

To Beth, Age 16, from her Dad, Jim Reese

Dear Beth:

Today you are sweet sixteen! Happy Birthday! This year is the mid-point of your teens. 13, 14 and 15 are behind you. 17, 18, and 19 are before you. That means you're a "middle-aged" teenager!

During the past three years you have blossomed physically. You have been transformed from a girl into a woman. Your height, shoe size, weight and all other dimensions have now essentially been established for life. The Lord has been very kind to you in making you the custodian of an attractive temple in which He dwells. As a committed Christian, may you always keep your body healthy and holy.

In these remaining teen years your unfolding personality will continue to flower. The real "you" is still pliable. Before it gels, make certain that every facet has been molded by the Master. When you were a little girl you responded in faith and love to the Savior. May that same child-like faith and love draw you daily into that quiet place alone with Him. Discover Christ in all His beauty. And in so doing, you will discover yourself, gloriously fulfilled in Him.

Having made life's greatest commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, there are now three major decisions that you must face in the next decade: your education, your vocation, and your life's partner.

**YOUR EDUCATION.** As you near the completion of High School, you must consider most prayerfully the next step in your learning process. Many fine options are open to you. But whatever form your education takes, it should contain a comprehensive and in-depth training in the Bible – life's greatest textbook. Prepare yourself as thoroughly as you can. Don't quit school until you should, but don't stay in school when you shouldn't. Education is work, it is time-consuming and it is expensive. Like your mother and I, you too will probably have to pay much of the costs yourself. But the God who provided for us will also provide for you as long as you pursue His perfect will. So welcome to the great adventure of higher education!

**YOUR VOCATION.** Unless the Lord has called you to go through life single, the most exciting and fulfilling vocation for you is that of wife, homemaker and mother. But God may also lead you to train for some other career as well. Your vocation should not only be compatible with your interests and abilities, but above all with the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission to go with the Gospel to your needy world. We want you to become whatever God wants you to be. Whatever your vocation, make certain you are a full-time Christian!

**YOUR LIFE PARTNER.** I look forward to the day when, in God's good will, I'll walk down the aisle with you on my arm to give you away to the affection and protection of the man God has chosen for you. It's not that your Mom and I want to get rid of you, but we know the blessed fulfillment of marriage and we are eager for you to experience the same "in the fullness of time." There will be many suitors for your love. But for the next several years you will be wise to guard yourself from distracting involvements that would frustrate your preparations for life. There's tenderness in a touch, and there's commitment in a kiss. So seek to save these sacred tokens of your affection for that wonderful young man whom the Lord has chosen to be your husband. At the right time and in the right place you'll meet him, as long as your total heart devotion is to Jesus Christ and your passionate pursuit is to do His will. Marriage is a choice fruit, but don't pick it till it's ripe!

The future before you is filled with many uncertainties. In the next few years your world will suffer some of the greatest tragedies of human history. But God can make you an adequate person in the midst of it all. He has given you hundreds of promises in His Word. Learn them, believe them, love them and act upon them. Trust Him in your sorrows as well as your joys. Trust Him in your weakness as well as your strength. Trust Him in your questions as well as your answers. People can fail you, but He'll never fail. Circumstances can swamp you, but He can keep you from drowning. Heaven and earth will soon pass away, but His Word stands true forever. So, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

Look forward with joy to Christ's soon return – very possibly in your lifetime! Prepare for the future as though you have a full life before you, but live as though you'll meet the Lord tomorrow. Let the Holy Spirit, who indwells you, also fill you daily, and guide you, instruct you, comfort you and make perfect everything that concerns you.

Be assured, Dear Beth, that your Mom and I are committed to the Lord's best for you. Expect us to act as parents who feel keenly our responsibility under God to help you become a complete and beautiful woman of God. I pray that you may be like your wonderful Mother – "A woman of noble character whose worth is far more than rubies."

We love you deeply,

Your Dad  
Jim Reese