Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Use] July 9 2011

What's America's favorite TV show among adults aged 18-49? American Idol.

"American Idol (also known as American Idol: The Search for a Superstar) is a reality television singing competition created by Simon Fuller and produced by FremantleMedia North America and 19 Entertainment, which began airing on Fox on June 11, 2002. Part of the Idol franchise, it is a spin-off from the UK show Pop Idol. The concept of the series is to find new solo recording artists, and has since become one of the most popular in the history of American television. As of June 2011, it is the most-watched TV series in the Nielsen ratings and is the only program to have been number one for seven consecutive seasons, surpassing All in the Family and The Cosby Show, which were both number one for five consecutive seasons."

"American Idol was created based on the British show Pop Idol. It has generated a lot of praise and criticism. "Early reviews noted the excessive product placement in the show negatively. Some critics were harsh about what they perceived as its blatant commercial calculations – Karla Peterson of The San Diego Union-Tribune charged that American Idol is "a conniving multimedia monster" that has "absorbed the sin of our debauched culture and spit them out in a lump of reconstituted evil." On its early episodes, Ken Tucker of Entertainment Weekly considered that "As TV, American Idol is crazily entertaining; as music, it's dust-mote inconsequential". Others, however, thought that "the most striking aspect of the series was the genuine talent it revealed". [ibid]

The show has created lots of spin-offs like American Juniors, American Idol Rewind, American Idol Extra, and The Next Great American Band. In 2006 another similar show jumped off with amazing ratings, America's Got Talent with a similar spin. In fact, the British talent search television series Pop Idol has started spin-offs in 42 different countries. If you look at a world map you would see most of the world covered by the impact of this wildly successful TV show. Some replay other programs, but many have their own show, such as Australia, Singapore, Sweden, and Poland. In 2003 a World Idol competition was held.

Our Sabbath school lesson this week talks about idols. From Mt. Sinai the Lord called people to "have no others gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3) and carefully forbids making and worshiping idols. Western Christians are often quick to point out that we do not bow down to a graven image as people in the East seem tempted to do, yet we are blind to the idolatry we exhibit in the entertainment world. Ellen White writes, "Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 305).

When you watch the passion and interest of viewers in the Idol series, when you read the statistics on the record-breaking number of viewers, the immense amount of revenue generated, and the huge and successful commercialization of finalists, you begin to think that the series has been appropriately named. It is worth stepping back and asking, "Who do I worship?"

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