



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Haters / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

Drop the rock.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to move away from judging others (and comparing sins) and toward offering grace to the people around them.

SCRIPTURE

As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of

them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more" (John 8:3-11 NLT).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

In this situation we see Jesus both uphold the Law of Moses and offer grace. By giving the Pharisees permission to stone the woman caught in adultery (if they were without sin), Jesus isn't discounting the woman's sin. Despite her sin though, Jesus didn't judge her. Instead, He offered her grace. Today, like the Pharisees, many of us still carry rocks. In other words, we're ready to pass judgment on anyone we think deserves it. In those moments—in the moments we really want to lob that comment, cutting remark, gossip, or insult—Jesus encourages us to drop the rock and reconsider.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Does anybody here watch reality TV? Even if you don't, it's almost unavoidable, right?

There's always a hater!

TENSION

Being a hater really comes down to one thing: judging.

Most of us recognize that we have some flaws, but hating on others allows us to shift the spotlight toward *their* flaws.

Sometimes God-followers love to compare themselves with others, *especially* people who aren't making great decisions.

Because here are some things you already know to be true: 1) No one uses the word hater a compliment. 2) No one trusts a hater. 3) No one likes being hated on.



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WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

TEACHING OUTLINE

We're going to look at a story in the Bible featuring some members of the *Haters Hall Of Fame*.

TRUTH

John was a big fan of Jesus, but there were plenty of others who had a bone to pick with Him.

The Pharisees prided themselves in following these rules AND in catching people who weren't. It was as if Jesus valued the humanity of a person over the importance of keeping a rule.

So during a time when Jesus was publically teaching, the Pharisees showed up to test Jesus.

So what did Jesus say? Nothing. I love how strange this is. Even more weird, John doesn't tell us what Jesus was writing.

This was a total mic drop moment. Because Jesus put the question back on the Pharisees. Some people think the mysterious writing Jesus did on the ground had something to do with the actual sins of the Pharisees.

What this woman did was wrong. But Jesus didn't judge her. He offered something else: grace.

Today, like the Pharisees, we still carry rocks, ready to lob at anyone we judge worthy of it.

Drop the rock.

APPLICATION

So, here are three ways we can all begin to drop the rock: 1) Stop measuring sin and deciding which sins are worse than others. 2) See the story. 3) Focus on you.

The sooner you learn to show grace to yourself for your past mistakes, the sooner you'll be able to extend that same grace to others.

LANDING

So, this week, I want you think of ways you can drop the rock in your own life.

INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this week happens right before the Introduction and right after the Landing of this message, and it's actually the XP for this series.

As students walk into session—or right before the message begins—hand each student a stone. (You may want to ask your SGLs to help you with this.) Ask your students to hold on to that stone throughout the talk. As the message closes, remind students of the physical rock they're holding onto right now. Ask them to think about how they would fill in this blank: "I'm tempted to hate on people who . . ." Then, either

hand out your sharpies or direct students to the sharpie station you've set up in the back of the room. Ask them to write whatever they'd put in that blank on their stone. Remind them that their answers are anonymous—no one will know who wrote it so they can feel free to be honest. On their way to small group, ask students to drop their rocks in a bucket by the door. Let this be a tangible, physical reminder of what it looks like to "drop the rock" of hate in their lives.

Note: For a full set of directions on how this XP works, check out the XP PDF found in the XP folder of your series download.



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Haters / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

DROP THE ROCK.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES + INTERACTIVE



INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens right here in the script. Check out the Communicator Guide that precedes this script to find out what to do here.

Does anybody here watch reality TV? Even if you don't, it's almost unavoidable, right? According to my very unscientific research, there were 750 reality shows on TV last year. Maybe you never step out of the Netflix lane. I get that, but if you do ever venture out to normal live TV, there's a good chance you'll find yourself watching some kind of reality.

In addition to house-flipping shows, cupcake-cooking shows, and ghost-hunting shows, there are a bunch of shows that center around relationships. Whether it's *The Bachelor*, crazy housewives, or a particular family, the relationship-focused reality shows almost always have one thing in common: **There's always a hater!**

It's the guy or girl who everybody gets mad at. And it's usually because they talk trash about *everybody*. They're constantly pointing out what's wrong, bad, ugly, or stupid about every human being around them. And in doing so, they create a *lot* of conflict and drama (which is what people love in reality TV).

