judge properly - Matthew 7:1-4: <sup>1</sup> *“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”* <sup>2</sup> *“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”* <sup>3</sup> *“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”* <sup>4</sup> *“Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye?”*

December 11 - the speaker talks about collaborating with Sarah so that he can *“co-create”* her dreams to be transformed into reality. Jesus would not say this.

December 22, the speaker is talking about the wise men seeing the star, then states *“Look for a star of guidance in your own life, and be willing to follow wherever I lead.”* Jesus would not say this.

I noted more than 80 of the devotionals as containing something questionable. Since the writing is often so vague, it is hard to tell if it is heresy, an aberration or just very poor communication. None of that fits what Jesus would do in communicating.

A) If you believe it is Jesus speaking, what authority does this book have on your life?

B) If you do not believe Jesus is speaking, then who is speaking?

There are two possibilities.

1) It is the author who is using this practice as a literary device to give her words more weight - in which case this is the height of arrogance.

2) It is demonic - a channeled book similar to *God Calling*

7) The book uses some form of *My Presence* in 261 out of 365 daily devotionals (71.5%), so it is a very important phrase in the book.

A) What did you think this phrase meant as you read through the book?

The only proper way to understand this phrase, *My Presence*, is according to the author's own description in the introduction - see below. The danger of this book is



that most people will not read the introduction and so will interpret this phrase according to their own understanding and practices. This is a critical error which tricks believers into thinking one thing while she is actually promoting something else. This becomes the means by which she introduces a very unbiblical practice of seeking extra revelation from Christ which then becomes more important than what the Scriptures say because the experience and new revelation will be used to interpret the Bible.

B) How does Sarah Young define this phrase in the *Introduction*?

She describes it in mystical language - Her first encounter was : *as if a warm mist enveloped me. I became aware of a lovely Presence, and my involuntary response was to whisper, "Sweet Jesus."* Her second encounter was: *I no longer felt alone. I knelt beside the bed in that sterile room and felt an overwhelming Presence of peace and love come over me. I knew that Jesus was with me and that He sympathized with my heartache. This was unquestionably the same "Sweet Jesus" I had met in the Alps.* Her third encounter was: *I visualized God protecting each of us. I pictured 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 brilliant light and profound peace. I lost all sense of time as I experienced God's Presence in this powerful way. I had not sought the experience, but I received it gratefully and was strengthened by it.* She states on page XI that the *God Calling book* became a treasure to me. It dovetailed remarkably well with my longing to live in Jesus' Presence. On page XII she states *I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more.* She then describes the development of her writing down whatever she believed Jesus was saying to her. She does not mention the study of scripture or even scripture reading in her practice. The focus is on "Sitting quietly in God's Presence during which she may or may not receive a message, but does receive "His Peace." Some of her devotions in December describe her practice with a little more detail:

Dec. 11 - In this devotional, the "light of My Presence" is what brings dreams to reality. Jesus the person is removed and replaced by this mystical Presence.

Dec. 12 -*This is why you must live by faith, not by sight , trusting in My mysterious, majestic Presence.* As with most of her devotionals, if you did not have the introduction, you might think it was okay - but then she puts in statements such as this one. The idea of this "My Presence" is something she is to put her trust in - not Jesus Himself, but this idea of "My mysterious, majestic Presence"

Dec. 13 - This message is about her practice. The first paragraph would sound okay if you did not know what she meant by "My Presence" from the introduction - but the second paragraph should cause concern - *The benefits of this practice are limitless.*

*Emotional and physical healing are enhanced by your soaking in the Light of My Presence. You experience a nearness to Me that strengthens your faith and fills you with Peace. You open yourself up to receive the many blessings that I have prepared for you. You become a cleansed temple of My Holy Spirit, who is able to do in and through you immeasurably more than you ask or imagine. These are just some of the benefits of being still in My Presence.*

Dec. 14 - *Living in collaboration with Me is the way to instill meaning into your days. Begin each day alone with Me so that you can experience the reality of My Presence. As you spend time with Me, the way before you opens up step by step. Arise from the stillness of our communion, and gradually begin your journey through the day. Hold My hand in deliberate dependence on Me, and I will smooth out the path before you.* This is the practice that

Sarah Young wants her readers to embrace for themselves - and again, it is the mystical experience, not the reality of drawing near to Christ through the scriptures, confession, vocal worship and service.

