



Unplug that American Idol

truth about idolatry

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The title of the nation's most popular television show correctly describes most people's place of worship. For nine seasons, *American Idol* has attracted millions and millions of viewers that watch ordinary folks compete to become the latest pop sensation. The show itself has become an intrinsic part of American culture and introduced singers like Kelly Clarkson, Jordan Sparks, Carrie Underwood and Adam Lambert. America loves its idols!

The Random House Dictionary describes an idol as an "image or other material object representing a deity to which religious worship is addressed." This definition fits this popular television show exactly, as record audiences watch weekly and then pay money to vote for their favorite singer. Households gather together around the TV altar to bow before the screen and page homage to the gods of Simon Cowell and Randy Jackson. (This year they are joined on their judgment seat with the openly lesbian comedian Ellen DeGeneres.)

What's wrong with a little TV entertainment? Television, in and of itself, is not evil but it does ascend the pedestal of idol worship in many homes. According to the A.C. Nielsen Company, the average American watches more than 4 hours of TV each day (or 28 hours/week, or 2 months of nonstop TV-watching per year). In a 65-year life, that person will have spent 9 years glued to the tube. That is more time each day than most people spend in an entire week reading a book, volunteering at charities, or conversing with their spouse. In ancient times an idol was made of wood or stone. Today, idols are flat screens with the names of Samsung, Panasonic, or Sony. And though most people would never pray to the cable gods, the game console or the HDTV commands the time and attention of the masses. This would have alarmed Darryl Zanuck, one of 20th Century Fox's most successful movie producers, who in 1946 said, "Television won't last because people will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."

Over the years, what is acceptable to show on the tube has now reached the extreme. Some of today's commercials would have never been broadcast twenty years ago as their content is simply too racy. Additionally, the line of decency is constantly crossed by the amount of sex and violence on television. Studies show that by the time a child finishes elementary school he has already seen 8,000 murders and 100,000 violent acts on TV.

Throughout its pages, the Bible warns against dangerous idols that steal time and attention away from what is most important in life. The book of Romans speaks against those who would look to the creation more than the Creator. "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal Almighty for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. They exchanged the truth of the Creator for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised," Romans 1:22,23,25.

Few people who lay on their death bed wish they would have watched the second episode of season nine's *American Idol* contest. That being the case, what type of changes would occur if Americans would unplug their idols for just an hour a day and spent that time discussing the Bible or helping those in need? If it really matters who is on *The Tonight Show* or who wins *American Idol*, then perhaps worship is misplaced and needs to be guided back to Savior of the Scriptures.