



# SHARING SCRIPTURE

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### When Your World Is Falling Apart

**For use:** January 10 - 16

**Texts:** Isaiah 7:1–9, Isaiah 7:10–13, Isaiah 7:14

Recently implicated in a \$6 million art fraud scheme, Kevin Benoit thinks back to how his friendship with Philip Righter led him to a potential loss of everything he held dear.

Starting life in a new country, and all alone, is not easy. So when Benoit left Montreal, relocated to Los Angeles and met Righter, an alleged Hollywood producer who promised to assist in prospering his acting career, the young Canadian actor couldn't refuse establishing a fast friendship. Little did Benoit know that Righter would steal his identity and funnel stolen money into Benoit's bank accounts. [1]

Two years later, Benoit was understandably riddled with shock upon finding out everything he thought he knew was a lie.

Fortunately, the FBI and Benoit were able to work together to catch Righter red-handed. Nevertheless, despite knowing that Righter had used him, Benoit couldn't help but feel guilty for working against his former friend. "He was still so genuine and personable," Benoit said, quoted in *Los Angeles Magazine*. "I would have to remind myself of what he did."

Losing one's reputation, close friends, and maybe even \$6 million is difficult to swallow, but cannot compare to losing a kingdom and, even more importantly, a friendship with the Creator.

As we study this week's lesson, we are reminded of how King Ahaz was

presented with the opportunity to accept God's guidance, and unfortunately rejected it. Ahaz chose to instead side with the Assyrian king in fighting back against neighboring enemies. Although the alliance saved Judah, the Assyrian king bribed Ahaz and plundered the conquered land, leaving Ahaz with little boasting rights for the victory. Even more devastatingly, Ahaz's decision to side with human wisdom rather than God's foresight would eventually bring Judah to ruin from which the kingdom would never recover.

Likewise, Ahaz failed to recover from his poor decisions. He continued rejecting God's divine promises, even when presented with various signs from the Lord. Because he did not believe, he could not be established as a true Davidic leader.

But unlike Ahaz, who did not admit his faults, and rejected God's signs and offers of second chances, Benoit confronted the person he had once trusted; Benoit chose to put his trust in truth rather than an exploiter.

Life will always present us with masked bandits and liars, but our way out comes when we are willing to believe in God's loving promises.

~Stefani Leeper

[1] <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/philip-righter-basquiat-fraud/>

## For Reflection

**Connecting:** Were you used by someone you trusted? What did you do when the truth was revealed?

**Sharing:** Why was Ahaz so determined to reject God's guidance?

1. Ahaz did not want to put God to the test like the Israelites had done (Isaiah 7:11-12)
2. Ahaz did not believe in God's power
3. Ahaz was stubborn
4. Ahaz focused more on worldly wealth than spiritual health
5. Ahaz did not understand the Messianic prophecies and believed his kingdom's salvation would come through his son
6. Other:

**Applying:** Wandering Israelites repeatedly tested God, whereas Ahaz failed to test the Lord. Where is the balance? Over your online connections, brainstorm with your small group about how to appropriately test God, asking for a sign in how to deal with a current issue your congregation faces.

**Valuing:** Have you ever felt stumped and/or frustrated over a puzzle you just couldn't solve, only to realize later that you could have asked God for the answer and didn't think to do so? How can we avoid falling into the same traps as Ahaz? Share your thoughts with a trusted friend over the phone or a video chat and then pray for each other.

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