

Desperation Band Lights Up the World

Jon Egan is a worship pastor at New Life Church in Colorado  Springs, Colo., where he also leads the youth ministry's Desperation Band. The group has released several albums, but their latest, *Light Up the World*, is a direct result of a mission outreach.

Egan (right) points out that sometimes when artists do albums, they hope to attach it to a bigger cause. "But in our case God did something with our youth ministry that was so amazing and so compelling. ... This project is committed to tell that story and raise awareness of the initiative that happened here within our youth ministry."

The initiative developed about a year and a half ago when God directed them to build a home for orphans in Uganda. When Egan called businessman Kirby Patterson about the new venture, Egan received an even bigger challenge. Patterson, who also has children in the youth program, told Egan: "The Lord spoke to me before you called about you guys wanting to build an orphan home, and this is what the Lord said, 'You're not supposed to build one orphan home; you're supposed to build four orphan homes.'"

Four homes? It costs \$30,000 to build just *one*, so how in the world could a youth ministry would raise \$120,000 for *four* homes? Patterson was part of the solution. He said that as a small token from his generation to the younger generation that he would match dollar for dollar what the youth raised, up to \$60,000.

Although \$60,000 was still overwhelming, Egan says they had a peace about it. "And you know what, if you're not sticking your neck for the Lord, you're not doing much." The ministry

decided to just go for it.

Egan says they started talking to the youth about what they wanted to do and what God was saying. At one of the youth meetings, they introduced Kirby Patterson, and in tears he repented on behalf of his own generation for handing down a horrible divorce rate and other issues. Egan says it was a “phenomenal night where the Spirit of God was so strong in that youth meeting. And our kids just embraced this man as a father.”

Tag, the youth ministry, spent eight weeks taking up offerings for the Uganda effort. During worship there were designated times when the special offering was received for Heartwork Uganda. The first week, the youth gave \$15,000. That’s when the leaders knew that something was going on. “These kids are grabbing hold of something, they’re getting it,” Egan explains.

And the youth weren’t simply going to their parents and asking for money. They were doing odd jobs around town and taking on second jobs to earn the money. By the end of the eight weeks, Tag had raised \$68,000. With Patterson’s match money, they had \$128,000. Egan says three of the houses have been completed, and the fourth home is under construction.

But they sensed that this wasn’t over. At their Desperation Conference they told the story about Heartwork Uganda. And in the worship service, during a six-minute song, a group of about 3,000 kids raised enough money to build another home—and that was without giving the youth any warning. For the next conference, the leaders wondered what would happen if the youth knew about the offering beforehand. During an afternoon session, Egan shared with the youth about Heartwork Uganda and let them know that they would have a chance to give. That night, the youth gave enough money to build two more orphanages. “That’s seven orphan homes,” Egan says, “all from the hearts of students, young people.”

Egan says they are grateful for all the albums Desperation Band has done, but he wants this album to tell this story. Now they believe they can expand this to an even greater movement. "We want to launch a campaign to build 1,000 orphan homes, built by 1,000 youth groups in 1,000 days." They don't have all the details worked out, but Egan says this is "a God thing," so they're just going to go for it.

Egan says this album and this mission is not a digression from their ministry mission. "Our desire with Desperation Band and Desperation movement and our youth ministry at New Life Church is always to reach the young people of our community of our city and of our region, our nation. ... Us focusing on orphans in Africa is not a departure from that dream. It actually is enhancing that ministry because when you give a young person here in America an opportunity to change the life and destiny of a young person in Africa, that changes the American kid more than anything can because you're teaching them true Christ compassion. You're teaching them how to be Jesus Christ on the earth, which is our mission.

"You reach a generation by helping them reach another generation. The next thing you know you're not reaching one person, you're reaching two. ... You're not just changing [the life of an orphan], you change the life of the person that changed that life."

Egan calls this "destiny rescuing destiny," and he and his team are excited about the worship on this project, "but we're so pumped that it's going to shout a story that is going to change lives for eternity."

He believes this project is simply a harvest of what they have sown for many years. He points out that throughout history prayer movements have always led to mission movements. "Desperation's always been about consecrating our hearts and desperately pursuing Christ in prayer and holiness. I think what's happened over the last year or two of our lives is that

all of our prayers are being answered and God is answering those prayers by using us, which is becoming ... a missions movement."

He says the songs on the CD are not necessarily missions songs, but prayer songs rooted in intimacy with Christ that are "colliding with all this talk and songs about action, being the hands and feet of Christ."

"We're going to stop sitting around begging God to move on the earth when He is up there waiting for us to move because He's put everything inside of us that we need. All authority from heaven and earth has been given to Christ. He gave it to us, and His plan to fill the earth with His glory is to use us."

Of course, Heartwork Uganda has had a tremendous effect on the youth; they've been transformed, Egan says, "because this is the heart of God."

"Churches need to come to grips that they don't exist for themselves; they exist for others. They exist to reach out."

Egan admits that it's taken his own ministry team time to figure that out. "We've been praying, we've been seeking, we've been passionate about Christ. ... But all of a sudden all this intentionality is showing up. ... God is downloading and dropping all kinds of direction into our hearts about reaching out and being compassion, being kindness, being love on the earth. And that is really turning our youth upside down. ... There is nothing that changes a heart like giving.

"I think we've been praying hard and worshiping hard for a lot of years, and now the heart of God is screaming at us saying: 'This is what I feel. This is what My heart beats for. This is what I love.'"

Egan compares the youth to Moses; they're at a crossroads, a burning bush, and God is telling them, "I've heard the cries of My people, and I'm sending you."

This is “a classic case of using the foolish things of the world to confound the wise,” Egan says. “And we are the foolish things. We’re just a bunch of young people who are crazy enough to try something and to make a change.”

For more information about Heartwork Uganda, visit [. To order *Light Up the World*, click here.](#)