

The book cover features a dark blue background with a complex, artistic design of musical notes and a crown of thorns. The notes are rendered in various colors, including purple, blue, and gold, and are scattered across the cover. A crown of thorns is visible at the bottom left, partially overlapping the title. The author's name, 'MICHAEL CARD', is printed in white, all-caps, serif font at the top. The title, 'The NAZARENE', is written in a large, white, serif font, with 'The' in a smaller, italicized font above 'NAZARENE'. Below the title, the subtitle 'Forty Devotions on the Lyrical Life of Jesus' is written in a smaller, italicized, serif font.

MICHAEL CARD

The
NAZARENE

*Forty Devotions on
the Lyrical Life of Jesus*



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*The LYRICAL LIFE of
the NAZARENE*

*The Nazarene had come to live
The life of everyman
And He felt the fascination
Of the stars
And as He wandered through this weary world
He wondered and He wept
For there were so few
Who'd listen to His call?
He came, He saw, He surrendered all
So that we might be born again
And the fact of His humanity
Was there for all to see
For He was unlike any other man
And yet so much like me
The Nazarene could hunger
And the Nazarene could cry
And He could laugh with all
The fullness of His heart
And those who hardly knew Him
And those who knew Him well
Could feel the contradiction
From the start*



THE LYRICAL LIFE OF THE NAZARENE

If you listen, really listen, to the life of Jesus, you will hear a subtle resonance. Yes, it “rings true,” but there is infinitely more to it than that. His life pulsates with an unspoken poetry; it vibrates in time with his life situation and those who found themselves within his reach. You might say his life was even a song in itself, or at least you could make a strong case for it being lyrical. It often rhymed beautifully. Sometimes it reverberated with a discord that in the end was still a meaningful resonance.

The lyricism and tone and color of the life of Jesus is one reason why so many of us write songs to him or paint pictures of him or seek to portray his remarkable life in any of a thousand other ways. In one sense, if you really listen, it is easy. There is so much depth. So many endlessly interesting scenes that no one could ever hope to squeeze dry. And in quite another sense, it is impossibly difficult because words fall so short and notes can only ring for a certain length of time. They are all clumsy bricks. Words can only resonate within their range of meaning. And melodies, even the vast soaring ones, are finite, limited to a key signature and a single time frame.

Nonetheless, easy or hard, we are left with his life. His beautiful, mysterious, frustrating, scandalous life. We are left with his words—comforting, challenging, enigmatic, dazzlingly, inescapably clear. His words resonate across time, through centuries. They fall on our listening ears and something pretuned in our hearts resonates with fresh melodies and lyrics, words and notes in honor of that lyrical life of his.

What follows is the result of a lifetime of fragmented attempts to listen to the lyrical life of the Nazarene. They are resonances I heard in my own heart and mind and shared along with the many

cowriters whose names I will, with great gratitude, indicate. They were a result of trying to see Jesus' life from a different perspective, from a fresh point of view. Sometimes I almost got it right, more often I missed something vital. But even the songs that don't hit dead center are invitations for you to listen, maybe to listen better and more clearly, more biblically, than I listened at first. Even the poorer ones are opportunities for you to pull his image into a sharper focus in your own heart and mind.

After all, isn't Jesus' life so worth listening to? Millions, even billions, of us have given ear to it, charged by his Spirit who allows us to listen to his Word in a way we listen to nothing else in this world. Could it be that it also makes us, invites us, to resonate in a way in which we resonate to nothing else in this world? The Spirit strikes or hammers or plucks an interior place, and we resonate, we harmonize, something sings the way the morning stars first sang (Job 38:7).

There are still a million questions that have yet to be asked of Jesus' life. Many, most, are unanswerable, but that does not mean they are not worth asking. Even the unanswerable ones leave us with a sense of wonder, and that wonder just might enable us to keep asking better questions still. There are perhaps as many songs left to be written about his luminous life as have been written. If this book provides the encouragement for just one new song to even find the beginning it will have served its purpose.

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