

Liberty University DigitalCommons@Liberty University

December 2008 2008

12-2008

Student auditions for 'Idol,' joins ministry team

Liberty University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj 2008 dec

Recommended Citation

Liberty University, "Student auditions for 'Idol,' joins ministry team" (2008). December 2008. Paper 30. $http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2008_dec/30$

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2008 at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in December 2008 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.



Student auditions for 'Idol,' joins ministry team

December 01, 2008 ¦ Teresa Dunham

"Does your dad know you're here?" That's the question an incoming Liberty University freshman recalls American Idol judge Simon Cowell asking him in a tryout for the hit reality television show. Known for dishing out blunt truth, Cowell wasn't holding anything back from Jonathan Baines.

An 18-year-old pastor's son, Jonathan sang his first solo in church at age 12. His father did know he was at the American Idol auditions — but Jay Baines, the senior pastor of Townsend Free Will Baptist Church in Delaware, was hoping God had a different route planned for his son.

Jay had been praying that God would bring Jonathan to Liberty University.

"We had concerns about the music industry and the choices he would face," said Jay, 42, who recently completed his Master of Arts in Religion online through Liberty's Distance Learning Program.

Yet the pastor wanted Jonathan to decide his own path, and that meant trying out for American Idol.

The young man auditioned in Philadelphia on Aug. 27, 2007, in front of a preliminary judge. Two days later he was ushered before show producers to sing again. By Sept. 2, he was singing for celebrity judges Paula Abdul, Randy Jackson and Cowell.

"It was very surreal for me," said Jonathan, who impressed the judges enough to make it to the next round of auditions in Hollywood.

Hollywood was a whirlwind of excitement, he said. In the second round of auditions, he received a standing ovation from Abdul for his rendition of "When You Tell Me You Love Me."

The applause left him feeling fairly confident. Yet, as he and a row of other singers stood before the judges after that round, they learned that only one person in their group would stay in the Season 7 competition. And Jonathan wasn't that person.

"It was a reality check," he said recently.

Since he was in the Top 70, Jonathan was informed that he could come back to audition again in July 2008, but he decided to explore his opportunities at Liberty University instead. The positive feedback at American Idol tryouts gave him the courage to pursue a spot on one of LU's four musical ministry teams. The teams are ambassadors for Christ and for Liberty University, traveling all over the country to sing at churches and events.

"That really built a lot of confidence in me. I think I'm really more prepared now," said Jonathan, who auditioned at Liberty just two days after his American Idol tryout aired on television this past season.

More than 1,200 people audition for a position on LU's ministry teams each year — and the teams usually average less than 10 openings each year — so the process is highly selective.

"He did very well," said Director of Ministry Teams Scott Bullman, recalling the young man's audition. "Certainly he's got a bright future."

Jonathan was selected to sing in the university's all-male Southern pop band Crimson Flood this fall. Until recently, Crimson Flood was a male trio — but they decided to become a band, complete with vocalists, drums, acoustic guitar, bass, electric guitar, keyboard and a sound technician.

When Jonathan got the offer from Crimson Flood, he recalls feeling a wave of relief. His hard work and professional voice lessons had made a difference after all.

"Finally I'd found something. God had opened a door," he said. "I knew that God had answered my prayers and showed me that He had really cared for what I had wanted."

He isn't the only Crimson Flood singer who has made it in front of American Idol judges, though. Current Crimson Flood member Kyle Kupecky also had the honor, according to a representative of the LU Department of Ministry Teams. Yet the most high-profile contestant associated with Liberty thus far is Phil Stacey, a Liberty University Online student who made it past the Top 12 in Season 6.

At the end of the day, Jonathan doesn't care if he's singing in front of an audience of 10 or 10,000. He just wants to use his voice for God's glory — and Crimson Flood will give him that opportunity.

"I'm just trying to figure out what God wants me to do. I'm just going to pray about it and see where God takes me," he said.

Besides Jonathan, members in the 2008-09 Crimson Flood include Caleb Grimm, Kyle Kupecky, Seth Bolte, Corey Horn, Jordan Terrell, Jay Cagle, Jonathan Marple, and Charles Thompson.