

## Day 1

# How Haters Help

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“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” **Genesis 50:20**

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The word “but” is easily my favorite conjunction found in the Bible. In your English class, you may have learned that a conjunction is a word used to connect clauses or sentences (eg. and, if, but, etc). However, I like the secondary definition found on Google for conjunction. Google’s website also defines conjunction as *the action or an instance of two or more events or things occurring at the same point in time or space*. Taking into consideration the gravity of the situation Joseph was dealing with in Genesis 50:20; I think I like the second definition better. It literally says you meant evil, but God’s actions in that very moment and place were working for my good.

Haters often come into our lives with evil intentions to slander our character, sabotage our relationships or do physical harm to us. However, God has the ability to cause their plans to work towards His purpose despite their best efforts (Romans 8:28). As followers of Christ who know that God is sovereign and that He cares for everyone who belongs to Him, we should look at people who hate us a necessary part of life. First, because the Bible commands us to love our enemies, and it would be hard to love them if we didn’t have any. We should also look at our haters differently because we understand that they present us with growth opportunities.

For the next four days, I want you to approach these devotional videos and guides with open eyes because you just might discover, that haters actually help.

## Reflection

**Tip:** Answer the following questions with prayerful consideration.

1. Are you able to identify actual haters that are currently in your life? If so, why do you consider them haters?
2. Read Matthew 5:44-45. Based upon the Scriptures that you just read; how should we treat people who you would consider a hater?
3. What is the positive outcome for obeying verse 44? (**hint: verse 45**)
4. Do you find it difficult to forgive, love and pray for your haters?

## Evaluation

If you answered yes to the 4th reflection question. This would be a good time to address any difficulties with God as you pray. I am well aware that there are things that happen in our lives that are hard to forgive. Feel free to express them with God. He already knows and can handle it. It's important to start the process of healing and forgiveness. If it seems like too much to handle on your own, I recommend that you find professional help to get through this difficult area of your life.

## Do Something

Pray for someone who was mean or rude to you in the past few weeks, use their name when you pray.

## Prayer Time Starter

Father, thank You for the opportunity to grow through adversity. Please help me to see you at work in the small things that occur daily in my life. Help me to trust You with the outcome in situations that are hard for me to understand if any good could come from them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



## Day 2

# How Haters Help

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### Haters Help Us Get Out of Our Comfort Zones

He called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply. Then he sent someone to Egypt ahead of them” Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar. **Psalm 105:16-18**

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The Psalmist gives us a bit of insight into the sovereignty of God. God called the famine by allowing the food supply to be impacted. He also “sent” Joseph ahead of the rest of the children of Israel into Egypt, which was only a piece of God’s greater plan. I’m sure Joseph would have preferred better accommodations than the chain gang he was on with fetters on his feet and an iron collar around his neck. Surely, the LORD could have considered a first-class seat for Joseph who was going to save His people, right? Unfortunately, godly character (which we will discuss in day three) is forged through trials and uncomfortable situations. It is the fear of what will happen in the uncomfortable situations that causes many believers to never become who they are called to be, in Christ.

**The unknown has caused the bravest of men to tremble.**

I once heard a story about a commander of a POW camp during World War II who played mind games with his prisoners. He would take a random prisoner out into a courtyard and ask him what fate did he want to meet that day. The commander then presented the prisoner with a choice. The first choice was a firing squad and the second a giant black door. One day he was training a new recruit when he played the game that he so often played. Asking the prisoner which choice he would make, the prisoner thought for a few moments and then selected the firing squad. The commander obliged the prisoner and executed his punishment. The commander turned to the recruit and said, “They always chose what can be known over what they cannot. The horror of facing the black door is always too much for them to bare”. Then the curious recruit asks, “Sir, what is behind the black door”. The commander replies, “Freedom”.

Don’t allow the fear of the unknown to keep you from the promises you have in Christ. We try so hard to maintain control of our lives which is always a losing battle no matter who we are. The reason we can’t win is simply that control is an illusion. Control ultimately belongs to God!

## Reflection

**Tip:** Answer the following questions with prayerful consideration.

1. How do you deal with uncomfortable situations? Do you try to get out of them as fast as possible or do you look for growth opportunities within them?
2. What does Psalm 105:16-18 teach us about God? How might it apply to you?
3. If control is really an illusion, how does that impact the way you view dependency on God?
4. Do you feel like God might be challenging you out of your comfort zone?

## Evaluation

Whether we have come to grips with it or not, we are dependent on God. In John 15, Jesus gives us the imagery of a vine and branches where he declares that we need to abide in him and without him, we can do nothing. A dependant life is a “prayerful life”. Take a few moments to evaluate your dependency on God by looking at your prayer life. Is this an area that needs work? If so, pray that God gives you the desire to connect with Him in a deeper way through prayer.

## Do Something

Intentionally try something new that is outside of your comfort zone this week.

