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Make time for your partner

A recent study comparing international working hours found that the average American works longer than workers in every other industrialized country, including Germany and Japan. Most Americans work longer than the standard 40-hour workweek. Also, most women today work outside the home, with 70 percent of mothers of school-aged children employed. The dominant family form is no longer Ward and June Cleaver but the dual-earner marriage in which both husband and wife are employed.

Our extremely busy lives mean that couples, especially after they have children, spend very little time together. Most marital conversations are little more than reminders and commands barked in passing ("Remember to take the kids to soccer after school today"). Yet to nurture a relationship, partners need to spend some time together, not just "quality time," but plain old quantity time.

Here are some simple suggestions of how to stay connected with your partner:

■ **Goodbyes.** Before you say goodbye to your partner in the morning, make sure you find out at least one thing that is happening in his or her life that day – from a doctor's appointment to a meeting with the boss. Later in the day, remind yourself to think about your partner's event, and when you come home at the end of the day, remember to ask your partner how it went.

■ **Reunions.** When the two of you reunite at the end of each workday, take 20 minutes to have a "How was your day?" conversation. This should not be the time to discuss any conflicts between you but to catch up on the day's events in each other's life and to vent about the day's frustrations. Stress outside of marriage can spill over into the marriage. This is an excellent way to containing outside stress.

■ **Appreciation.** Find at least one opportunity during the day to express genuine affection and appreciation to your partner: "You look really nice in that dress"; "I appreciate your taking out the trash"; "Thanks for just listening."

■ **Touch.** When we came into this world, we were promptly cradled in protective arms. We never outgrow the basic human need to be held and caressed, whether man or woman, young or old. Touching provides spiritual nourishment, just as food and drink nourish us physically. When you're with your partner, kiss, hold, caress and touch each other. Make a goodnight kiss a regular ritual before going to sleep.

■ **Dates.** Plan a date together once a week with just the two of you. (If you take the kids along, it's not a date.) Use this time to get reacquainted with your partner. Ask questions: "How are things going with your coworker?"; "Are you still thinking about painting the bedroom?"; "Where should we take our vacation this year?"

We make time for each other when we date – walks in the park, dinners together, movies, long phone conversations. Then, after we marry, we no longer make time together a priority, and we wonder why we become strangers.

Dr. Neal R. Jones is a clinical psychologist for Pastoral Counseling of Palmetto Health, which has a satellite office in Sumter. You can contact him at 775-3510 or at Neal.Jones@PalmettoHealth.org. This information is provided as an educational service and is not intended to be a substitute for mental health treatment

PANORAMA

American Idols invade



Photo provided

The American Idol tour comes to the Colonial Center in Columbia on Aug. 2. Last season's winner, Taylor Hicks, is at far right in the center row. Chris Daughtry is at bottom right.

See Taylor, Chris and friends at the Colonial Center

By MARY DOLAN

Item Staff Writer

Taylor, Katharine and the rest of the American Idol gang have made the jump from the television screen to the stage with the American Idols Live Tour 2006, which will stop Aug. 2 at the Colonial Center in Columbia.

From January to May, millions watched the reality show every Tuesday and Wednesday night as one by one, American Idol hopefuls were eliminated through rounds of singing competitions until Taylor Hicks emerged as the top vocalist.

The tour, which showcases Idol's top 10, kicked off July 5 in New Hampshire and winds down Sept. 24 in Pennsylvania. While gearing up for a show last week in Hershey, Pa., Chris Daughtry, who hails from McLeansville, N.C., said he was looking forward to the Southern shows – there are dates in North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee – because his family would be attending as

many as possible.

Daughtry said life on the road has been exciting for him and his tour-mates.

"It's amazing," Daughtry said. "The crowd has been unbelievable. It's crazy because I've been to so many rock shows where people are still coming in before the main act gets in, and this place is, every night, packed before the show starts ... There are no empty seats and it's awesome. These people are just so amazing. The response has been phenomenal."

Daughtry recently announced he has signed a recording contract with 19 Recordings/RCA Records, joining fellow season five Idols, winner Hicks and runner-up Katharine McPhee as signees.

He is currently in the midst of penning the tracks for his first album, collaborating with other musicians such as Carl Bell from the rock group Fuel. Fuel had asked Daughtry to join as its lead singer after he was booted from Idol, a request Daughtry ultimately declined.

"I thought it was awesome," Daughtry said. "It's very rare that anybody gets that kind of opportunity, but the fact that I had the recognition that I had at the time, it opened up more doors for me."

Between working on material for his forthcoming disc and tossing around a football at the various venues with his tour bus-mates, Daughtry remains busy when he's not on the stage. He said the Idol musicians are close and find ways to pass the time together between gigs.

"We're all like buddies ... especially the guys," Daughtry said.

Attendees of the American Idols Live show can expect performances from each of the top 10, including McPhee, who missed a few days because of bronchitis and laryngitis. Tickets range in price from \$38.50 to \$68.50 and can be purchased by visiting www.thecolonialcenter.com.

Contact Staff Writer Mary Dolan at mdolan@theitem.com or 803-774-1294.

Moyers' latest project shows difficulty of treating faith on TV

By RICHARD N. OSTLING

AP Religion Writer

The ongoing series "Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason" on Public Broadcasting Service has demonstrated the difficulties of treating heavy religious substance on TV, perhaps especially on public TV.

