

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com

Dreaming Big

What Do You Hope to Achieve?

By Paul Asay

What Happened:

The American Dream...for decades, it's been an easily defined goal for most Americans: a house of your own, a steady job and solid retirement, a good family. In today's uncertain times, the American Dream is changing.

Nearly four-fifths of the Baby Boomer generation—folks ages 54 to 64—believe owning a home and being financially dependent are important elements of the American Dream, but for Millennials—folks in their late teens and 20s—those goals aren't as big a deal.

Younger Americans place a higher priority on travel than their parents and grandparents, and nearly 40 percent say it's an integral part of the American Dream. Instead of a steady job, Millennials dream of being self-employed and want greater flexibility in their work hours. Not many youth are thinking about retirement either. Maybe because with the uncertainty of Social Security and the ups and downs of the stock market, the thought of making enough money to retire makes them a little queasy.

“The American Dream has been part of our culture since the 1930s, and has at times referred to home ownership, a good job, retirement security, or each generation doing better than the last,” writes Dan Kadilec for *Time* magazine. “Now comes a new young adult population to say it means none of that; the dream is really about day-to-day control of your life.”

Talk About It:

What is *your* American Dream? What do you want to achieve in your life? Is buying a house a must? Having a family? Working at a fun, rewarding job? Getting Rich? Being famous? Having a family?

Do you think your goals are different from those of your parents? How? If they are different, why? Is it because you're less optimistic that getting a house or financial security isn't as achievable as it once was? Or do you simply dream of different things?

Because we're dreaming, what do you dream America will be like in the future? Will things get better and better? Or worse? When you're 40 or 60, what will Americans do for fun? How will games look or have changed? Cars? Houses? Will we have computer chips in our brains? Will we live to be 150? What sort of world will your grandkids inherit?

What the Bible Says:

Many youth want to enjoy the time they have now instead of counting on an uncertain future. In some ways, the attitude is more aligned with having faith in God—keeping Him at the center we can deal with anything good or bad.

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ‘Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble’” (Matt. 6:31-34).

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb. 13:5).

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

“Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off” (Prov. 24:14).

Paul Asay has written for *The Washington Post*, *Christianity Today*, Beliefnet.com and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for PluggedIn 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 at @AsayPaul.