People love to hate the haters!

But haters don't just exist on reality TV or in sports, do they? They're all around us. Whether it's the classroom, the ball field, Instagram, or our own home, there's usually *somebody* who has a lot of negative stuff to say about *everybody*.

- In some cases, that person annoys us to no end. We get so tired of hearing all the negativity.

- In other cases, that person totally entertains us. It's kind of fun and funny to hear them go off about why they can't stand someone.

But we all have to be honest enough to say this:

There's a little bit of hater in all of us.

TENSION

2 MINUTES

Being a hater really comes down to one thing: **Judging.**

See, judging other people is easy. It takes no effort at all to find flaws in someone else. We're all naturals.

Most of us recognize that we have some flaws, but hating on others allows us to shift the spotlight toward their flaws. Who doesn't want to do that? We judge other people to feel better about ourselves. And I think sometimes this is especially true for those of us who are churchgoers.

In fact, if you're new here or you've been hesitant about the whole church thing, this may be part of the reason why. Maybe you thought, *I'm not going to church. It's just a bunch of haters.* That's fair.

Sometimes God-followers love to compare themselves with others, *especially* people who aren't making great decisions. Why? Because we come out looking superior. Our sin isn't as bad as *their* sin!

Maybe we mean well, maybe we don't. Sharing something bad that someone else is doing as a "prayer request" can be gossip if we're not careful. People just seem to get a little jolt of self-esteem by pointing out someone else's failure.

In some ways, we're all haters.

And deep down, we know that isn't a good thing.

Because here are some things you already know to be true:

1. **No one uses the word hater as a compliment.** No one says, "Oh, that guy's such a hater. I have so *much* respect for him!"
2. **No one trusts a hater.**
3. **No one likes being hated on.** Chances are you've experienced this. Either someone judged you or looked down on you for something you did. If that's ever happened, you probably know that being hated on feels *awful*.

But what do we do about it? Hating comes so naturally. Judging other people is such a normal part of what we do. It's not like we can turn off those thoughts, can we?

The Bible has a lot to say about our tendency to judge or hate on others. Today, we're going to look at a story featuring some members of the *Haters Hall Of Fame*.

TRUTH

6 MINUTES

We find this story in the book of *John*, one of the four accounts in the Bible that records Jesus' life. John was one of the first people to follow Jesus, and one of three guys who was closer to Jesus than anybody.

John was a big fan of Jesus, but there were plenty of others who had a bone to pick with Him. Like the Pharisees.

In the Jewish world, Pharisees were the top dogs of the Jewish religion. And they didn't like Jesus because He spoke with authority. The crowds listened to Him and followed Him around. The Pharisees obviously felt threatened.

And the reason the Pharisees were as powerful as they were, was because they were supposedly "in" with God. Somehow, they could also determine other people's standing with Him. This made them the ultimate judges.

See, the Jewish religion literally had hundreds of rules for people to follow. These rules regulated everything from their diet to how many times they prayed each day. So in addition to *big* rules like *The Ten Commandments*, they also had TONS of smaller ones. The Pharisees prided themselves in following these rules AND in catching people who weren't.

Jesus, on the other hand, taught messages about loving people, showing mercy, and offering compassion. **It was as if Jesus valued the humanity of a person over the importance of keeping a rule.**

And this didn't compute for the Pharisees. With their entire social system being built around rules and law, you can imagine how the tension grew between Jesus and them.

So during a time when Jesus was publically teaching, they showed up to test Jesus in a very public way.

As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd (John 8:3 NLT).

The word "adultery" basically refers to cheating on your husband or wife. And just like today, adultery was a big deal in Jewish culture. Only, back then it wasn't just a bad thing to do, it was illegal. And the Pharisees grab this woman to make an example out of her. **They knew that Jesus knew how serious a crime this was. Now they wanted to see how Jesus would respond.**

"Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him . . . (John 8:4-6a NLT).

TEACHING SCRIPT



So they set out to trap Jesus.

- Would He punish the woman and go against His growing reputation of compassion and grace?
- Would He devalue the law that came from God Himself in order to save this woman?

