

LGBTQ singer-songwriter 'GameStops' iTunes Christian music charts

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#) in the [March 10, 2021](#) issue



(Courtesy photo)

For two days in February, an openly queer Christian artist had the top Christian album on iTunes.

*Preacher's Kid* by Grace Baldridge, who records under the name Semler, hit no. 1 on February 9 in Apple's iTunes store, dethroning Lauren Daigle's 2018 album *Look Up, Child*.

"It's unbelievable. I keep trying to pinch myself," Baldridge, 30, said in an interview. "I actually got a tattoo last night to try and pinch myself to see if this was real."

But don't expect to hear the eight-song album on Christian radio anytime soon.

It carries a parental advisory for explicit lyrics and at turns lacerates youth group lock-ins and short-term mission trips—staples of an evangelical upbringing—while professing a complicated faith.

“I’m a child of God, just in case you forgot, / and you cast me out every single chance that you got. / And that’s your loss, not mine. / I’ll be better than fine,” Baldridge sings on the opening track, “Bethlehem.”

The LA-based singer-songwriter has described the album as a “project about coming out as a queer person of faith” and its success as “an underdog story.” One commenter likened its rise on iTunes—driven by something of a social media campaign among LGBTQ-affirming Christians and ex-Christians—to “GameStopping” the Christian music industry, a reference to the sudden rise in GameStop stock in early February after Reddit users bought shares en masse to drive up its value.

“I’m here for it,” Baldridge said in a video posted on Twitter.

“I want to grab the no. 1 spot on the iTunes Christian music chart and claim it for anyone who has been cast out in the name of God.”

The idea for the album came to the musician in part while she was interviewing Dan Haseltine, the lead singer of popular 1990s Christian band Jars of Clay, for her Refinery29 documentary series *State of Grace*, which explores the intersection of human rights, sexuality, and faith.

Baldridge created the album without a label, uploading it to iTunes earlier this month as a Christian album because, while it may not play like a typical one, that’s what it is, she said.

“The Lord works in weird ways, my friend,” she said. —Religion News Service