Dec. 16 - *I AM SPEAKING in the depths of your being. Be still so that you can hear My voice. I speak in the language of Love; My words fill you with Life and Peace, Joy and hope . I desire to talk with all of My children, but many are too busy to listen.* The communication from Jesus is not through the Scriptures, but through an inner voice deep in your being.

Dec. 17 - *As you rest quietly in My Presence, My Light within you grows brighter and brighter. Facing the emptiness inside you is simply the prelude to being filled with My fullness . This "light" is what she described in her experience in the introduction of the book - note the capitalization - and it comes by resting quietly in My Presence*

Dec. 22 - *Praise and worship are the best responses to the wonder of My Being. Sing praises to My holy Name. Gaze at Me in silent adoration.* This seems contradictory - sing, but be silent?

Dec. 24 - *Learn to tune in to My living Presence by seeking Me in silence.*

Dec. 25 - *AS YOU WAIT attentively in My Presence, the Light of the knowledge of My Glory shines upon you. This radiant knowledge transcends all understanding. It transforms every fiber of your being: renewing your mind, cleansing your heart, invigorating your body. Open yourself fully to My Presence; be awed by My glorious Being. . . . When you sit quietly with Me, the process I went through is reversed in your experience. As you identify with Me, heaven's vistas open up before you— granting you glimpses of My Glory.* This devotional also says the stable was filthy. I have serious doubts Mary would have left the stable "filthy," but would have cleaned it out as any mother would as she prepares to give birth. The process described here is to be mystically identify with Jesus' experience - and it is the *Presence* that will transform you.

Dec. 27 - *Take time to be still in My Presence so that I can strengthen you. The busier you become, the more you need this time apart with Me.* This is not Bible study or serving, but the quite waiting described earlier.

Dec. 28 - *As you grow closer to Me, I open your eyes to see more and more of My Presence all around you. Things that most people hardly notice, like shifting shades of sunlight , fill you with heart-bursting Joy. You have eyes that see and ears that hear, so proclaim My abiding Presence in the world.* The call here is to proclaim *My abiding Presence in the world* instead of the gospel. I consider that to be serious.

Dec. 31 - *Thank Me for My peaceful Presence, regardless of your feelings. Whisper My Name in loving tenderness. My Peace, which lives continually in your spirit, will gradually work its way through your entire being.*

C) What are some of the things "My Presence" is supposed to be able to accomplish in your life? Includes January 2, 4, 23, 28, 29, 31; February 26; March 4, 8, 13,14, 17, 19, 24, 27; April 5; May 3, 8, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28, 29; June 16, 19, 24; July 1, 16, 18, 19, 28; August 20, 30; September 4, 30; October 5, 7, 8, 15, 22, 26; December 8, 9, 13.

This is a critical area to understand since it reveals the heart of her error. These are some of things which she attributes to "My Presence." Below I give a summary list of these statement and date which is followed by the excerpts from the devotional from which the summary list was generated.

- \*Equips you to face whatever the day brings - its uncertainties (Jan 2, May 8)
- \*Only antidote to threat of uncertainty (May 26)
- \*Removes fear (Jan 4, June 24, July 28)
- \*Gives peace (June 19)
- \*Source of blessing to others (Jan 23, March 14)
- \*Source of blessings for yourself (Dec 13)
- \*Cause of all the pieces of your life to fall into place (Jan 28)
- \*Cause anxiety to shrivel away (Jan 29, July 19)
- \*The best defense against anxiety / fear (March 4)
- \*Watches over and protects (Jan 31, Dec. 9), powerful protection (Oct 15)
- \*Enables you to see life from “Jesus” perspective (March 8)
- \*Source of Joy that cannot be taken away (March 13, May 3, Oct 5, Oct 22)
- \*Source of forgiveness (March 17)
- \*Source of security / safety (March 24, July 18)
- \*Transforming power (March 27, April 6, July 28, Dec 13)
- \*Source of the gifts of Love, Joy & Peace (April 5)
- \*Source of radiant love (May 29)
- \*The best equipping (May 8)
- \*Gives glimpses of “Jesus’s” overflowing vastness (May 17)
- \*The only remedy to bring about godly problem solving (May 21)
- \*Makes the load of problems lighter (May 25)
- \*A form of worship (May 28)
- \*Something to be celebrated (June 19)
- \*Source of being energized and lightened (July 1, Sept 4)
- \*Only hope to avoid depression and darkness (July 16, Oct. 7)
- \*The ultimate reality (July 18)
- \*A light for your path (Aug. 10) - this substitutes God’s word with “My Presence”
- \*Healing power (Aug. 20), emotional and physical healing (Dec 13)
- \*Source of courage (Aug. 30)
- \*Means to fill man’s gaping emptiness (Sept. 4)
- \*Means to receive the abundant life (Sept. 30)
- \*Source of strength (Oct. 8)
- \*True confidence (Oct. 26)
- \*Fulfilment of deepest longings (Dec. 8)
- \*Holiness (Dec. 13)

