

D Group Lesson – “Approval”

Series: American Idols #3

Text: John 12:42–43

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Big Idea

When we crave the approval of people more than the approval of God, approval becomes an idol that keeps us from fully following Jesus.

HOOK

Icebreaker / Opening Question

- What is something people commonly do to gain approval from others?
- Have you ever avoided saying or doing something because you were worried about what people might think?

Introduction

Everyone wants acceptance and affirmation. Approval itself is not sinful, but when our need for approval controls our choices, identity, or obedience to God, it becomes an idol. In John 12, some religious leaders believed in Jesus but stayed silent because they feared losing the approval of others.

LOOK

Read John 12:42–43

“Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it... for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”

Observation Questions

1. What kept these leaders from openly following Jesus?
2. What does it mean that they “loved the glory of people more than the glory of God”?
3. Why do you think approval from others can feel so powerful?

4. In what ways does culture encourage us to seek validation and praise?

Digging Deeper

- The issue was not belief alone; it was fear of rejection.
- Approval becomes an idol when:
 - We prioritize people's opinions over God's truth.
 - We avoid obedience to protect our reputation.
 - We depend on praise to feel valuable.

Supporting Scriptures

- Galatians 1:10 — Pleasing God vs. pleasing people
- Philippians 3:7–8 — Paul counting worldly status as loss compared to Christ
- Isaiah 6:1–5 — Isaiah overwhelmed by God's glory

Discussion Questions

1. Where do people most commonly seek approval today? (social media, work, relationships, appearance, success, etc.)
 2. Which "symptoms of approval addiction" stood out to you most?
 3. How can seeking approval damage our relationship with God and others?
 4. Why does remembering Christ's acceptance help free us from people-pleasing?
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TOOK

Application

The gospel reminds us that our identity is not built on applause, likes, success, or reputation. Because Jesus was rejected for us, we are fully accepted by God through Him.

Personal Reflection

- Where am I most tempted to seek the approval of others?
- Is there an area where fear of people is keeping me from obeying God?
- How would my life look different if I cared more about what people thought of Jesus than what they thought of me?

Challenge for the Week

Choose one practical step this week:

- Speak truth lovingly in a difficult conversation.
- Spend less time seeking online validation.
- Serve or encourage someone without seeking recognition.
- Pray daily: "Lord, help me seek Your approval above all else."

Prayer Focus

Pray that God would:

- Reveal areas where approval has become an idol.
- Give courage to follow Jesus openly.
- Help the group find identity and acceptance in Christ alone.