



### **“GOD IS MY BRAND OF MUSIC”** - Tope Alabi

People look at the music world and tend to classify the gospel music industry as the same with the secular industry. Those who are able to distinguish between the two say that the gospel industry is gradually imbibing the practice of the secular music industry.

One of Nigeria's leading gospel acts, Patricia Temitope Alabi, popularly known as Tope Alabi, also a film music composer and actress, was born on the 27th of October 1970 to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Akinyele Obayomi in Lagos State, Nigeria. Tope Alabi, the only female child out of three children, currently has 15 albums. They are: Ore ti o Common (2001), Iwe Eri (2003), Agbara Re Ni (2005), Agbara Olorun (2006), Angeli Mi (2007), Kokoro Igbala (2008), Kabiosi (2010), Moriya'nu, Agbelebu (2011), Alagbara (2012), Agbelebu (2013), Oruko Tuntun (2015), Omo Jesu (2017), Yes & Amen (2018) and Spirit of Light (2019).

In the light of this, *Livinghope Magazine* got the renowned gospel artiste to examine the difference between the classical and contemporary gospel music industry to enrich the minds of readers. The singer laid emphasis on her song AYE LE, calling on Nigerians to seek the face of God amongst other issues discussed to clarify doubts.

Excerpts below:

**LHM: As a classic gospel artiste that has authored many Christian lyrics, how would you describe the influence of your brand of music on listeners and to what extent would you consider it an instrument for the transformation of lives?**

**Tope Alabi:** I can see God changing lives through my music and that is the impact I think I have made and that is the way my music affects lives. It affects them deeply. My music is spiritual and it changes lives. I have been changing lives with my lyrics and my lyrics are from above.

They are divine. I can't sit down on my own and think about my lyrics. I can't write those lyrics myself. In essence, they are spiritually inspired. My brand of music is different from secular music because it is all about God.

**LHM: What impact in your opinion has the gospel industry made in the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and would you say music has really been used successfully as a tool for effective evangelism?**

**Tope Alabi:** Gospel music has been used as a tool to impact lives and turn many souls to

Christ. For me, I have had series of testimonies of how I have changed people's lives, what my music has done in their lives. I have met a pastor that said my music changed his life and he was converted through my music to a Christian and he is now a pastor. He even invited me to his church to minister. I also heard people that were jobless testify of how they got a job after listening to my album. There was a guy that was very sick, he had a kidney problem and was listening to my album and he said immediately the spirit of God fell upon him. The spirit of God told him to put water on the table and after he put the water on the table, he just started playing my music and it was as if someone was praying inside the water for him. After the hymn, he drank the water and immediately received his healing. He went to the hospital to check after a week and he was told nothing is wrong with him, that he was well. I have had a series of testimonies where gospel music has blessed lives.

The gospel industry is doing its own best. We are not preachers but at the same time, as we sing about Jesus Christ, people want to know Jesus. When they get to know Him, they receive their own miracles and what we do is that we make sure we use good instrumentals and melodies that help us ensure that the youth, especially, come back to Christ.

**LHM: Looking at the gospel industry today in comparison with that of the 70s and 80s, what difference can you make of the two eras in terms of spiritual content?**

**Tope Alabi:** We are talking about Tope Alabi now, not other brands. I will say the gospel music industry is really trying, we are really

***“When God wants you to do or be something, He will take you there whether you like it or not”***

trying our best. Talking about the 70s, the way they preached their gospel through music then is different from the way we are doing it now, but I as a person, and I am very sure that other people, gospel artistes are trying their best to make sure that we don't sing anything out when God doesn't ask us to do so. I would say about myself that I never sing songs that are not spiritual and it is the same God that was talking then that is still talking now. The Bible tells me that God is new every morning. If God is new every morning that means what He wants us to do now is what we are doing now. He said we should not remember the things of old, they are gone already. Any gospel artiste that does not listen to God before releasing any album, that is his problem. For me, I listen to the Holy Spirit before I do anything. I would say the gospel of the 70s is the same Jesus yesterday, today and forever.

