

Why NFL Great Tom Brady's Letter Is Making Headlines Today

As the NFL playoffs begin this weekend, Tom Brady looms over his sport once again. His New England Patriots have the league's best record and are favored to win their fifth Super Bowl trophy. Brady is considered by many to be the best quarterback ever to play the game.

But that's not why he's making headlines today.

Calvin Riley was a 20-year-old junior college pitcher who was beloved by his family, teammates and community. Last Aug. 6, he was shot in the back and killed while playing Pokémon Go in a San Francisco park. The murder is still unsolved but is presumed to have been a random act or gang initiation. His memorial service was attended by more than a thousand mourners.

Calvin grew up in Boston and loved Tom Brady. His family then moved to San Mateo, California, where he enrolled in Serra High School, which was Brady's alma mater. Not long after his funeral, a letter came to his parents' home. It was a two-page handwritten letter from Brady. He heard about Calvin's death and wanted to help. "It's just surreal," Calvin's father said. "It would have been easy to send a card or an email. It tells you what kind of human being he is."

Thousands of people expressed their condolences to the Riley family. But Brady's sympathy made the news because it was surprising that a world-class athlete would take time to send someone he didn't know a personal note.

Here's the question: Who would be surprised by your compassion today?

Jesus constantly shocked his culture with his inclusive love. He called a hated tax-collector to be an apostle. He touched lepers and forgave notorious sinners. His personal mission was clear: "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Now he wants us to do the same. Who in your community would be least likely to receive your personal outreach?

Here's the problem: Some, especially in the Christian community, may not understand your compassion. Christians must sometimes weather the judgment of people to extend the grace of God.

Here's an insight that may help. According to the recent book, *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy?*, smart people often suffer from a comparative worldview. They measure their intelligence or success by the intelligence or success of others. But there's always someone else to impress. And what pleases one person may displease another. Rather than measuring success by what other people think, you should focus on "doing something that you find meaningful, that you can kind of get lost in on a daily basis."

Paradoxically, studies show that focusing on meaning rather than results actually produces better results. We become better at what we do if we do what gives us significance.

Here's the bottom line: Nothing created beings do brings greater significance than doing what we were created to do. And we were created to love our Lord and our neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39), whether our neighbor loves us or not.

Tom Brady wrote a surprising letter to a grieving family. What surprising gift of grace will you offer a hurting soul today?
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