Jan. 2 - *Let the Light of My Presence soak into you as you focus your thoughts on Me. Thus I equip you to face whatever the day brings.*

Jan 4 - *through the Light of My universal Presence— **fear loses its grip on you.***

Jan 23 - *As you live in close contact with Me, the Light of My Presence filters through you to **bless others.***

Jan 28 - *When My Presence is the focal point of your consciousness, **all the pieces of your life fall into place.***

Jan 29 - *Whenever your mind wanders, lasso those thoughts and bring them into My Presence. In My radiant Light, **anxious thoughts shrink and shrivel away.***

Jan 31- *My Presence **watches over you** continually, **protecting** you from both known and unknown dangers.*

Feb 26 - *I will show you the next step forward, and the one after that, and the one after that. Relax and enjoy the journey in My Presence, trusting Me to open up the way before you as you go.*

March 4 - *So the temptation to be anxious is constantly with you, trying to worm its way into your mind. **The best defense** is continual communication with Me, richly seasoned with thanksgiving. Awareness of My Presence fills your mind with Light and Peace, leaving **no room for fear.***

March 8 - *Let the Light of My Presence shine on this pursuit **so that you can see it from My perspective.***

March 13 - *Rest in My Presence, receiving **Joy** that no one can take away from you.*

March 14 - *The more you rest in My Presence, the more freely My **blessings flow** into you.*

March 17 - ***Forgiveness** is at the very core of My abiding Presence.*

March 24 - *You can **feel secure**, even in the midst of cataclysmic changes, through awareness of My continual Presence.*

March 27 - *While you wait in My Presence, I do My best work within you, **transforming** you by the renewing of your mind.*

April 5 - *LET ME FILL YOU with my **Love, Joy, and Peace**. These are Glory-gifts, flowing from my living Presence.*

April 6 - *When you approach Me with thanksgiving, the Light of My Presence pours into you, **transforming** you through and through.*

May 3 - *The **Joy** of living in My Presence **outshines all other pleasures.***

May 8 - *Begin each day anticipating problems, asking Me to equip you **for whatever difficulties you will encounter.** The **best equipping** is My living Presence, My hand that never lets go of yours.*

May 17 - *Through spending time in My Presence, you gain **glimpses of My overflowing vastness.***

May 21 - *Determined to make things go your way, you forget that I am in charge of your life. The **only remedy** is to switch your focus from the problem to My Presence. Stop all your striving, and watch to see what I will do. I am the Lord!*

May 25 - *When you turn from your **problems** to My Presence, your **load is immediately lighter.***

May 26 - *The only **antidote to this poisonous threat** is drawing closer to Me. In My Presence you can face **uncertainty** with perfect **Peace.***

May 28 - *As My Presence envelops you, you may feel overwhelmed by My Power and Glory. This is a form of **worship**: sensing your smallness in comparison to My Greatness.*

May 29 - *My Presence enfolds you in radiant Love.*

June 16 - *Many voices clamor for your attention, trying to divert you to another path. But I have called you to walk ever so closely with Me, soaking in My Presence, living in My Peace. This is My unique design for you, planned before the world began.*

June 19 - *I AM THE FIRM FOUNDATION on which you can dance and sing and celebrate My Presence. This is My high and holy calling for you; receive it as a precious gift . . . don't be intimidated by fear. Though it stalks you, it cannot harm you, as long as you cling to My hand. Keep your eyes on Me, enjoying **Peace** in My Presence.*

