

# Pride's Gravitational Pull

✘ A few weeks ago I received an e-mail from *Charisma* news editor Adrienne Gaines. She wanted to know if I'd be interested in writing an article about national recording artist Israel Houghton.

I'm pretty sure my email reply was typed and sent in less than five seconds. Houghton is one of the most influential voices of the modern worship movement and he's someone I've wanted to interview for a quite a while now. The Grammy-award winning leader of New Breed is also the executive worship director at Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston and has penned classic songs such as "You Are Good," "Friend of God," and "Say So."

I have to confess. I was pretty pumped about this interview. I didn't go too crazy, but I did make sure to tell my family—especially my sister Rhonda who is our church's worship pastor and is a huge Israel Houghton fan. It was, however, one of those precarious moments where the buzz of getting a big story assignment has the potential to turn into self-congratulatory overkill.

The interview with Houghton took place this past Wednesday at a concert venue in my hometown of Tulsa, Okla., where he was playing a tour date that night with Chris Tomlin. The result of that interview will be printed in the pages of *Charisma* in a future issue, but that's not exactly what this blog is all about.

I met with Houghton in his dressing room and we spent about an hour or so doing the interview. It was an insightful conversation that revealed some fascinating parts of his story that were completely new to me.

In one interesting exchange, I asked him about the rock star syndrome that, if unchecked, can plague members of the worship

community. He told me about the “intoxicating” elements that accompany that lifestyle and how seeing the big picture helps him keep an attitude of humility. Good stuff.

I turned off my old school tape recorder (I can hear the collective groans from my fellow journalists now who I’m sure entered the digital age years ago) and after another 30 minutes of shooting the breeze headed back to the house. As I customarily do, I rewound the tape and checked it out while leaving the parking lot. To my utter shock and dismay, there was nothing playing but white noise and a faint hint of two voices.

The entire interview was a wash.

In almost 20 years (and hundreds of interviews) as a freelance journalist, this is only the second time this kind of technical malfunction has cost me so dearly. And guess what? My first thought wasn’t, “How can I solve this problem?” or “How did this happen?” or even “I hope I didn’t just blow this story.”

Nope. My first thought was, “This is so embarrassing,” followed immediately by, “This is going to make me look so stupid.” Yes, that’s right. I was initially more worried about the self-inflicted shot to my pride rather than the professional consequences of a careless mistake.

When I got home, I decided to email Houghton directly with a plea for mercy and a request for another interview. I wanted to bypass his publicist and his road manager as a form of ego damage control. I’m not sure how many times I used the phrase “I’m so sorry” or something along those lines, but let’s just say profusely would be an understatement.

That night, around 10:15, I got a call from Houghton who graciously offered the opportunity to come back to the venue for another crack at the interview. This time, I brought two recording devices and he even added a third option by using an

audio program on his laptop. We joked around about my foible, he endured my self-deprecating wise cracks and everything was cool. I also ended up with three perfectly good versions of the same interview.

While this story had a happy ending, the lesson I learned was nonetheless sobering. Pride is a sneaky thing. It creeps up on us and rears its ugly head when we're least expecting it. Pride's gravitational pull is irresistibly strong. Like clockwork, it causes us to land on our proverbial (and sometimes literal) backsides.

And my interview goof up got me thinking about other areas of my life where I've failed to root out prideful thoughts, prideful motivations and prideful actions. Trust me, there are plenty that I'm quite frankly too proud to publicly mention.

I wish it didn't take embarrassing moments to bring me to this reality. But I'm pretty sure it won't be the last time something like this happens to me. I assume many reading this can relate. I'm sure most, if not all of you, have had similar stomach-turning circumstances this week. If not, you probably will in the near future.

Perhaps we could all avoid unnecessary humiliation with a deeper look at what God's word says about pride and humility. James 5:16, for instance, encourages believers to "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (NIV).

Another pride reducer is service. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4/NIV)

And the ultimate ego check can be found in Psalm 139:23-24 where David provocatively prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ... See if there is any offensive way in me ..." (NIV)

But as long as we live on this earth, we will all deal with

certain levels of pride. That's why I keep coming back to Proverbs 16:18 where King Solomon reminds us that, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (NIV).

One thing I'm learning, however (and was rudely reminded of a few days ago) is that sometimes the fall comes first. I'm starting to think maybe that's just God's funny way of keeping us humble.

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