

To Dan, age 12, from his Dad, Jim Reese

Dear Son Dan:

Today you are twelve years old! Congratulations! What a joy you have been to Mom and me since your birth at 3:00 a.m. just five hours before I had to leave for a month of meetings in the West. How thoughtful of you to schedule your arrival so I could see you and be assured that all was well with you and Mom.

Thoughtfulness and sensitivity to the needs of others has always been one of your developing qualities. I'm sure that God is pleased to see the flowering in your life of Romans 12:10 which says: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." The Lord will greatly bless you, my Son, as you lovingly serve Christ and others throughout your life.

Like Jesus during His first twelve years (Luke 2:40), you have been growing and becoming strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God is upon you. When Jesus was just your age He went with His parents to worship the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem. And it was there that He said, "I must be about my Father's business." I hope that's the kind of business you'll be in too – your Heavenly Father's business.

In Jesus' day Jewish boys of twelve began to learn a trade. Jesus became a carpenter like His earthly father, Joseph. I don't know what job God wants for you. Maybe you'll be a shepherd of God's flock like your father. Maybe a carpenter. (You enjoy working with your hands.) But whatever God has chosen for you, you will enjoy it, for God gives gifts to each of His children that are a joy to develop and use for His glory.

In Jesus' day boys of twelve were in their final year of preparations to become a "Ben ha Torah" which means a "Son of the Law" at age thirteen. Till age twelve they were called "katon" which means "little." But after their twelfth birthday they were called "gadol" which means "big." You now are becoming big – not only physically, but mentally, emotionally and spiritually. God is making a man out of you. During Jesus' next eighteen years (from ages twelve to thirty) the Bible says He "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Eight years ago you asked Jesus Christ to be your Savior and Master. Now you may ask Him to be your Example. You too can grow like He did to become the complete man He can make you.

Daniel, your name means "God is my Judge." May you always live so that you will not be ashamed to stand before your Judge to give an accounting of your life. The best way to be prepared to stand before your Judge is to be a "Son of the Law." In Jesus' day boys your age began to wear the tefillin, called phylacteries, on their wrist and forehead, containing small scrolls of God's Word. May you instead wear God's Word on the inside. "You Word I have hidden in my heart that I might no sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

Do this, my Son, and you will grow up to be known as "Dan the Man" – a man of God!

Love Always,

Your Dad