

**HANDLING HATERS**

*“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.” (Luke 6:22, NIV)*

I WONDER HOW GOLF FEELS. I hope it’s not sensitive, not with the number of times it must hear each day these words: “I hate this game!” And I won’t attempt to write the words that often precede and follow that declaration. Just how do you spell &#!&@ anyway?

Of course I’m joking. Golf can’t feel anything, no matter how much it is hated. Golf is not the same as you and me, wired with emotions and defensive for our own sakes. Let someone say they hate us, or act as though they do, and you can be sure we will feel it. And that feeling is no good at all.

It might be surprising then that the God who loves us, in the voice of his Son Jesus, allows people to hate us, not for any fault of his own, but simply because we follow him. This may not be apparent to you. You look around and think, *No one hates me, and if they do it’s because I can be a jerk, not because of Jesus.* Especially as Westerners, we do not understand the hatred expressed in murderous persecution.

But the enemy of our souls, Satan, still hates Jesus. He hates that anyone would choose to follow Jesus. And thus, he will put every roadblock in our way.

Say you and your spouse welcomed a small child into your home. From day one, you feed the child honey. Rather than milk or even baby formula, you give the child soda pop. And just for good measure, you wake the child in the middle of every nap. Now you may never say you hate your child, but your actions threaten its very life. They say without words, “We hate you.”

This is how our great enemy works. He—and those he employs in his tactics, often without their awareness—work to hate us by impeding our affections toward Jesus and our growth in him. We are hated because of him, and we are attacked because of that hatred, whether or not these attacks are explicit and overt.

So what do we do when we are hated? According to Jesus, we count ourselves blessed. This only makes sense, of course, if we firmly identify with him. This hatred is coming because haters see Jesus in us. That is, after all, what we want! It’s a hatred we can handle, because over and above it we are loved by God. And that blessing will outlast even the severest of this world’s onslaughts.

**Opening questions** When have you felt hatred pointed in your direction? What was the reason behind it? Do you understand why people would hate you because of your faith in Jesus?

**READING** Luke 6:27-36, 1 Peter 3:8-17, 1 Samuel 24:1-22

**Enemy care**

What is your initial reaction to Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6? How do you think we can accomplish such concern and love for our enemies?

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**Hated for good**

What contrasts did Peter provide in 1 Peter 3? What positive and negative responses have come your way when you have acted in God-designed righteousness?

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**David and Saul**

Consider the example of David in 1 Samuel 24. How might we treat our own enemies so honorably?

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