

To Paul, age 13, from his Dad, Jim Reese

Dear Paul:

Today's the big day you officially arrive at Teenhood, that wonderful age between Childhood and Adulthood. Welcome to a great new world! You'll only be a teenager once (we hope!) so your Mom and I want you to make the most of it.

That giant of a man, the Apostle Paul, for whom we named you, was once a teenager too. He spoke of it in I Corinthians 13:13 – "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." As for him, so for you, these are the years of "putting away" and "becoming."

We've greatly enjoyed watching you pass through all the stages from Baby to "Teenie-bopper." But now you are "putting away" childish things and "becoming" a man. There are three areas in which to become a man: 1. Become a man with YOURSELF, 2. Become a man with OTHERS, and 3. Become a man with your GOD.

BECOME A MAN WITH YOURSELF. Now's the time to get tough with yourself and to go into serious training with increasing self-discipline.

Subdue your body. God has given you a healthy body. Now build it and become a rugged, robust and sightly temple for the Lord.

Subdue your mind. God has given you a good mind which you must fully awaken into maturity by diligent study and discipline.

Subdue your spirit. This is the part of you that puts your body and mind to work for either good or evil. Let God control your spirit so it will not be a "spirit of fear," as Paul said to young Timothy, "but of power, and of love and of a sound mind."

BECOME A MAN WITH OTHERS. Learn to respect everyone. Be at ease with all people no matter who they are. Be genuinely interested in them and draw the best qualities out of them. With men be a man's man. With women be a gentle man. With children be a kind man.

With everyone be considerate, be understanding, be patient, be loving, be discreet, be forgiving, and be yourself. Do this, and for the woman whom God shall give you as your wife, you'll be the right man.

BECOME A MAN WITH YOUR GOD. Your greatest privilege is to live with the Lord and for the Lord.

Fear God as the One before whom you will stand one day to give a full accounting of all you've ever done or said or thought in public and in private.

Make Jesus Christ your best friend and constant companion. Love Him with all your heart. Get to know Him intimately through much time in God's Word and in prayer.

Be sensitive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life as the One Who wants to guide you and empower you and make you a complete man who always does the right thing in the right way in the right place at the right time and for the right purpose.

We don't expect you to become all of the above by tomorrow. But we do expect you to develop constantly in all these areas. And we'll be praying for you and working with the Lord and with you to help you PUT AWAY your childhood and BECOME a man – God's man.

We love you very much,

Your Mom and Dad