Inevitably, such a theme produced earnest "talking heads" with abstract comments. PBS' 2004 "The Question of God" overcame this with dramatizations from the lives of a celebrity atheist, psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, and atheist-turned-Christian C.S. Lewis, the great Oxbridge literary scholar.

That PBS production had a different problem: posing challenges to God minus answers, even though Lewis provided plenty of them and host Armand Nicholi, a Harvard psychiatrist, was a believer. Sometimes, PBS' treatments of the Bible also favor skeptics and liberals over moderates and conservatives.

Moyers, an intelligent and influential telecaster, found some varied voices for his 1996 series on the Book of Genesis. But this latest outing, featuring participants in the PEN authors' alliance, shied away from intelligent, orthodox believers in God who embrace the heritage of church, synagogue or mosque.

The cast included:

■ Salman Rushdie, the chosen representative of Islam, a self-described "hard-line atheist" who believes religions and moralities are never revelations but mere creations of human imagination.

■ Rutgers philosopher Colin McGinn, another dedicated atheist, who once told the BBC "it's a bad idea to believe in God."

■ Canada's Margaret Atwood, an agnostic whose "Handmaid's Tale" depicts the danger of a future America ruled by manic theocrats.

■ David Grossman, the sort of Jew who believes Israel perennially favors "the way to violence."

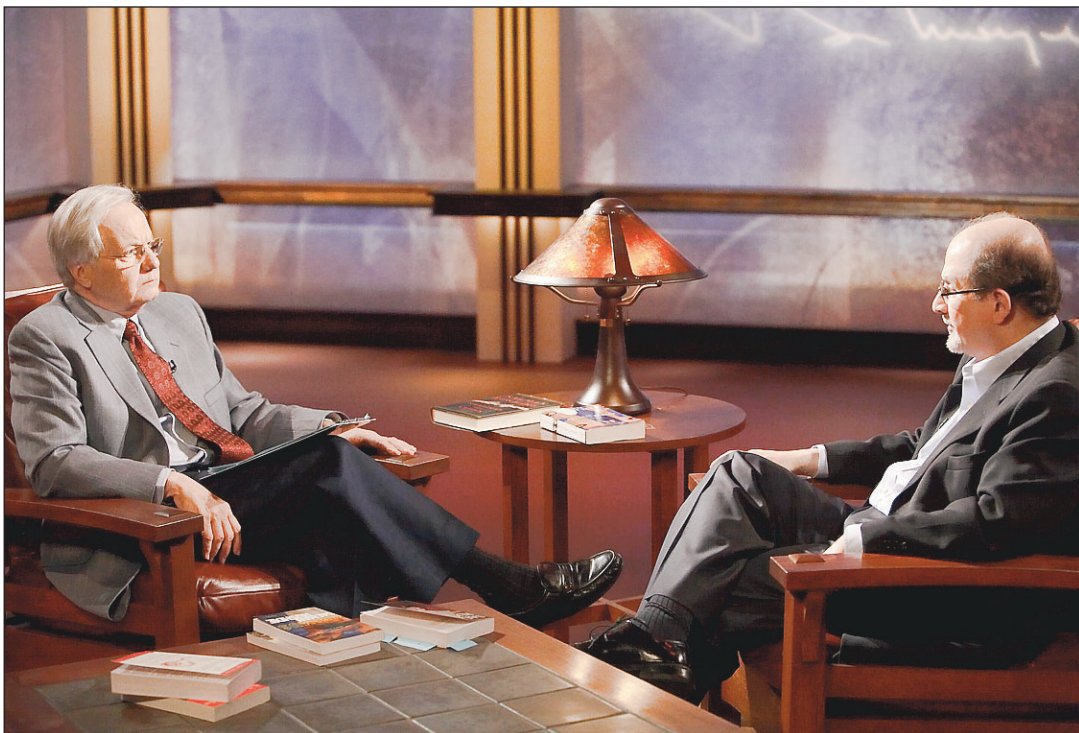
■ Mary Gordon, a Roman Catholic who dislikes her church, rejects dogma and thinks "it's very hard to believe that there is a personal God looking out for us."

■ Richard Rodriguez, writer and PBS essayist, whose Catholic identity is complicated by his gay identity.

■ Britain's Jeanette Winter, a lesbian who forsook her extremely rigid Pentecostal home at age 16.

Though Moyers' softball questioning tended to meander, he repeatedly elicited alarms about the persistence of conservatism (or "fundamentalism") and believers' effrontery at refusing to operate strictly in private.

The secondary theme, as ex-



AP file photo

Bill Moyers, left, discusses religion and politics with author Salman Rushdie in a New York studio during the May 26 taping of an episode of "Bill Moyers on Faith & Reason."

pressed by Moyers on PBS' "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly," is the "great divide" between people who think "faith requires no proof" – conservatives would surely dispute that characterization – and "those of us who believe that religion is a conversation."

Moyers said his selected authors believe "fundamentalism can lead to 9/11. It can lead to pol-

itics that settle nothing, in which all of us go for the other's throats and we have holy wars, in effect, in the political square."

"People who think they know the mind of God don't want to listen to people who think that maybe we can't know the mind of God," he asserted.

As *New York Times* critic Edward Rothstein observed, the Moyers gospel branded religious

traditionalism as synonymous with terrorism and political oppression and ignored any positive contributions to civilization from such faith.

In Rushdie's case, it's easy to sympathize with sourness. After all, the man lives under a 1988 execution order sanctioned by certain Muslim authorities.