

Why I Free Slaves: Musician Derek Mount

When Derek Mount makes music, he often captures moments in time, what he calls the “environment of sound,” like warmth and coziness in autumn. He respects restraint and values contemplation. His material is at once creative and deliberate, inspiring and careful. He thinks often about connection and impact.

“It’s such a responsibility as we think about the kind of universe we’re *all* creating,” Mount says. “There are opportunities like never before to be generous.” Kind and soft-spoken, Mount is optimistic for humanity—hopeful we will use our gifts, talents and strengths “to give, to make this place a little more equal, a little more just.” His support of Free the Slaves is rooted in a central need to serve others.

“My wife, Sarah and I try to help free slaves because we believe that a life not lived for others is not a life.”



Mount sees the freedom and flexibility so readily available in his life. He appreciates his existence as “carefree and abundant.” He has every chance to do what he loves and connect with his community. Then he looks outside himself, at the 40 million men, women and children enslaved around the world. “It’s a very sad state when we realize those are our brothers and sisters,” Mount says. “It is my belief that we’re all very much connected.”

When Mount catches a glimpse of the world of modern slavery—where traffickers target the vulnerable, global economics drive human suffering and survival is all that matters—he is both humbled and moved to act.



Practicing Gratitude and Grace

Mount counts himself lucky; he and his wife, Sarah, are surrounded by a faith community that takes the anti-slavery fight seriously. In 2008, members of their church helped make a documentary on human trafficking that garnered international attention. In the film, music is a chief component of evocative storytelling; it resonated with Mount professionally and personally. After a screening in a beautiful old theater, he left both embarrassed about how little he knew about modern slavery and determined to make a real difference.

“My initial reaction was compassion,” Mount recalls. He felt intense sympathy; slaves suffer abuse, starvation, disease, manipulation and cruelty. They struggle to eat, find clean water,

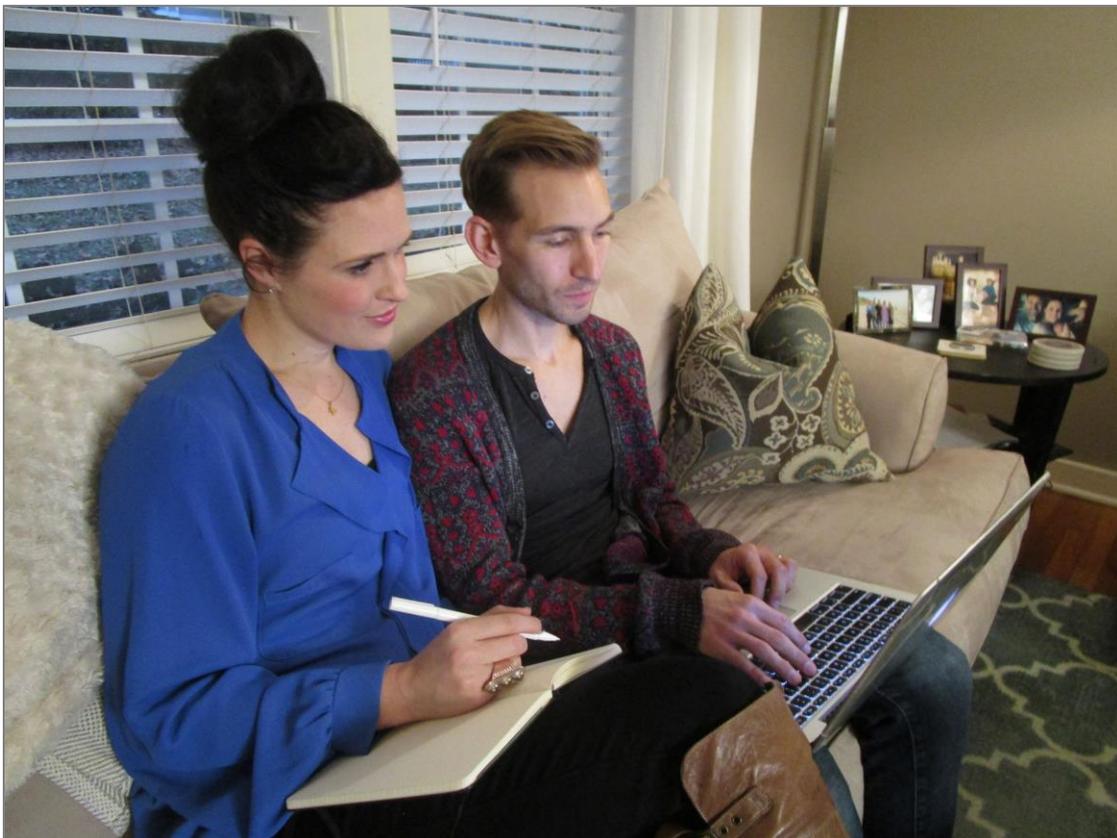
and survive appalling conditions and treatment. Slaves are brutalized by fear, threatened with violence and trapped. It's a life "none of us can imagine," Mount says. "They've done nothing to deserve anything that dark or oppressive." Slavery is inherently unfair—a shocking insult to the basic human rights of freedom and dignity.