June 24 - *Fearful, **anxious thoughts melt away** in the Light of My Presence.*

July 1 - *As you spend time "soaking" in My Presence, you are **energized and lightened.***

July 16 - *As you slide down those slippery walls, you are well on your way to **depression, and the darkness** is profound. Your **only hope** is to look up and see the Light of My Presence shining down on you.*

- July 18 - *The more aware you are of My Presence, the **safer you feel**. This is not some sort of escape from reality; it is tuning in to **ultimate reality**.*
- July 19 - *Bring your **anxieties** out into the Light of My Presence, where we can deal with them together.*
- July 28 - *Open yourself fully to My transforming Presence. Let My brilliant Love-Light search out and **destroy hidden fears**.*
- Aug 10 - *My Word is a lamp to your feet; My Presence is a **Light for your path**. This from Psalm 119:105 but it changes the reference to the Word to "My Presence."*
- Aug 20 - *My very Presence has immense **healing powers**.*
- Aug 30 - *Through that encounter with My Presence, she gained **courage** to return to her mistress.*
- Sept 4 - *In the intimacy of My Presence, you are **energized**. . . . Ever since the Fall, man has experienced a **gaping emptiness that only My Presence can fill**.*
- Sept 30 - *I am training you to keep your focus on My Presence in the present. This is how to **receive abundant Life**, which flows freely from My throne of grace.*
- Oct 5 - ***True Joy** is a by-product of living in My Presence.*
- Oct 7 - *Sit quietly in My Presence, allowing My Light to soak into you and **drive out any darkness lodged within you**.*
- Oct 8 - *This awareness of My Presence **strengthens** you as you receive and respond to My Love.*
- Oct 15 - *The promise of My Presence is a powerful **protection**.*
- Oct 22 - ***NO MATTER WHAT** your circumstances may be, you can find **Joy** in My Presence.*
- Oct 26 - ***True confidence** comes from knowing you are complete in My Presence.*
- Dec 8 - *As you spend time in My Presence, your **deepest longings are fulfilled**.*
- Dec 9 - *As long as you stay close to Me, My sovereign Presence **protects** you wherever you go.*
- Dec 13 - ***TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY**. The word holy does not mean goody-goody; it means set apart for sacred use. That is what these quiet moments in My Presence are accomplishing within you. As you focus your mind and heart on Me, you are being **transformed**: recreated into the one I designed you to be. This process requires blocks of time set aside for communion with Me. The benefits of this practice are limitless. **Emotional and physical healing** are enhanced by your soaking in the Light of My Presence. You experience a nearness to Me that strengthens your faith and fills you with Peace. You open yourself up to receive the many **blessings** that I have prepared for you. You become a cleansed temple of My Holy Spirit, who is able to do in and through you immeasurably more than you ask or imagine. These are just some of the benefits of being still in My Presence.*

Young, Sarah (2012-10-09). Jesus Calling: Enjoy Peace in His Presence (p. 364). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

### Section 3 - Evaluating the Book

- 8) Psalm 46:10 is quoted several times in the book as a foundational premise (page XIII). What is the actual context of this verse and what does it mean?

Psalm 46:1–11 (NASB95) <sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; <sup>3</sup> Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah. <sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. <sup>6</sup> The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. <sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah. <sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. <sup>10</sup> “Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” <sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

The context of the Psalm is finding in God a refuge, strength and help in trouble (vs. 1). This is true in the midst of natural calamities (vs. 2-5) and when nations are at war (vs. 6-9). Verse 10 is not about finding personal peace by sitting someplace and being still and quite in the “Presence” of God. This verse is about finding refuge in the midst of trouble in the God that will exalt Himself among the nations and in the earth. He is with us and is our stronghold. It is about finding peace in the middle of turmoil because of the truth that God is in charge. This not *an enticing invitation from God to lay down our cares and seek His Presence* (Page XIII), and especially so when it is understood by what she means by “*My Presence.*”

- 9) In several of the daily devotionals, there are specific absolute statements made about various things - the greatest, the most important thing, the best way, the only means, etc. While it could be argued that since this is supposed Jesus talking to Sarah, that these statements are only true in their application of Sarah. However, some of these statements are made as universal truths being applied to Sarah, not specific truths applied only to Sarah. Are those statements true? Explain

