

Michael Card is an award-winning musician, performing artist and writer of "El Shaddai," "Immanuel" and many other songs. He has produced over twenty albums. He has also written numerous books, including *A Sacred Sorrow*, *A Violent Grace*, *The Parable of Joy* and *Sleep Sound in Jesus* (a children's book). A graduate of Western Kentucky University with a bachelor's and master's degree in biblical studies, Card also serves as mentor to many younger artists and musicians, teaching courses on the creative process and calling the Christian recording industry into deeper discipleship. Card lives in Tennessee with his wife and four children.

Michael Card on Completing the Biblical Imagination Series

Jeff Crosby, InterVarsity Press's associate publisher and head of sales and marketing, recently interviewed author Michael Card about his four-volume commentary set the Biblical Imagination Series. Published over a three-year span, the series is now coming to a close with the final volume John: The Gospel of Wisdom and its companion CD, John: The Misunderstood Messiah. Their conversation follows.

You had a vision for the Biblical Imagination Series and its impact on readers and seminar attendees. Recapture what that vision was for us.

Michael Card: The vision is to encourage followers of Jesus to engage with the Scripture at the level of the imagination. To not simply read for information or theological affirmation but to grasp fully with all the heart and all the mind the person of Jesus as He is expressed through the Gospels. We must take a fresh approach against biblical illiteracy in the church and I hope this approach will help in that fight.

You've just completed John, and you called it *The Gospel of Wisdom*. What drew you to that nomenclature for John's Gospel?

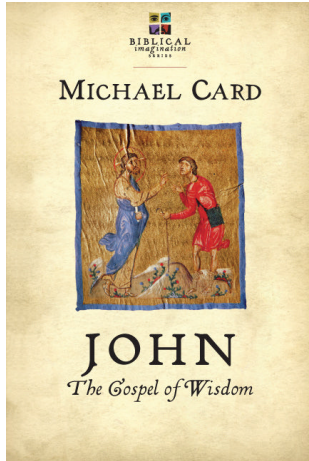
Card: One of the reasons for the uniqueness of John (92 percent unique from the Synoptics) is that he bases his presentation of Jesus on the Wisdom writings, where the Synoptics are based on the Law and the Prophets. But that presentation reflects the perspective of the Wisdom writings, which surprisingly concern themselves primarily with the inadequacy of Wisdom. John engages with that motif by presenting Jesus as the misunderstood Wisdom of God.

Earlier, you'd published a book with Thomas Nelson on John called *The Parable of Joy*. You've moved from "joy" to "wisdom." Why that shift? What did you encounter today that was surprising or different from your ponderings some twenty years ago?

Card: The earlier focus on the nature of parable in John comes from his portrayal of the life of Jesus as a parable. I still believe this is a compelling idea but not the central organizing principle of the book. What surprised me twenty years later were the connections between John and Ephesus and Ephesus and Jerusalem.

Tell us about the songs focused on John, a recording you're calling *The Misunderstood Messiah*. What are your one or two favorite cuts?

Card: The record is not far along enough as yet to talk about specific songs. I do believe this will be my last ten-song record and so I am planning on making it special.



John: The Gospel of Wisdom
 Available August 2014
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What are the two or three surprising things you learned about Jesus or about the Gospels as you read, studied, and wrote these four volumes in print and in song?

Card: The absolute authority of Jesus as seen particularly in his miracles, the way people often respond with fear and awe was new to me. In Jesus we do not see a struggle between the power of light and darkness. This is not Darth Vader and Luke with light sabers pushing against each other to see whose power is greatest. Jesus simply speaks a word and people are healed and delivered or the storm is calmed. That kind of authority can be disturbing.

Jeff Crosby also talked with Holly Benyousky, Michael's long-term manager and supporter, about the volume of Michael's work, particularly his work with the Biblical Imagination Series.

You've worked with Mike for a long time. What stands out to you about his work on this particular series of books?

Benyousky: Mike has always had an observant eye and mind for the messages given to us in the Bible, but in this series there is a more considered, thorough look at Scripture which comes from living longer, from a maturing disciple of Christ. There is a benefit to Mike's having dwelt in the Gospels, one by one, but also in collaboration with each previous writing, first with Luke, then Mark and Matthew, now with John. Successively, he has built on the total mass of the four stories; both the individual focus and strength of each book and the marinating of the four together has given him keen insight to a narrative which he articulately hands to us.

As you've toured with Mike and listened to people respond to this current portion of his body of work, what stands out most gratifying to you, as his friend/manager/partner in music and book publishing?

Benyousky: People fall in love with God's Word either for the first time or again as Mike talks about things which may seldom be taught in the places where he goes. His passion for Scripture, for knowing God is contagious. He draws his audience into a delightful journey of asking questions and looking deeper into sometimes well-known stories or little-known contexts which illuminate both the heart and the mind. Mike feeds a hunger that exists for Truth with fresh insights and conviction; he makes our minds turn in the best ways. I love seeing Mike never give up on seeking what is beneath the top layer of words in a passage. He loves translating, explaining the wealth that he has begun to mine in his pursuit of Jesus, in Jesus' pursuit of him. It is transforming for many people.