Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Looking Back
What Were the Biggest Events in 2012 for You?
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What Happened:
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. So said Charles Dickens in his book *A Tale of Two Cities,* but he might've been just as well referring to the year 2012.

The world saw the best athletes in the world compete in London during the 2012 Olympics, which saw American swimmer Michael Phelps become the most decorated athlete of all time. Democrats were excited to see President Barack Obama elected for a second term.

However, the nation suffered more than its share of tragedy. Hurricane Sandy ravaged the east coast of the United States, and we all mourned the horrific killings that took place in Aurora, Colo., and Newtown, Connecticut.

In a *USA Today* poll, the biggest stories of the year were:
1. Mass Shootings
2. U.S. Election
3. Superstorm Sandy
4. Obamacare
5. Libya
6. The Scandal at Penn State
7. U.S. Economy
8. Fiscal Cliff
9. Gay Marriage
10. Syria

While these national stories were important to many of us, they probably weren't nearly as important as what happened in our own lives, and those of our own families and friends. The stuff we experienced—whether who we met, where we went, what we lost or what we found—had the power to rock our worlds to their very foundations.

Talk About It:
Nationally, what was the story that impacted you the most? Was it the shooting in Newtown? The Olympics? Were you personally impacted by Hurricane Sandy? Who were you hoping would win the election? Do you think the world will change because of what happened this year? How?

What was the most important event to take place this year for *you*? What made it special? What was the best thing to happen to you this year? What was the hardest thing you had to experience? Do you think something this year has changed you? How?

Was 2012 a pretty good year for you; or was it, overall, a year you'd rather forget? Why? What made it good or bad? What do you hope will be coming your way in 2013?

Were there times in 2012 when you felt the presence of God? Was He there during a particularly rough time? Was He behind something really cool that happened? Did you ever feel God was with you?

What the Bible Says:
"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Josh 1:9).

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Paul Asay has covered religion for *The Washington Post, Christianity Today*, *Beliefnet.com* and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and wrote the Batman book *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He lives in Colorado Springs with wife Wendy and his two children. Follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.