**LHM: Let's talk a bit about your journey from a theater performer, an indigenous actress and now a gospel artiste. How come and what did every step of transformation teach you?**

**Tope Alabi:** I was in the theater for like 18 years before I left and now I'm in the gospel industry. This is what God wants and that is how far God has brought me, that is what I can say. The transformation is of God. I love to be an actress; I love to play a role. From childhood, my parents were told that I was going to be a minister of God. I knew it myself because at times I was with my mother when they told her about me becoming a minister.

Because we were Catholics, we didn't know what being a minister of God meant other than just being a reverend sister or reverend father. That didn't allow us to take it serious and at the time, I loved to see myself acting as an actress in movies. I went into acting. When I was in secondary school, I joined acting groups and went for competitions. I loved theater. I couldn't even remember that there was a revelation given to me. When God wants you to do or be something, He will take you there whether you like it or not. In my own case, I wanted to be an actress. I tried everything and attended competitions just to appear on television. I wanted to beg before I could act, but God had prepared me to work for Him. When it was time for me to start, I got into the music gospel industry and that was it. God called me from the theater to singing gospel and I thank God for where I am today.

My first performance was somewhere in Ota. I was invited by the organizer, Late Gbenga Adeboye and I was frightened. I remember being tense and shaky but over time I grew confidence to face the crowd and handle the stage.

**LHM: What would you consider as the effect of denominationalism on the unity of the body of Christ and what denomination would you say you belong to?**

**Tope Alabi:** There is unity in the body of Christ. Christians are one and the same. Even though I am a member of Living Faith aka Winners, I hardly attend my church because I always have programs on Sundays in other churches but all Christians are serving the one true God.

**LHM: Of what significance is the synergy between you and your husband in the overall achievement of greatness in your career as a gospel artiste?**

**Tope Alabi:** Working with my husband has been a great blessing. In fact, I wouldn't have asked for any other partner. We are a great team and he has made the journey easy for me. People who know me know I go with my husband to almost all my events. In fact, when they see me, they know he is somewhere around, and this has protected me as a female artiste from so many negative comments and harassment.

**LHM: How would you consider traveling abroad as a factor that has influenced your brand of music as well as your mode of dressing over the years?**

**Tope Alabi:** Traveling abroad hasn't changed my dressing. It has nothing to do with my dress sense. I love putting on my long gowns and dresses and tying my turban on my head. Traveling abroad hasn't affected my dressing but it has influenced my brand of music. It has exposed and broadened my brand to the world. I have met a lot of people who as a course of traveling, like my songs and express it. In essence, it has introduced my brand to a larger audience and as well, led me to meet people who have been of great help to developing my music and my person.

**LHM: What inspired your latest release, 'The Spirit of Light' the collaborative album with TY Bello?**

**Tope Alabi:** 'The Spirit of Light' was inspired by the Holy Spirit. TY just called me on a weekend, Saturday for a photoshoot and after the shoot, she requested we do some songs together and luckily, she had arranged for instrumentals and we decided to give it a try. We stayed together for I think, two to three hours and we composed 16 tracks for that album. I didn't write down any of those lyrics, they just came. Inspiration came from the Holy Spirit. All my tracks and albums, I usually write down the lyrics before going to the studio but on that day, I didn't even know we would sing. I just dressed for a photo shoot as I was invited by TY and after that, I agreed to do a couple of songs with her and that was it. When we started, I felt the spirit of the Lord and that was how the songs started coming. I didn't plan it. I didn't have it off hand or script it. I just opened my mouth and it started coming out. Normally, I plan and script other tracks. I do write what the Holy Spirit tells me but 'Spirit of Light,' I didn't write anything down. The Holy Spirit just kept giving me songs after songs.