Immersed in the luxuries of liberty, music, art, love and friendship, Mount appreciates how much we take for granted and how grateful he is. He believes humanity will prove freedom, justice and generosity can overpower the sinister forces that drive and pervade modern slavery.

"I feel like every human interaction is an opportunity for grace," he says. "We have this wake that we leave, and it can be life-giving and profound and beautiful, or selfless and full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness or faithfulness...or it can be [the] complete opposite."

The Power and Reach of Free the Slaves

Mount has had the opportunity to volunteer in orphanages in impoverished countries. When he read *Disposable People*, the groundbreaking 1999 book by FTS Co-founder Kevin Bales, he immediately recognized its vision and philosophy. "I was very impressed by the plan and structure in place to actually make a profound difference," Mount says. He and his wife were actively searching for a group to support that was efficient, effective and resourceful.



“We were looking for an organization that would be ethical and responsible and use the resources they had wisely,” Mount says. Our [Community-based Model for Freedom](#) is innovative, thoughtful and proven. Free the Slaves works with local leaders to change conditions on the ground and create sustainable systems of freedom.

“It’s been an organization that has truly impressed and inspired us: their communications, the quality of the work, their hearts,” Mount says. “They were actually trying to get to the root of a problem and solve it. Free the Slaves has proven they’re not just putting a Band-Aid on a little issue here and there. They’re actually trying to think with a macro- and micro-perspective. They have a real, genuine purpose. We’re just thankful that they’re around. I genuinely believe good things are happening through them.”

The Passion of Giving

Spirituality is a defining component of Mount’s life, and he views liberation as a central tenet of his faith. St. Francis of Assisi taught: It is through giving we receive. Mount holds this teaching close and believes giving is contagious. “I think it’s important to figure out where our passion lies—where we feel called and drawn—and figure out a way to connect and inspire...and give.”

With his longtime band, [Family Force 5](#), Mount writes deep songs, serious songs and funny songs, which are often fan favorites; songs such as “Chainsaw” make listeners laugh, even feel joy. He imagines his work carries with it a “little trail of peace.”



Material possessions will not bring us joy or peace. Yet sometimes we need a little push—a reminder, a call—to help each other. “We need people to raise awareness for us, or to inspire us or spark us,” Mount says. He challenges everyone to find a way to give: direct donations, spreading the word to raise awareness or sharing the moving stories of slaves and survivors.

Mount chose to support our crucial work because he wanted his donation to mean something concrete. “Free the Slaves is able to take what we’re all able to give them and put it together and actually make an impact,” he says. “Free the Slaves is doing amazing things. We’re seeing real progress, and we’re seeing real results. When we see little victories here and there, I find it extraordinarily encouraging. Getting a chance to play any kind of role in that story—that’s what I want to be a part of.”



**Free the Slaves needs your help.
Learn more. Take Action. Donate Today.
We Don't Free Slaves, You Do!**