

# Jackson overcomes past, discovers voice with help of Carthage church

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CORPUS CHRISTI—With two drug-addicted parents, Keron Jackson's youth was anything but stable. He was abused. He was homeless for stretches. He and his sisters essentially raised themselves.



Keron Jackson, whose life was transformed thanks to the love shown by members of Central Baptist Church in Carthage, sang at the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting in Corpus Christi. (PHOTO/Eric Guel)

School was his escape, and he was a straight-A student. But even that hadn't worked out. He made a run at being an actor and worked steadily enough to survive, but not without living out of his car, sneaking showers in

theaters and swiping food from green rooms.

A friend suggested he enroll in Panola Junior College in Carthage.

In Carthage, Jackson met John Cain, a member of [Central Baptist Church](#), who gave him a job mowing lawns to earn money for school supplies. Cain and his wife, Janice, took a special interest in Jackson and invited him to their church.

It turned out to be a life-changing appointment.

"It was Sunday School class No. 23. They adopted me as a 'project,'" Jackson recalled.

"I was walking around with blinders on. I didn't care if I lived or died. God and I were not on good terms."

The class didn't just take Jackson under their collective wings. They took him into their lives.

"I'm just glad that God landed me in Carthage with the right people. ... They would ask, 'Do you want to go out to eat?' They'd come up to the school to see me. They really, really looked after me. They took me in and really kind of nursed me back to life and, of course, gave me Jesus Christ," he said.

Joyce Hughes in Carthage helped him make another discovery. She saw in him the potential to be a truly great singer. She taught him proper technique and helped him realize his gift. From her, he learned to sing *Amazing Grace*, Handel's *Messiah* and operatic arias.

In 2004, Hughes drove Jackson to Waco to audition in the music school at [Baylor University](#). He earned a scholarship, became a part of the opera program and got involved in everything he could on campus. He graduated in 2007 and has had plenty of adventures, awards and accolades in the last

five years.

"I did world premieres of operas, international tours, the whole nine yards. But at the same time, I'm a minister. I'm an ordained evangelist. That's my calling. But I still travel everywhere, singing God's praises and talking. I'm a motivational speaker at high schools and colleges. And of course, I sing at churches all the time," he said.

Most recently, Jackson sang at the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting in Corpus Christi.

"I tell people it's not the voice; it's the testimony," he said. "The voice only gets me in the door to tell the story."