

Skillet's New Song 'Unpopular' Could Be Anthem for a New Generation of Truth Tellers

No one likes the feeling of rejection. No one enjoys being put out. It stings to be rejected, and it hurts to be cast out. Yet obedience to the Lord often means rejection, while standing for the truth is often the surefire path to being unpopular.

That's why Jesus said, "Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets" (Luke 6:26, NIV).

He also said this: "Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets" (Luke 6:22–23).

The word "blessed" here means "truly happy," or, as explained in the Classic Edition of the Amplified Bible, it means "happy—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, apart from your outward condition—and to be envied."

But how can this be? We're supposed to be so happy that we "leap for joy" when people hate us and exclude us and insult us and slander us because of our relationship with Jesus? What?

It's one thing to say, "As miserable as this rejection feels right now, I know I will have a great reward in heaven, and because of that, I will rejoice."

That can be a great encouragement to us, as Jesus said.

But even in the here and now, He says we are “blessed” when we are rejected for Him and His truth (see also Matt. 5:10-12, 1 Pet. 4:12-14). As Acts records, after the apostles were flogged for preaching Jesus, they “left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). Do you grasp the significance of this?

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The apostles thought to themselves, “We are being identified with Jesus! The world is treating us the same way it treated Him. What an honor!”

And so, what was meant to be a badge of shame became a badge of honor. “The same people who hated our master now hate us too! We are blessed!”

By being excluded, they now found deeper inclusion with their Lord. The negative became a positive. As Hebrew states, “Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore” (Heb. 13:12–13).

Back in 2016, in the thick of the presidential race, candidate Hillary Clinton referred to “half” of the supporters of candidate Donald Trump as a “basket of deplorables.” Her comments were delivered at a private fundraising event but were leaked to the public. This helped energize Trump’s base, which quickly reappropriated her insult and wore it as a badge of honor. “We are the deplorables!”

The term of disparagement became a term of honor, to the point that Clinton herself said that her “deplorables” comment was a factor in losing to Trump.

This is what came to mind the moment my good friend John Cooper sent me an advance copy of Skillet's new release "Unpopular." (I call John "KB," standing for "Kid Brother"; I'm "BB," "Big Brother," to him.)

The moment I finished listening to the song, I sent him a voice text saying, "This could be the anthem for this young generation!"

Instantly, the song sounded familiar to me, not like something new that I had to get used to. And the words were easily learned and memorized, to be sung and repeated countless times in the years ahead, as if to say, "Go ahead and call me unpopular. I will wear that title proudly!"

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"Unpopular" could be the song that liberates young people (and old people) from the paralyzing grip of peer pressure and breaks the chains of conformity to the crowd.

After all, if the world is bent on evil, why would I want to be popular in the eyes of that world? If my peers are rejecting truth and morality, why would I want to be accepted by them, let alone respected or praised by them?

To put this in the most jarring and stark terms, would you rather be accepted or rejected by drug dealers and human traffickers? Would you rather such people praised you for your dishonesty or cast you out because of your integrity? As the lyrics of "Unpopular" say, "If freedom is disease, Who would ever wanna be popular?"

To paraphrase, "If *that* is what freedom means, I'll pass on it. Thanks, but no thanks! In fact, the last thing I want is to be popular with a world that hates the God I love. Not a chance!"

To the contrary, as the lyrics declare, if I've got my family and my sanity, I've got everything I need. And if I'm the one you've been talking about, the one you've been hating, the one you unfriend on social media, the one you mock with your nasty memes, I have one word to say in response: "Whatever!"

That is the message of "Unpopular," a song that will soon be sung by countless millions of Skillet followers, including a whole lot of young people, who are often the most vulnerable to peer pressure.

And while "Unpopular" is not a call to fleshly independence or prideful stubbornness, it *is* a call to speak the truth, whatever the cost or consequence might be.

To the younger generation in particular, it's a call to find identity in being "unpopular"—just as Jesus and the prophets were unpopular.

This is the path to real freedom, delivering us from the opinions of people and setting us free from the craving to be praised and liked.

So go ahead and bring on the mockery and the rejection and the loss of friends because of our devotion to Jesus. We are more than glad to be unpopular for Him and His cause.

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Dr. Michael Brown () is the host of the nationally syndicated The Line of Fire radio show. He is the author of over 40 books, including "Can You be Gay and Christian?"; "Our Hands are Stained with Blood"; and "Seizing the Moment: How to Fuel the Fires of Revival." You can connect with him on Facebook, X or YouTube.