These include 2/23, 2/27, 4/2, 5/8, 6/30, 7/16, 7/17, 8/29, 9/12, 9/14, 10/11, 10/15, 12/31

The entries marked with an asterisk \* are universal statements

- \* Jan 30 - WORSHIP ME ONLY. *Whatever occupies your mind the most becomes your god.*  
*No - We are to worship the Father, not just Jesus*
- \* Feb 1 - FOLLOW ME ONE STEP AT A TIME. *That is all I require of you. In fact, that is the only way to move through this space/ time world.* Not well put, but perhaps it could be argued that Jesus’ many commands could be reduced down to following Him one step at a time. In addition, you will move through this space/time world regardless of doing it one step at a time with Jesus or not, but to do it properly you must follow Him one step at a time. This is poor communication from a being that is supposed to be Jesus.
- \* Feb 3 - But you can find Me only in the present. No, I found Jesus in the past, and I will also find Him in the future as well.

- Feb 22 - *Your awareness of your constant need for Me is your greatest strength.* No, the awareness of the need is not my greatest strength. The Holy Spirit within me is my greatest strength
- Feb 23 - *BE ON GUARD against the pit of self-pity. When you are weary or unwell, this demonic trap is the greatest danger you face.* No, there are many other sinful traps I face, and at different times, they are a greater danger than self-pity.
- Feb 27 - *Your gravest danger is worrying about tomorrow.* No, I can think of many other things that can be a greater danger than this.
- \* Feb 28 - *Don't look for affirmation in the wrong places: your own evaluations or those of other people. The only source of real affirmation is My unconditional Love.* I guess this would depend on the specific things arising out of that love. I am also affirmed by God's word and by the Holy Spirit.
- \* March 22 - *I do My greatest works through people with grateful, trusting hearts. Rather than planning and evaluating, practice trusting and thanking Me continually.* This one is strange because its context is a call to not plan and evaluate, yet those are good things that do not contradict being grateful and trusting God.
- \* March 27 - *Nothing is as important as spending time with Me.* No, how about serving Him, obeying Him, worshiping Him, etc. all of which are done in many other ways than practicing Sarah's form of seeking "My Presence."
- April 2 - *Your deepest, most constant need is for My Peace.* No, peace arises out of the greater needs of forgiveness, obedience and trust
- April 14 - *At the end of your life-path is an entrance to heaven. Only I know when you will reach that destination, Okay - the Father knows too - but Jesus is omniscient*
- April 25 - *Circumstances are in flux, and the world seems to be whirling around you. The only way to keep your balance is to fix your eyes on Me, the One who never changes.* Yes and no. Yes, fix my eyes on Jesus is true, but this includes much more than practicing the "My Presence" devotions that Sarah advocates
- \* May 8 - *Begin each day anticipating problems, asking Me to equip you for whatever difficulties you will encounter. The best equipping is My living Presence, No, the best equipping is God's word understood and applied by the Holy Spirit within a context of other believers that will practice the "one another" commands.*
- May 16 - *The most important thing to determine is what to do right now.* No, often you cannot determine what to do right now until other factors are known including what is actually true.
- May 21 - *Determined to make things go your way, you forget that I am in charge of your life. The only remedy is to switch your focus from the problem to My Presence.* No, this would be fine if the focus was on God's revelation, but this is the mystical "My Presence" which does not bring an actual remedy.
- \* May 26 - *Every person on the planet faces gaping jaws of uncertainty. The only antidote to this poisonous threat is drawing closer to Me.* If this means closer to Jesus Christ and all that He has promised, then yes. If it is to "My Presence" then no.
- \* June 15 - *Spending time alone with Me is the best way to develop seeing eyes and hearing ears.* No, this comes from an understanding of God's word, prayer and body life - not the mystical "My Presence" spending time with ?
- \* June 25 - *Because I am God, from whom all blessings flow, thankfulness is the best way to draw near Me.* No, James 4 indicates that drawing near to God begins with confession and subsequent repentance. You cannot even get to thankfulness without this first

