

Israel Houghton believes in the “Power of One”

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Israel Houghton’s mother never expected her son would grow up to lead thousands of people in worship or become a Grammy, Stellar and Dove Award-winning recording artist.

In 1971, when his 17-year-old unwed mother found out she was pregnant, her shocked parents advised her to terminate the pregnancy. But a simple act of kindness from a stranger paved a way for Houghton and offered his mother hope and a promise of something greater.



Israel Houghton

“I could have easily been an abortion statistic,” Houghton said. “My mother is white, and my biological father is black. She came home and told her parents, ‘I’m pregnant, and the father is black.’ They had a really difficult time with it.

“The suggestion was: ‘Have an abortion. Move on with your life.’ She had everything ahead of her, and in a lot of ways had every reason to go, ‘Let’s just chalk this up as a mistake and move on.’ Instead, she said, ‘No, no, I’m going to keep this baby.’ She ended up kind of getting shunned for a good chunk of her life after that and didn’t have a lot of contact with her parents.”

When she was eight months pregnant, Houghton’s mother and his biological father split up. She had moved to California, in danger of losing the baby she was carrying due to drug use.

But a woman who was driving by and saw the obviously pregnant young

woman stopped to talk with her. The woman told her: “Jesus loves you. You’re not forgotten. You did the right thing. It’s going to be all right,” Houghton said.

“Those words of life were so powerful to her and so revolutionary to her that she got on her knees on a street corner in San Diego and gave her life to the Lord. I’m here today because of that woman’s faithfulness to God to share the gospel with my mother. The lady gave my mother a Bible, and as my mother started reading the Bible, she chose my name as a sign of a new beginning.”



Israel Houghton in concert.

Today, as Houghton travels around the country leading worship and performing concerts, he shares his testimony in hopes of leading people to Christ.

“I really enjoy that I’m in the good news business,” he said. “If you turn on CNN right now or any news show, you’re going to hear what’s wrong and hear bad news. I love that I get to give people hope, give them a chance to exhale and just find encouragement.

“At the heart of it, I want people to connect with God. I think out of that connection comes really great things because we really believe that worship, action, justice and social responsibility go hand-in-hand.”

Houghton has written songs for the church worldwide and is considered an architect of cross-cultural worship, as well as being an award-winning producer and arranger. He recently released a new album titled [*The Power of One*](#).

“If you look at our albums thematically, the early ones were about the church and what God is doing,” Houghton said. “On the most recent

records, our message has shifted to social and global concerns, focusing on identity and the purpose of God in everyone's life. I strongly believe that those of us who consider ourselves worshippers need to have a heart for social justice. 'Power of One' is the song we wrote specifically around that thought for this album.

"I really enjoy what I do. It's about getting a bigger picture of what's going on in the world instead of focusing on my life, wants and needs. It's about connecting people around the world."