It seemed like the perfect plan. Because either way, Jesus wouldn't come out looking good.

So what did Jesus say? Nothing.

But Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger (John 8:6b NLT).

I love how strange this is. Even more weird, John doesn't tell us what Jesus was writing. He could've been drawing pictures of cats. He could've been writing His grocery list. We don't know what Jesus wrote. But we know that it made people frustrated:

They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust (John 8:7-8 NLT).

This was a total mic drop moment. Because Jesus put the question back on the Pharisees. It was a genius move. In other words, He was saying, "I totally respect the law. I'm all for it. So who wants to be the first one to throw a stone? I have an idea! Whoever *hasn't* sinned, step right up!"

Basically, this disqualified everyone:

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" (John 8:9-10 NLT).

Some people think the mysterious writing Jesus did on the ground had something to do with the actual sins of the Pharisees. But again, we don't know what He wrote. Whatever it was, combined with His words was enough to make them "slip away." Their ego and pride were deflated.

So Jesus asks the woman, "*Where is everyone? Did anyone stick around to judge you?*" He already knew the answer. But He asked it to make a point.

"No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more" (John 8:11 NLT).

The thing that makes this moment so powerful is that . . .

- The only perfect One in this situation
- The only One without sin
- The only One qualified to be a judge

. . . **DID NOT JUDGE HER!**

Don't miss this: What this woman did was wrong. But even then, Jesus didn't judge her. **He offered something else: grace.** He offered her a chance that she didn't deserve.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Thousands of years later, many people still have a tendency to think like Pharisees. We want to judge. We want to feel superior. We want to feel better about our own issues. It comes naturally.

Today, like the Pharisees, we still carry rocks, ready to lob at anyone we judge worthy of it. Our rocks just look a little different.

- It might be an eye roll.
- It might be a text.
- It might be a subtweeting Snap.

But no matter what our weapon looks like, Jesus' words are as true and important today as they were back then: *Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone.*

If you're perfect, fire away. But if not, you need to reconsider.

The message for us two thousand years later is this:

Drop the rock.

It's simple. But that doesn't make it easy. Because like we said, judging is a normal part of everyday life. It's just what we do.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

The good news? No one has this figured out. Which means every one of us has a lot of learning to do.

So, here are three ways we can all begin to drop the rock.

- 1. Stop measuring sin and deciding which sins are worse than others.** For example, your gossiping isn't better than what she did with her boyfriend, which isn't worse than the lie you told your mom, which isn't better than the beer he had, which isn't worse than you cheating on that test, which isn't better than the mean text she sent.
- 2. See the story.** The second thing you can do? Give people some grace. That guy who parties all weekend? He has a story. That girl who throws shade on her fake Instagram account? She has a story. That guy who cheated on the Calculus test? He has a story. The people around you didn't just magically appear at your school. They all have a backstory. **And that story affects why they act the way they do.** And here's what's true: You have no idea what their story is, even if you think you do. So give people a break.
- 3. Focus on you.** Spend less time thinking about other people's issues and more time thinking about your own. Focus on baby steps you can take in the right direction!

TEACHING SCRIPT

Because here's the thing: You can't change people by judging them!

Seriously. *No one* had a change of heart because someone started talking trash about them and their issues.

And I don't tell you to *focus on you* so that you'll feel terrible shame about yourself. I tell you so you can experience what the woman accused of adultery did: *The grace of Jesus*.

Because here's what I know: **The sooner you learn to show grace to yourself for your past mistakes, the sooner you'll be able to extend that same grace to others.** Those of us who are hardest on ourselves are the same ones who are hardest on others. So in learning to give grace to others, we'll learn to give it to ourselves as well.

LANDING

1 MINUTE + INTERACTIVE

So, this week, I want you think of ways you can drop the rock in your own life. Whether you're hating others with words, actions, or texts, look for ways to dial down the judgment.

And I think you'll find that people really respond to grace, mercy, and compassion—just like you do. It's what makes Jesus so appealing: simply loving people. And while it's not easy, it's worth it. **So drop the rock and embrace grace.**



INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens right here in the script. Check out the Communicator Guide that precedes this script to find out what to do here.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
