

= Jesus Freak (song) =

" Jesus Freak " is a song by the American contemporary Christian music group DC Talk . Released on August 1 , 1995 , it was the lead radio single from (and lends its name to) the group 's fourth album . The song was written and produced by Toby McKeehan and Mark Heimermann . Lyrically , the song is about standing up for the belief in Jesus Christ in the midst of persecution . It received largely positive reviews from music critics , including some mainstream music reviewers , and was played on some non @-@ Christian stations . It earned DC Talk three GMA Dove Awards .

= = Origin and lyrics = =

After the success of DC Talk 's third album , Free at Last (1992) , which was based primarily on hip @-@ hop and pop oriented song writing , the trio decided to innovate their style . Michael Tait , one of the members of DC Talk , said , " I was totally into rock and roll at the time [...] I really wanted to make a rock record . " The band decided to focus on more rock @-@ oriented music , with touches of rap and pop interwoven into the mix . Tait later explained , " We wanted to write songs that would hopefully touch a generation . " DC Talk member Toby McKeehan , writer of the song 's lyrics , wrote the song to be a bold declaration of love for Jesus Christ , even in the midst of persecution . In order to bring the hard @-@ hitting reality of their message to the mainstream , DC Talk combined the raw lyrics with guitar @-@ driven grunge @-@ rock . McKeehan took the song 's title from the derogatory 1970s term " Jesus freak " and turned it on its head ; he noted that when he was looking up the word " freak " in the dictionary , he saw an entry that said " ardent enthusiast " . Since the song and album 's release , many of the group 's fans have donned products with the term " Jesus Freak " .

The first time the band performed the song live , McKeehan only had about a verse written . He later recalled , " We had not yet recorded it for our album , but we had a demo with one verse written . We thought it would be safe to try it [in South Africa] . We could not believe the immediate response it got . "

= = Composition = =

" Jesus Freak " begins with acoustic strumming of the main riff written in the key of E minor , followed by guitar distortion as the vocals enter . During this transition , the song moves to the key of F minor . During the verses , which are sung by Michael Tait and Kevin Max respectively , a sparse electric guitar pattern , which outlines the chord progression , is played . During each pre @-@ chorus , McKeehan begins rapping about various people who have been retrospectively labeled as " Jesus Freaks " , such as John the Baptist . After the second chorus , a melodic breakdown is followed by a dissonant guitar solo . Following the repetition of the chorus , the feedback @-@ laden conclusion ends abruptly .

Musically , the song has been described as alternative rock and grunge , with many reviews noting a similarity with the sound of Nirvana . According to the Encyclopedia of American Gospel Music , " Jesus Freak " is believed to be one of the first songs to link alternative rock and rap rock in CCM .

= = Music video = =

The music video for " Jesus Freak " was directed by Simon Maxwell , who also worked on the music video for " Hurt " by Nine Inch Nails . Maxwell 's treatment of the video , reminiscent of his work with Nine Inch Nails , features footage of Christian imagery such as doves and crosses mixed with stock footage of riots , book burnings , hate crimes , a metallic hammer and sickle symbol of Communism , footage of one of Hitler 's speeches and an accompanying Nazi propaganda film projected onto a screen that includes Nazi burnings of " degenerate " materials . Interspersed between the stock footage is video of the band performing the song in a darkened room .

Although the song and video are , on the surface , about expressing one 's belief in Jesus Christ ,

the band later commented that the song could also be a metaphor for the " preservation of standing up for what you believe in ? even in the midst of persecution . "

McKeehan later said that the point of the video was to " push the envelope " for the Christian rock community , and indeed , the song and video proved controversial . Although the song and video were an earnest attempt to " declare a single @-@ hearted faithfulness in Christ in an age when such devotion strikes many as the freakiest kind of fanaticism , " some of the more conservative Christian community members disapproved of the video . The song however , was highly successful on Z Music and managed to achieve air time on MTV .

= = Release and acclaim = =

The song was released as the lead @-@ off single for Jesus Freak in 1995 and received positive comments from music critics . The single was released to alternative and modern rock stations , the band 's first venture into these radio formats . Due to its dark , grunge sound ? during an era when alternative rock was ruling the airwaves ? the song was even played on some non @-@ Christian stations . As part of the promotion strategy for the song , InterLinc , a Nashville @-@ based Christian music promotion company , sent out over 4 @, @ 000 copies of the CD single to youth pastors , along with Bible study material . Commercially the single was successful ; it initially charted on the Bubbling Under Hot 100 Singles at number 25 with little mainstream radio assistance . The song peaked at number 10 .

" Jesus Freak " received largely positive reviews from music critics . The song was even successful enough to garner praise from secular music reviews . Entertainment Weekly editor Laura Jamison , in a review for the Jesus Freak album , said that DC Talk , " successfully , if derivatively , combines textured vocals , aggressive guitar , and solid songwriting , especially on [...] the raucous title track . " In a review of " Jesus Freak " , the Chicago Tribune said " In considering the group 's artistic merits , it 's time to bury the over @-@ burdened label ' Christian band ' [...] DC Talk deserves to be judged by a different standard . "

In addition to " Colored People " and " Between You and Me " , " Jesus Freak " was considered instrumental in breaking DC Talk into the mainstream . " Jesus Freak " was extremely successful when it came to the GMA Dove Awards . In 1996 , the song won awards for Song of the Year and Rock Recorded Song of the Year . The music video for the song later won the award for Short Form Music Video of the Year in 1997 .

= = Other releases = =

Various version of " Jesus Freak " have appeared on several DC Talk official releases , including the band 's greatest hits album Intermission . A live version of " Jesus Freak " was included on the 1997 live release Welcome to the Freak Show (1997) . A short , comedic reprise , performed by Michael Tait , is included on the Jesus Freak album . In addition , a remix of the song , available on the " Jesus Freak " single , entitled " Jesus Freak (Gotee Bros. Freaked Out Remix) " features a more hip @-@ hop sound , reminiscent of the band 's third album , Free at Last . On August 3 , 2010 , the single was released as downloadable content for Rock Band .

= = = Cover versions = = =

The Newsboys have played this song ever since Tait joined in early 2009 . The band also released a new recording of the song with KJ @-@ 52 on their 2010 album Born Again . On the DC Talk tribute album , Freaked ! (2006) , both 4th Avenue Jones and Chasing Victory recorded covers of this particular song . " Jesus Freak " has also been covered by Larry Norman . McKeehan , under his stage name TobyMac , also recorded a cover version of the song for his album Alive and Transported . John Jonethis covered the song on his album Lounge Freak .

= = Track listing = =

= = Charts = =

= = Album credits = =

= = Accolades = =