**LHM: What were the challenges faced in life as a gospel artiste and how did you overcome them?**

**Tope Alabi:** There are many challenges in the job. There was this time they said I was serving a jail term in the States for carrying cocaine and it was



written in some papers in Nigeria and I was at home. When someone sent it to me, I was surprised because I was at home in Nigeria. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord gives us victory.

**LHM: What efforts are you making towards building successors in your chosen career and what admonitions have you for upcoming artistes?**

**Tope Alabi:** I am trying my best as I have many people that I am training. Training people doesn't mean they must live in your house and go around with you because I don't have a school now. Although I am planning to have a school. But once you have people that believe in you, look up to you, listen to you, some don't even know you in person and I have people like that. I have some that I am helping to reach their career and my plan is that by the grace of God, I will have so many of them. When we grow old, we will have them to carry on. I have my first daughter that is in the university now, that one will come up. I have sisters, brothers and some of my little girls, Iseoluwa and the rest of them.

The advice I have for upcoming artistes is don't just gamble into gospel music because you know how to sing or because you've got the skills. Do gospel music that is by the spirit of God. Do gospel because God has called you to do it. They should not be looking for money immediately when they start. They should know that they have to work and work hard before they get there, and when they get there, nobody can take them down because it has been God that has been guiding them.

**LHM: Did you ever envisage the greatness achieved thus far? To whom would you ascribe this to? Use your story as a guide to the 'get rich quick' youths of this generation.**

**Tope Alabi:** I never thought I would come this far. I am a kind of person that just loves to explore who I am. I don't run after money, fame or anything. When I wake up in the morning it's just for me to bless God. Sleeping at night and waking up alone is a miracle to me. We should all just wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He will take us to where we are supposed to be in life and if where we want to be in life is not the purpose of God for our lives, He will make sure He takes us to our own promised land that we will never regret coming to this planet, Earth. My advice is wait on the Lord, be of good courage.

***"I believe we need to come together as a nation and come back to our God"***

**LHM: From the reaction of your fans and listeners, which of your songs do they consider most inspiring and why?**

**Tope Alabi:** I have so many songs. I have Igba Ti Moro, L'ati Nu Oyun, Orun Ohun Aye, Angeli Mi that have helped lives. I have Mori'Yanu, Fun Mi Layo. I have several of them like that. I have Bi gba ban'gba ni, e je kama roju; Eni ti o ri o kori nkankan. They are inspiring to my listeners because it is the Holy Spirit that inspires me. If God wants to arrest people for Himself, to bless them, that is how he does His things.

**LHM: The theme of our 19<sup>th</sup> edition in relation to the Nigerian Project is drawn from Ecclesiastes 10:15 which says: "The labour of the foolish wearies every one of them, not knowing how to go to the city". Can you speak briefly about this relating it to the stance of Christians in their various walks of life?**

**Tope Alabi:** I have sung songs that have portrayed this. I sang songs that are related to this theme. I sang about Nigeria some years ago. I sang Aye le o, ibosi o. It's all about Nigeria and our land. I believe we need to come together as a nation and come back to our God. I have said this several times that we must come back to our maker before things will be placed right. We just need God, and God needs our attention. Until we come back and say, God we are back, we have missed it all this while, all alone we have been on our own and we are back and that is when God will help us.

**LHM: Can you tell Livinghope readers who Tope Alabi is?**

**Tope Alabi:** Tope Alabi is a wife. Tope Alabi is a very playful person. I am not an angel. In fact, I can call myself a comedian. Tope Alabi still cooks for her husband in the house. She plays with everybody who allows her. She's down to earth. I tell you the truth whether you want to hear it or not that is if I have the opportunity. Tope Alabi is very passionate about the things of God and not only the things of God but precisely the things of God. When I love you, I can go to any length. I am very passionate about my relationship with people. I play a lot but most people don't know.

**By: Anne Bassey**