- June 30 - I can do My best handiwork when you sit in the stillness of My Presence, focusing your entire being on Me. No, God does His best handiwork when you will obey Him and that includes getting up and serving Him.
- \* July 4 - The greatest blessing is nearness to Me— abundant Joy and Peace in My Presence. It is quite debatable about what the “greatest blessing” is, and since the nearness to “Me” here is connected to “My Presence,” then this is not one of them.
  - \* July 11 - WORSHIP ME ONLY. Idolatry has always been the downfall of My people. I make no secrets about being a jealous God. No, as stated earlier, the Father is to be worshiped too.
  - July 16 - *As you slide down those slippery walls, you are well on your way to depression, and the darkness is profound. Your only hope is to look up and see the Light of My Presence shining down on you.* No, I have hope in the Holy Spirit and God’s promises as contained in His word.
  - July 17 - *I have called you to follow Me on a solitary path, making time alone with Me your highest priority and deepest Joy.* No, I have been called to follow on a path filled with many other believers, and being “alone with Jesus” is not my deepest joy. It is being with Him with other believers who share in that joy.
  - \* Aug 29 - The most effective way to resist evil is to draw near Me. No, it is to submit to God - James 4:7
  - \* Sept. 12 - RECEIVE MY PEACE. It is My continual gift to you. The best way to receive this gift is to sit quietly in My Presence, trusting Me in every area of your life. No, it is to know God’s word well enough to know and trust Him - Isa. 26:3.
  - Sept. 14 - *That is why walking in the Light of My Presence is essential to keep you from stumbling.* No, the “Light of My Presence” is mystical. I avoid stumbling by knowing God and His will and obeying it.
  - Sept. 19 - *Your greatest strength is your desire to spend time communing with Me.* No, the desire would not be the greatest strength even in Sarah’s system
  - Sept. 30 - I AM PERPETUALLY WITH YOU , taking care of you. That is the most important fact of your existence. This is a strange statement, but no, there are many other statements that are more important .
  - \* Oct 1 - WORSHIP ME ONLY. As stated earlier, we are to also worship the Father
  - Oct 11 - The one thing you absolutely need is the one thing you can never lose: My Presence with you. No, it is not the one thing I absolutely need. I have never yet experienced a “My Presence” experience.
  - \* Oct 15 - Awareness of My Presence is your best protection. No - I do not even have to be aware of “My Presence” to be protected.
  - Nov. 21 - *Listen as I offer you My Peace and Presence in full measure. The best way to receive these glorious gifts is to thank Me for them.* No, peace comes from knowing and trusting God
  - Dec 31 - *receive My Peace. This is still your deepest need,* No, it is not my deepest need.

These are not statements that are consistent with the Biblical Jesus and some are plainly contradictory to what He has said which proves the claim that it is communication from Jesus is false.



10) What topics concerning living the Christian life are absent from the book? What aspects of developing a righteous character are missing?

There are quite a few things missing or very rarely mentioned including foundational issues such as clear statements about \*sin and how do deal with it, \*repentance, \*Bible study, \*Scripture memorization, \*personal holiness, \*fellowship with other believers, \*witnessing to unbelievers, \*serving Christ and in His church, \*the ministry of the Holy Spirit, etc.

11) Does Mrs. Young believe in the sufficiency of Scripture? Explain (see 2 Peter 1:2-4, 19-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2 Peter 1:2-4 (NASB95) <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NASB95) <sup>19</sup> So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB95) <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Sarah Young does not believe in the sufficiency of scripture.

The introduction reveals that Scriptures were not the foundation for her beliefs and practices. The focus is on the experiences of a mystical "*Presence*." Her "conversion" is not brought about by Biblical truth, but an experience. She was "*wondering whether being a Christian made much difference in the quality of my life.*" The assurance came through a devotional book and the experience that followed, not Scripture. She states, "*So I was ready to begin a new spiritual quest. It started with delving into a devotional book, *The Secret of the Abiding Presence* by Andrew Murray.*" Again, a devotional book, not the Scriptures were the focus of her spiritual quest. The book, *God Calling*, became a "treasure" to her and "*It dovetailed remarkably well with my longing to live in Jesus' Presence.*" Yet, when it came to the Scriptures she states: "*I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more. Increasingly, I wanted to hear what God had to say to me personally on a given day.*" The messages she received met her felt need. She states "*The Bible is, of course, the only inerrant Word of God; my writings must be consistent with that unchanging standard.*" However, there is no checking of her writings against the Scriptures, and as pointed out above, there are many unclear statements, inconsistencies, and contradictions to the Scriptures. Her writings are not consistent with the Bible.

