

Musiciansâ€™ new project aimed at bringing the gospel to southern Sudan

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HOUSTON—For the husband-and-wife duo [Dave and Jess Ray](#), music has become more than melody and lyric. It’s an expression of lives committed to obedience and sacrifice for God’s glory.

At the beginning of their marriage, the Rays both were immersed in the Christian music industry in Nashville, Tenn. Dave Ray performed with the Christian band Better Days Ahead, and his wife handled tour publicity for recording artists such as Jars of Clay, David Crowder Band and Charlie Hall.

Jess and Dave Ray, worship leaders at Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston, want to use their gift of music as a tool to share the gospel with unreached people groups around the world. They are donating 100 percent of the gross proceeds from their newest album, Music For the Radio, to purchase handheld radios that will help bring the gospel to southern Sudan.

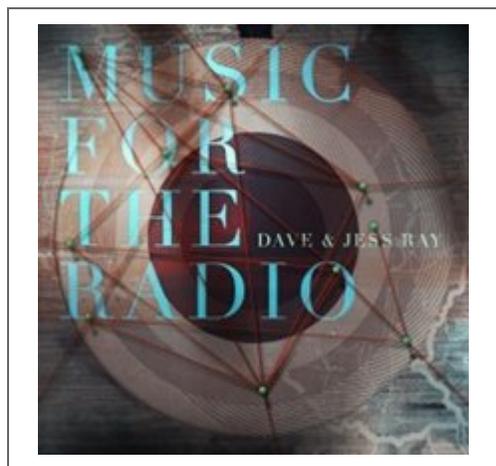
However, in 2006, the couple felt God calling them to begin leading worship together at [Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston](#). During this time, the Rays also sensed God placing a new desire on their hearts—to use their gift of music as a tool to share the gospel with unreached people groups around the world.

While on a mission trip to southern Sudan in 2008 with the Christian relief organization [Aid Sudan](#), the Rays felt deeply burdened by the lack of resources available to share the gospel. They learned the literacy rate of most areas in Sudan was less than one percent.

The Rays also were deeply moved by meeting a woman named Asinita, who lost most of her possessions except for six chickens due to a tribal raid. As a gesture of gratitude of hospitality, Asinita insisted on giving the visiting mission team one of her chickens.

“It was an incredibly kind and sacrificial act,” Dave Ray said. “It also left this really haunting question with us: ‘What would it cost me to give up one sixth of everything I own?’ We can never repay Asinita for that gift, but what we can do is live in obedience and sacrifice. So that was sort of the birth of this desire that whatever we do in our ministry needs to be done in a sacrificial way.”

After returning to Houston, the Rays were even more compelled to find ways to share the gospel with the Sudanese. This prompted them to partner their music ministry with Aid Sudan, whose latest project includes a radio station network enabling solar-powered, fixed-tuned handheld radios to transmit the gospel from hut to hut.



For \$20, a handheld radio can be manufactured, transported and

distributed to southern Sudan. These radios are designed to last up to 12 years, and an estimated 12 to 15 people listen to each radio. In addition to sharing the gospel, the radio station broadcasts health and hygiene training, as well as local and international news.

By combining their musical platform with these efforts, the Rays will be donating 100 percent of gross proceeds from their newest album, *Music For the Radio*, to purchase these radios and bring the gospel to southern Sudan. During their upcoming concerts, including CD release party at Tallowood Baptist Church May 15, they will share the vision behind this project.

“The heart cry of the entire album is to encourage followers of Christ to share what they’ve been given, which is the gospel,” Jess Ray said. “For this particular project, God has placed on our hearts the southern Sudanese and their need for the gospel.

“The title track is really all about taking the song of God, which is the salvation of Christ and just singing that out for all to hear. That’s a song that we want to sing as loud and to as many people as possible. Our hope is that through this project, the gospel of Christ will be placed in southern Sudan.

“Taking that mission trip deepened our hearts and deepened our burden for this area. It seemed like a natural fit to come home and create an album that would help serve those people. For us, it kind of felt like a natural way to use our music as a tool in ministry to share the story of southern Sudan.”

Her husband agreed, adding: “Part of what makes this so exciting for us is to give people a tangible way to become involved in something that could truly have an historic impact, especially since southern Sudan becomes the world’s newest nation on July 9. This radio station project has the opportunity to present the gospel to millions of people and change lives for

eternity.”