

Peace in Every Season

In 2019, Yewande Isola, better known as “Wande,” became the first female rapper signed to Reach Records—the home of Lecrae, Trip Lee, Andy Mineo and many of the most popular Christian rappers. Last month, on the eve of the release of her debut EP—*Exit*—Wande spoke to *Charisma* about her passion for pointing people to God through her music.

“I want to make high-quality art that’s different from the norm, but I also want to always make sure I have a message of hope in my music,” Wande says. “I want people to be able to hear my music and, one, [be] confident in themselves to be who God has called them to be, and two, get pointed back to God. I think sometimes in life—just through being busy and the crazy things that happen in life in general—it’s easy to get off-track or not have your full focus on God. So I want my music to be something that you can listen to enjoyably, but then, after listening to it, it motivates you to say, ‘Man, I want to go spend some time with God.’”

Her evangelistic approach to music is nothing new. She says she first started rapping during high school, after a biology professor allowed her to creatively submit one of her assignments in rap form. She chose that option and was surprised to learn she was good at it and people were impressed by her. Then she realized she could pair that skill with her faith.

“I was a Christian—I just gotten saved maybe two years before that—so I just started using [rap] to spread the gospel at lunch,” Wande says. “Like, ‘OK, if y’all find rapping entertaining, I’ll do that for you.’ And then from there, it turned into a passion. I started recording and wanting to actually make this my career. Through some internships and hard work, I finally found myself at Reach Records. They offered me a contract, and now I’m here.”

Perhaps that story of natural gifting paired with years of hard work is why she finds Joseph's story in the Bible very relatable.

"I like the story of Joseph," Wande says. "A lot of people didn't initially see the value that God had in him. But at the same time, God communicated to him, 'You're going to be out here, and you're going to be doing some really big things.' God took him through a journey. His success wasn't overnight. He literally went through a lot of phases. But each phase taught him a lesson that helped develop him as a leader in who he was later on in life. I think that's why I relate to him."

Her new EP, *Exit*, is inspired by that idea of God leading his followers through specific seasons in life—some pleasant and some challenging.

"In life, every season you go through is just that: it's a season," she says. "And there's an end to it. Even if you're going through suffering, it's going to end, and you'll be able to go into rejoicing. And then sometimes when you're going through rejoicing, there might be another season where it's going to be refinement. In order to get to the next phase of where God's calling you to be, you have to exit [this season] eventually. I'm just calling listeners to remember that and to be confident in who God called them to be, ultimately."

"No Further," one of her favorite songs, is an invitation written from God's perspective to step into relationship with Him. The song's lyrics emphasize God's love for the listener, despite any sin they may have committed in their past. *Exit*'s lead single, "Happy," demonstrates the importance of finding hope in the Lord in troubled times—a particularly timely message given the coronavirus outbreak.

"Sometimes in life, things are not going to be okay," she says. "You are going to be upset, and that emotion is real. But ['Happy'] encourages you to not just find your happiness

in the security of your job or because you have nice things around you, but to find your happiness in the Lord. I think that's really cool, because it challenges listeners to shift their priorities and where they're placing their values. If your value is placed in God and who He says you are and knowing that God never changes, then despite the madness going around, you can still have peace through that. Because you [can say], 'God's not a liar. God says He's my provider. So even though this job I had was taken, if God is my provider, He can provide another one.'" {eoa}

Wande's Exit is now available to stream or purchase wherever music is sold.

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