

# DEEP SIX STUDY

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## ***The GOAT Problem – “A Better Way Than Better Than”***

**MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS** (You can view the full message online at [capecodchurch.com](http://capecodchurch.com))

**Opening:** The idea of being the “GOAT”—the Greatest Of All Time—captures something deep in us. Competition, comparison, and striving to be “better than” others often feel like the best way to success. Yet throughout Scripture the story of “better than” shows how striving can seize our hearts and lead to disappointment, despair, and even destruction. Perhaps, then, there is a better way than “better than.”

### **1. The GOAT Problem** (Genesis 4:2b-5; Genesis 4:8-10; James 3:16)

- The story of Cain and Abel reveals how comparison and rivalry emerge early in human history. Both brothers bring offerings to God, but Abel brings the first and best, while Cain brings “some” of his crops. When God accepts Abel’s offering and not Cain’s, Cain becomes angry and dejected—not turning *toward* God, but *against* his brother. The desire to be “better than” leads Cain down a path he never intended, ending in violence and regret.
- We’re all prone toward striving – toward trying to be “better than” others. Here’s the thing: *striving works*, but it does so at a cost: wins without joy, success without contentment, and souls worn down by striving. The Book of James names the deeper issue: jealousy and selfish ambition produce “disorder” and “every kind of evil.” If we live only to be better than others, it will...
  - a. Corrupt our Decision Making – if our only goal is to “win,” eventually we will cross moral boundaries we never imagined we’d cross.
  - b. Give us an Unreliable View of Self – our self-image will be “disordered” and based solely on whether we’re “winning” or “losing,” swinging between superiority and inferiority to others.

### **2. The Simple Beauty of Calling** (Genesis 4:6-7; 1 Corinthians 4:1-4)

- Before Cain acts in his anger, God warns him: “*Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you; but you must master it.*” This moment reveals a battle of voices - God’s calling versus the voice(s) “crouching at the door, eager to control you.”
- Calling is not about being “better than” someone else, but about being “faithful to” what God has called you to be. Paul clarifies this perspective in 1 Corinthians 4: leaders are merely servants, and *faithfulness* – not the evaluation or applause of others – is the true measure of “greatness” in God’s kingdom.
- When our calling is clear and becomes our only guiding voice, comparison loses its power. Our goal becomes faithfulness to God and to his calling on our lives, even when pursuing that calling makes us appear “lesser than” in comparison to others.
- When we stop striving for the approval of others and stop competing to be “better than” – and instead live our lives seeking only the *approbation* (approval) of heaven – we find rest, purpose and true satisfaction – a better way than “better than.”

## ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

*These passages may provide additional insights related to the subject of this week's message. All verses are NLT unless otherwise noted.*

Proverbs 14:30; Romans 12:3-8; 2 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 3:23-24

Video of the Week: [Genesis 1-11](#) by the Bible Project

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Tom Brady is just one example of someone whose competitiveness, ambition, hard work and innate talent led him to be recognized as the GOAT in his field. What are some other examples of when someone's striving "worked" in the eyes of the world?
2. Is there anything wrong with that kind of success and achievement? Explain your answer.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-4 again. Paul writes that he not only doesn't trust the judgment (evaluation) of others, he doesn't even trust his own judgment of himself – but only God's judgment. Assuming we should do the same, how can we know what God's judgment (evaluation) of us is?
4. How do competition, ambition, and striving to be "better than" shape how people tend to treat each other? How should our treatment of others be different from that if we're living to be "faithful to" our calling from God?
5. The Puritan prayer from The Valley of Vision asks God to "make thy approbation my only aim." What are some practical things we can do to cultivate a heart that truly cares more about God's approval than human applause?
6. The message suggested that "faithfulness is endurance" and "faithfulness is confession." What would you add to that list, expanding on what faithfulness to God's calling looks like ("faithfulness is \_\_\_\_\_")?