

Carson Wentz pledges free food for Philly, raises \$850K in the name of Jesus

By Cody Benjamin

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PHILADELPHIA — Zach Wentz, the older brother of the Philadelphia Eagles' beloved quarterback, [once said](#) that Carson carries this career observation behind closed doors: "No matter my age, how many years experience I have, I'm going to affect people's lives."

Nothing exemplified that more than Friday night, when the younger Wentz, after just 29 games in an Eagles uniform and just over two years after arriving from faraway North Dakota, drew at least 25,000 to the Phillies' Citizens Bank Park for his AO1 Foundation's inaugural charity softball game. Close to 30 of his teammates, including Super Bowl LII MVP Nick Foles, may have had a hand in the crowd, but just the sheer majority of No. 11 jerseys in the house made it clear: This was all for — and all about — Carson.

And if the event wasn't an unofficial shade of [Pulse Twin Cities](#), a recent Billy Graham-sized outreach near Wentz's hometown Midwest, it reaffirmed not only that the Eagles quarterback has the platform to "affect people's lives," but that this 25-year-old man is devoted to affecting lives in a particular way.

Wentz has long been synonymous with his Christian faith, but unlike many in the NFL who proclaim similar God-is-No. 1 priorities, his journey has been lauded as much for his on-field MVP candidacy as his commitment to demonstrating that faith. He's got Bible verses and "AO1" (short for "Audience of One," or Wentz's belief that Jesus is the only one for whom he's really playing) tattooed on the arms and wrists that helped the Eagles get to the Super Bowl. He led a [baptism at a team hotel](#). He [keynoted the National Prayer Breakfast](#). He [served underprivileged kids in Haiti](#). After his injury in 2017, he never gave Foles anything but support as the latter brought Philly its first Lombardi Trophy.

And on Friday, when tens of thousands might've flocked to Citizens Bank Park simply for the chance to see their Eagles hero up close, what they also got was confirmation of Wentz's true mission.

Before drafting and overseeing Team Wentz on the diamond, cheering on Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie in batting practice and crowning lineman Stefen Wisniewski — a former free-agent afterthought who now, in part thanks to Wentz, cites leading Super Bowl LII's post-game prayer as his career peak — the night's home-run derby champion, the third-year quarterback said he wants his ultimate legacy to be sharing

God's love.

"Politics and religion are kind of the two things that are very sensitive in the world," he said. "But if you love something enough and you believe in something enough, you're going to talk about it. That's just kind of where I stand. I believe that one day, this is all fleeting, this whole world will be behind me, and I don't want to regret a single minute of it."

And after adding that he wants people to "see that someone in the spotlight with so-called fame isn't afraid" to be bold in their faith, he gave the people just that with the third-inning unveiling of "Thy Kingdom Crumb," a 25-foot food truck that will **bring free food** and "the gospel of Jesus Christ" to Philadelphia starting in the fall of 2018.

Friday night was certainly about fun. There's really no other way to describe Super Bowl-winning football players attempting to own the softball field — 320-pound Halapoulivaati Vaitai losing his balance in the outfield, Jason Kelce tagging out Nick Foles in a rundown, Mack Hollins whipping out his "Backpack Kid" dance after homering, kicker Jake Elliott launching a bomb in the game's first at-bat, wide receiver Bryce Treggs crashing into the outfield fence to steal someone else's homer.

Much like Wentz, though, beneath its flashy plays, its many smiles and its title-winning talent, the softball game at its core was just another vessel in the young man's mission to share something greater — something bigger than his game, his money and any level of appeal he has to a city so direly in love with what he does on the gridiron.

By night's end, exactly a month after Wentz pledged up to \$500,000 for the construction of a shelter and sports complex in Haiti, his foundation said it had raised more than \$850,000 from the game.

That's probably enough to affect some people's lives.