

American Idols group study guide

by Dawn Owens

Session 13: The La-Z-Boy Life

RULES FOR THE ROAD:

These studies are designed to be as user-friendly as possible so that you as a group leader will need only to download, browse through, possibly do some light preparations, and head to the study. In order to facilitate ease of use, cues are provided throughout the study to indicate:

1. when you read aloud to the group (**Bold text**),
2. when you ask questions to the group (*bulleted italics*), or
3. when you have the group or individual group members read (Underline text).

There is no "student guide" for the use of group members. Their primary tools will be the book, *American Idols*, their Bibles, and an occasional handout provided by you (provided in each group study).

Please note also that the studies are set up with the assumption that some participants will not have read the *American Idols* chapter prior to doing the study. Therefore, there may be times that pieces of the text will need to be copied for them to follow along.

PACKING YOUR BAGS:

1. Bring a few extra pens and paper for them to take their quizzes.
2. Have Bibles available in case someone comes to the study without a Bible.

MEETING THE CAST:

Begin by asking everyone to state his or her first and last name, and respond *briefly* to the question,

- *If you had to spend a weekend out in the woods, what is the one item of comfort you could not do without (i.e. toilet paper, public bathroom, pillow) ?*

Explain that you'll go first so others have time to think (which also gives you the opportunity to show by example how briefly you expect others to respond), then proceed around the circle.

After everyone has had a chance to respond, take a few moments to open this study in prayer.

REVIEW OF LAST WEEK'S EPISODE:

Let's take a moment and review what we discussed in our last chapter "The Passion for Fashion." The author suggested many ways we can succumb to the idol of fashion, fitness, and appearance.

- *Can someone remind us what some of those ways are?*
- *Was anyone in the group convicted of this idol some way in your life? If so, would you mind sharing your experience with the group?*

ROUND 1:

The next chapter in our book, "The La-Z-Boy Life" introduces us to another idol some of us could find difficult to give up: "The idol of comfort."

- *What do you think is the idol of comfort?*
- *What is the author's explanation of the idol of comfort? (If no one is able to respond, direct them to the top of page 176.)*

On page 176 Princeton sociologist Robert Wunthrow is quoted saying:

Read the quote on page 176.

- *What do you think about Mr. Wunthrow's quote? Do you believe it to be true? Why or why not?*
- *Would someone be willing to share if and how this quote is true in your life?*

ROUND 2:

This next exercise will help us to do some soul searching. We will ask ourselves some questions that will require us to consider what we believed when we first came to Christ compared to what we believe now. We'll explore what we would be willing to do to glorify God... and in what ways do we expect God to glorify us? Let's begin with your directions.

(If you have time you can also use the worksheet at the end of this study. The worksheet asks the same questions listed below, but allows the participant to write down their thoughts with the question. If you decide to use this method, give the participants 15-20 minutes to contemplate these questions.)

Hand out a piece of paper.

First, I want you to number your paper from 1-8.

Then I am going to read the questions that are listed on page 180. With each question I will give you a moment to consider your answer. Now remember, this is between you and the Lord so I am going to be phrasing the questions so you can pray them through as I read them. Any questions? (Wait to see if anyone has a question.)

Okay, let's begin.

1. **In what ways have I chosen comfort over your commands and plans for my life?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
2. **What choices have I made purely for comfort's sake? Were any of them contrary to your will?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
3. **Whom have I neglected or avoided because it would be uncomfortable for me?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
4. **Have you been calling me to any service or ministry that I have been slow to hear because of my discomfort with the idea?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
5. **Have I been exalting my "comfort level" over the needs of the others?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
6. **Have I given to you only what I'm comfortable giving?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
7. **Have I come to expect my discipleship path to be an easy one?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)
8. **Have I been keeping you out of the driver's seat because of the preference for things I'm comfortable with?** (Wait 2-3 minutes for them to respond)

Does anyone need a question repeated?

- *How did you do with this exercise?*
- *Did you learn anything new about yourself - or your particular comfort zones - through this exercise? If so, what?*
- *What were some of the emotions you felt as I read through (or you read through) each question?*
- *Did anyone feel God tugging on your heart as I read, maybe suggesting you to change that area of your life?*

THE JUDGES REVIEW:

To make a lasting change in our lives, we need the Holy Spirit working in us to reveal our sin as God sees it so we will recognize it in future seasons of our lives. To withstand the temptation to worship this idol we need to work through a process that is consistent with the word of God. Our author helps us through that process begin on page 178 continuing through 183. Let's take a look at his suggested "prescription of sacrifice" to dig deeper in God's Word in the hopes of ridding our lives of this idol.

In the middle of page 179 the author asks us several questions, the last one being, "Do I mean it when I pray, 'Thy will be done?'" Let's use our Bibles to find where in Scripture "Thy will be done" is found and why it is a statement we need to be concerned about in our walk with the Lord.

Let's go to Matthew 26:36-46 to find out what was going on.

Have someone read Matthew 26:36-26.

There are many gems we can glean from these passages. Let's first take a look at the spiritual state of Peter, James, and John.

- *Do you think Peter, James, and John were concerned about glorifying God? Why or why not?*
- *How did they respond to Jesus' request to stay awake and pray?*
- *Can you relate to how Peter, James, and John responded to Jesus? If so, how?*

Now, let's discuss how Jesus responded to His Father's call to prayer?

- *What is the first indicator that Jesus is responding in obedience to His Father's call to prayer?*
- *What was Jesus' state of mind during this time of prayer?*
- *Do you think the description of Jesus' emotional state was an indicator to him of his need to pray?*

- *Has there ever been a time that you experienced something similar to Jesus' emotional state, feeling a burden to pray? If so, did you pray? Why or why not?*
- *What was Jesus' prayer?*
- *How can Jesus' prayer be an example us of how we should view comfort?*

THE VOTES ARE IN:

It is easy for us as Christ-followers to get caught up in our own needs, forgetting what God has asked of us. Jesus is the greatest example to us of how we should lay down our own needs to glorify God. To truly rid our lives of this idol we need to go through the process of rejecting this idol, repenting of our sins against God, resisting the temptation to "fall asleep" (as James, Peter and John did) when we are called to sacrifice our time, our resources, and our needs to obey God, and replacing the false god with the one true God.

COMMERCIAL BREAK:

Let's end our time together in prayer. Would someone like to end our session today by praying for the group about the idol of comfort, using these four steps of rejecting, repenting, resisting and replacing to guide us? If no one volunteers, end the session by praying for the group this week.

PREVIEWS OF NEXT WEEK:

- Next meeting's time, date and location:
- **Assignment:** Read chapter 14 of *American Idols*.
- Be sure to read through the study of chapter 13.
- Bring a stop watch or a regular watch with you for Round 2 of the study.

AM I GLORIFYING GOD?

1. In what ways have I chosen comfort over your commands and plans for my life?

2. What choices have I made purely for comfort's sake? Were any of them contrary to your will?

3. Whom have I neglected or avoided because it would be uncomfortable for me?

4. Have you been calling me to any service or ministry that I have been slow to hear because of my discomfort with the idea?

5. Have I been exalting my "comfort level" over the needs of the others?

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