## Prayer Time Starter

Father, thank You for the privilege of prayer. Help me to see you as Sovereign over all things, and grant me the grace to seek you first and foremost through prayer. I don't want to be lazy or remain in my comfort zone if you are moving me towards growth opportunities that come through the discomfort. Your ways are always the best, allow me to find peace in them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



## Day 3

# How Haters Help

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### Haters Help Us Develop Godly Character

Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph's character. **Psalm 105:19**

May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation "the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ" for this will bring much glory and praise to God. **Philippians 1:11**

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William Hershey Davis wrote, "Reputation is what men say about you on your tombstone; Character is what angels say about you before the throne of God." What a remarkable statement. My hope has always been that I can continue to close the gap between reputation and character as I grow closer to Christ.

The Hebrew word used to describe how God tested Joseph uses the imagery of melting metal. The refiners would put gold or silver into a container and turn up the heat beneath the precious metals. Before heat was applied to the gold it would not appear special at all. However, when the gold got to a certain temperature it would begin to melt and become separated from the worthless elements. Think about this process for a moment. The metal had to get hot enough to turn into a liquid. When God wants to develop our character He does so by allowing the heat to be turned up.

This imagery of refining experiences also carries over into the New Testament. In 1 Peter he talks about our faith being refined through various trials that we face. Our ability to trust God grows as our faith is tested and character is forged. Everyone may not see our godly character on display right now. As a matter of fact, people will speak evil of you and hate you because they don't see God as the refiner behind the scenes causing you to look more like Christ. However, we have hope in a day, that God will honor what is done in secret before our haters.

## Reflection

1. Put yourself in Joseph's shoes for a moment how would you have felt about God as you were being tested? How would you have felt about your family? What about your captors?

2. Do you ever feel any of these emotions about your situations? How could looking at difficult moments as a test change your outlook?
3. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7, 1 Peter 4:12-13. Do these passages provide hope for your current situation? Why or Why not?

## Evaluation

We all go through varying levels of suffering; it's simply a part of life. However, when we are going through our trials we always have access to God through prayer. Do you tend to turn towards or away from God when you face the various trials of life?

## Do Something

Make it a point to be there for someone in your circle of influence who is facing difficulties this week.

## Prayer Time Starter

Father, thank You for the many ways that you stretch my faith. I want to reflect Jesus' character and learn to trust you more. Help me to understand the experiences that hurt are helping me get rid of the useless things in my life, and grow my faith in you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



## Day 4

# How Haters Help

**Haters Help Us Find Our Purpose**

“And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I’m here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it.” **Genesis 40:14-15**

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I love a good movie. What makes a good movie for me is a compelling story. Before many of my favorite films were on anyone’s radar, they began in the mind of a dedicated person who authored a script. Eventually, that script made its way into the hands of a film producer. Film producers are responsible for many aspects of the films that make their way into our theatres and homes that we enjoy so much. These producers plan and coordinate various aspects of film production, such as selecting the script; coordinating writing, directing, and editing; and even arranging the financing. You could say that the success of the film is hinged greatly on the producer. The director is also a very important part of the movie-making process. Directors control and manage a film’s creative components by guiding the technical crew and actors towards the vision of the film.

If life were like the movies, God would be the writer, producer, and director. When we are looking for our purpose in life, we need to remember God’s role. We are merely actors in his production. I’ve heard that actors can be a quirky bunch, which plays perfectly into my illustration. Sometimes actors go off-script. At times the director screams, “Cut!” demanding that it be done his way, and at other times he gives the actor a bit of leeway. Either way it’s ultimately up to the director to decide how his film goes.

When we are seeking our purpose in life, we need to understand that our purpose is only found within the context of God’s purpose. To say it another way, we should seek God’s purpose for our life and not attempt to write our own scripts based upon our limited understanding.

A good actor looks towards the director for “direction”. He or she asks how to approach a scene, or for their lines and marks. A great director must be intimately acquainted with how an actor should go about fulfilling their obligation to the film. That is the beautiful thing about God. He is not only the writer, producer, and director. He is also the star of the film, through the person of Jesus Christ, or LORD.

If you are seeking your purpose in life look no further than the greatest actor/director that has ever lived. Follow Him and listen for His directions.

Joseph believed he did not deserve to be in his current predicament. But little did he know that it was a part of the storyline. What about your story that is still being written, are you in a place that you feel like you don’t deserve to be? Ask yourself if God is trying to teach you something in your present situation.

## Reflection

1. How do you think Joseph felt about his purpose when he spoke in Genesis 40:14-15?
2. Have you ever experienced a situation in your life that you felt like you were being punished unjustifiably? How did you handle it?
3. Read Psalm 57:2. What are your initial thoughts about this passage?
4. In what instances should a person cry out to God? When is the last time you felt the desire to cry out to God?

## Evaluation

Have you ever said to God, “Whatever the question is God, my answer is Yes!” Would you?

## Do Something

Make it a point to connect with other believers (supporting cast) to fulfill God’s purpose in your circles of influence.

## Prayer Time Starter

Father, thank You for giving me a role in your movie. I want to be the best actor I can possibly be. Help me to understand that any haters are just a part of the plot, that will ultimately bring you glory. Help me to love them, while I grow closer to you. Amen.

