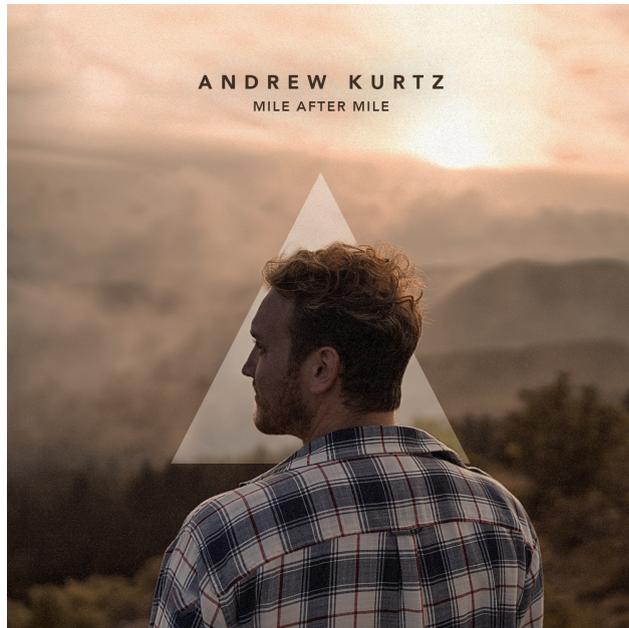


# JOHNSTON NOW MAGAZINE FEATURED INTERVIEW



When you think of Johnston County, you don't always think of its great music scene. But there are quite a few hidden gems here. I recently had the opportunity to sit down with one of them, Contemporary Christian Artist, Andrew Kurtz, to get to know him and what makes his music worth listening to.

A country boy with gospel roots, you can find Andrew in quiet moments between practices jotting down lyrics in his brown leather journal. He spent his younger days in Pennsylvania Amish country, where he developed a love for music, agriculture, and horses, something he still has

a passion for today. He moved to Johnston County with his family when he was about 15. When asked, he said the one thing he loves about Johnston County is that people are so welcoming. He added, they don't just welcome you to be hospitable; but, that there is a genuine sincerity behind it. He recalls how when they first moved into his neighborhood, people brought cookies and brownies and they got to know everyone around them, something that was different from his home in Pennsylvania and that you don't often find anywhere else.

Playing the piano and singing in the lobby of C3 Church in high school, Andrew attended Southeastern University's C3 Church college program to study music. He was hired on after graduating and later became the worship leader over their new band, Real Hope Worship. They released their first EP late last year, titled Moving Mountains. However, Andrew's life isn't always about being on stage. He also mentors young men in his community and travels around the world to places like Belize and Guatemala, sharing his music and serving others. I had heard about a time when he traveled to Haiti a few years back and how it had changed his perspective on worship. This is what he had to say on the experience:

"Growing up in Church and in America, I don't know that I ever realized how privileged we are." he said. "It's not that we should feel badly about that, but that we should at least understand how different the rest of the world lives than we do. I didn't, I took that for granted. Going to Haiti I saw people living in these horrible conditions. Their drinking water was essentially sewage. They lived in shacks that were made of scrap metal, like my childhood forts. And that was their home. I went to church with them and these same people, they sang this beautiful song to the Lord and they were so excited. They worshipped with total abandon, they didn't care who was watching. They didn't care what their surroundings were. They didn't care what their environment was. I realized God is here. God is everywhere. It may look different, but He is always good."

When asked about a trait that he loves, he referenced his quirky sense of humour that often no one gets but him. His least favourite trait; his insecurities. "I don't like that I can be insecure about things," he said "So, I need all the more to depend on God for confidence." The thing

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that he wishes everyone knew about him: “I really want to encourage people. I really want people to know how much God loves them.”

You wouldn't know it by talking with him now, but in a recent podcast from [The Forged](#), Andrew spoke about a time when he sat alone on the bus and was bullied. When I asked how he got through that challenging period and if he had any advice for others, he said that even with his EP Mile After Mile, there were times in writing it that he was depressed. “I genuinely was in a very dark place,” he said. “There was so little purpose and so much negativity in my life. I didn't even know how to pray, but I went to Belize and dug into the word of God.” After Belize, he wrote Mercy Says, his first single based on the reference in Hebrews 4 of how Jesus understands our weaknesses. “There is a line in the song” Andrew adds, “that says ‘Mercy meets me where I am, and I know mercy understands.’ It only says it once, but that's the key part where the song started for me. I really understood what God's mercy was.” In one of my favorite lines “Your breakthrough's coming round the bend,” Andrew talks about the imagery of seeing light just around the corner. Finally, a light coming into the darkness. “That's kind of a long answer.” He says “But how I dealt with depression is, honestly, running to God. I had no other choice, allowing myself to believe that my breakthrough was coming around the bend.” Andrew added that just the fact he allowed himself to hope, did so much. Although his songs are catchy, uplifting, and usually something everyone can sing along to; his new single, Mercy Says, as well as his upcoming EP, Mile After Mile, a collaboration with producer Elthon Mendoza, tells of fighting through that darkness with God, something he wants to help others do through his music.

As I wrapped up my interview with Andrew, his words swaying from heartfelt sentiment to anecdotes that had me rolling out of my chair, I learned that his life (and probably this interview) could easily be summed up in the whimsical lyrics of Katy Perry's Hot and Cold or Macklemore's Thrift Shop, but what he really hopes people will find is that it ends up resembling the spiritual message in “I'll Just Say Yes” by Brian Courtney Wilson. Hinting that his life, and his music, will always be about saying “Yes” to what God has for him, and trusting in God's love.

His single, Mercy Says, is currently available on all digital platforms! Stay up to date on upcoming performances or pre-order his EP Mile After Mile, scheduled to be released March 22nd, at [www.andrewkurtz.com](http://www.andrewkurtz.com)

Susanne Poté, local photojournalist, community activator and brand consultant. For professional content featuring your company or event contact [susanne.pote@icloud.com](mailto:susanne.pote@icloud.com)