She includes Bible Scripture references related to Bible verses or fragments that came to her mind as she "listened to God" and to provide "additional depth for the reader" (Pg XIV). She does not attempt to make a Biblical case for the thoughts expressed, and I found that the verses I did look up had little to do with the devotion that day, or it was obviously a thought that applied the verse out of context.

The word, Scripture, only occurs three times in the devotionals (April 20, July 25 & Aug. 10). The July 25 writing puts the Scriptures on par with “sights, sounds, thoughts and impressions” as a means of the Lord’s speaking to her. The other two uses speak of letting Scripture saturate your mind, but the Aug. 10 application of this makes it secondary to the “My Presence” idea throughout the book - “As you walk close to Me, saturating your mind with Scripture, I will show you how to spend your time and energy. My Word is a lamp to your feet; My Presence is a Light for your path.” The speaker is so poor in handling the Bible as to pervert Psalm 119:105 and substituting “My Presence” for God’s word.

The word, Bible, only occurs three times in the devotionals (Sept. 10, Nov. 8 and Dec. 4). On Sept. 10 - “The Bible is full of My promises to be with you always.” In this usage, the Bible is important only as a reminder the promises of to be with you. On Nov. 8 - “As you journey through rough terrain with Me, gain confidence from your knowledge that together we can handle anything. This knowledge is comprised of three parts: your relationship with Me, promises in the Bible, and past experiences of coping successfully during hard times.” In this usage, the promises in the Bible are secondary to the relationship with “Me” in having confidence. On Dec 4 - “I am training you to think My thoughts. As you spend time in My Presence, My thoughts gradually form in your mind. My Spirit is the Director of this process. Sometimes He brings Bible verses to mind. Sometimes He enables you to hear Me “speak” directly to you.” In this devotional we find that only the Bible verses that come to mind are part of the spending time in “My Presence.” Bible reading and study are not included in the time spent in “My Presence.”

12) Do you see anything dangerous in the book? Please be specific.

- A) Her concept of “My Presence” as a source for living the Christian life. This is mysticism at best, but it appears to be demonic once it is understood what she attributes to “My Presence” (See 7C above).
- B) The very notion of speaking on Jesus’ behalf. The literary method is either demonic or the height of arrogance
- C) The open invitation/ push to pursue mysticism and especially to get “Jesus” to speak to you as he has spoken to her.
- D) The overemphasis on “My Presence” to the actual exclusion of God given responsibilities - fellowship and Christian service in particular. These would be all the “one another” commands as well as the instructions given concerning the Church as the body of Christ - Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4, etc. . Frankly, this is another form of selfishness, and if followed it would destroy the fellowship needed to help a person mature in Christ.
- E) Warnings about those who might challenge the practice she advocates to insulate it from critique. Two in particular are - October 15 and November 17 which even states, “*Christian voices also can lead you astray: . . .*”

13) Should this book be commended / recommended, ignored, warned against? Explain.

**This book must be warned against. It is dangerous and contrary to the Scriptures. Since the Jesus of *Jesus Calling* is inconsistent with and even contradictory to the Jesus of the Bible, the author is either delusional or demonically influenced in her belief that Jesus would speak to her in this way and say these things to her.**

Online resources / critiques of *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young

Tim Challies:

<http://www.challies.com/book-reviews/jesus-calling>

Michael Horton:

<http://www.whitehorseinn.org/blog/2013/03/05/review-of-jesus-calling/>

Lighthouse trails:

<http://steakandabible.com/2012/07/04/is-deception-calling-a-review-of-jesus-calling-by-sarah-young/>

Bob DeWaay:

<http://www.cicministry.org/commentary/issue125.htm>

Todd Pruitt:

<http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2013/11/did-jesus-really-say.php>

Shawn E Thomas:

<http://shawnethomas.com/2013/07/19/is-god-calling-through-that-devotional-book/>

Christianity Today:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/october/sarah-young-still-hears-jesus-calling.html?paging=off>

Christian Research Institute - regarding *God Calling* :

<http://www.equip.org/PDF/DG100.pdf>