



EQUIPPING U

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION/DECEMBER 2012

Can I Have A Sign?

Kimberly von Oeyen

Have you ever wished God would give you a sign—something tangible to reinforce your faith?

Just today, a woman distraught over the ending of her marriage lamented, “I wish there was some kind of fleece, so I could know what to do next.”

THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU A SIGN

King Ahaz was offered a sign—proof to help him believe that God would protect his kingdom from destruction. Knowing he could ask for anything, Ahaz asked for nothing, declaring “I will not put the Lord to the test.” His statement sounds like faith, but it was actually rebellion—disregard and disobedience cloaked in religion.

Despite Ahaz’s arrogance, Isaiah declared a sign would be given. “*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*” God was coming—coming to live among people who would reject Him just as Ahaz had done.

Let’s not be like this prideful king. Let’s embrace the sign God has offered—the virgin-born Son, Jesus.



God’s Unparalleled Gift

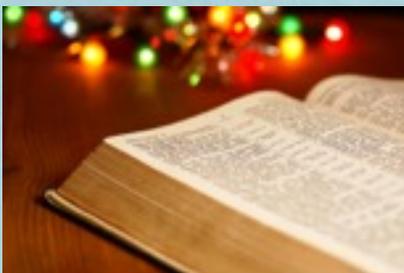
adapted from *Anticipating Christ at Christmastime* by Kimberly von Oeyen

[T]he gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23b)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

When I was eight, my brother Jim, who was five at the time, gave me a plush turtle for Christmas. I couldn’t believe it. I was so insulted. I couldn’t believe he would give me a child’s toy, and I told him so.

Grieved by my attitude, my mom took me aside and shared



TEACHING TIP. In the hustle of the Christmas season, it can be tempting to ignore spending time in God’s Word. Make time in Scripture a priority, for unless we do, we really won’t have anything to share with our students.



TEACHING TIP. Invest the time to send Christmas cards to your students. Writing a brief note inside can go a long way to help traveling students stay connected, and it lets your students know that you care.



TEACHING TIP. Although many familiar faces may be away for Christmas, there will probably be families who will attend church for the first time this December. Look for them. Welcome them. Prayerfully, they’ll be back in January.

how Jim had picked this turtle especially for me. She showed me how the turtle's mint green plush perfectly matched the carpet in my bedroom. Then she recounted Jim's excitement when he chose it for me, and pointed out how much I had hurt him. I was undone, my conscience pierced.

I was undone, my conscience pierced.

Everyday God's unparalleled gift is rejected and despised by proud people who find His gift of salvation insulting, just as I found my brother's gift insulting.

But what joy, when a wise person, knowing the value of God's gift, explains the cost of salvation. Sometimes unbelievers respond as I did, with a conscience that is pierced.

As believers, we must continually prize Christ, because when we prize His other gifts—talent, health, family, or possessions—more than we value Him, we, too, are rejecting Him.

Everyday God's unparalleled gift is rejected.

It's also common, when we lose the ease and simplicity of life, to be tempted to be angry at God because He doesn't allow us to walk a road free from pain. Yet, James instructs

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Paul von Oeyen

ICEA is a volunteer staffed ministry. Each month Equipping U highlights and honors one of our faithful volunteers.

Our volunteer spotlight shines this month on Paul von Oeyen, the chairman of ICEA's board of directors.

Paul, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, has served with ICEA for six decades! Whether answering telephones, recruiting exhibitors, or leading the board of directors, Paul is faithful. Thank you for serving through ICEA.

FROM THE EDITOR

Merry Christmas!

I pray you and your family will have a wonderful time celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ—God's unparalleled gift.

I also pray that you will have the opportunity to share Him and the gift of His salvation with a friend or loved one this December.

I look forward to serving you in 2013.

Serving with U,

Kimberly von Oeyen
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us to *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

We may not initially see the beauty of the gifts we are offered, but that doesn't mean they aren't valuable. I still have that turtle, which I named Myrtle. She reminds me to never lose sight of the person behind the gift, for they are the greater treasure.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ICEA currently needs weekly volunteers to staff the office during business hours Monday-Friday. Responsibilities include answering the phone, processing mail, and assisting the events committee with tasks for the February and October conferences.

For more information please contact Paul at the ICEA office at 248-557-5526.

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SAVE THE DATE

Mark your 2013 calendar for the Summer of Purpose VBS Summer Ministries Training on February 16, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm at Ward Church in Northville.

Curriculum Preview • Teacher Training
Team Building

Early bird registration is now open!