

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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I Like Giving - Reboot

Brad Formsma

[Video] "Sometimes in life we get stuck..." "It says it's declined." Women in an exercise class. Man watching TV. A woman says "I feel like you're not fully invested in this relationship with a man staring off into space.

Well, welcome to all eight of our campuses as we begin or continue our Reboot series. You know we don't have many guest speakers here at NCC and part of that is honestly I think we're pretty blessed with an amazing teaching team but occasionally I just feel like there's something that someone that we need to hear from and one of those people is my good friend Brad Formsma. Brad is an expert in the field of generosity but that doesn't do it justice because I've rarely met anyone that's more infectious in terms of the creativity and the joy in giving to others and not just monetarily but with his life and some unique ways. And so a few years ago he wrote a book called 'I Like Giving'. And you may have gotten that book when he was here a few years ago but if you have it we've got some copies either at your campus or you can grab it online. And I bumped into someone on the way in to church and they mentioned to me that they give Brad's book away more than my book and that hurt a little, hurt a little. Not really, I love it I love it because I have given this book away maybe as much or more than any other book because I love the message of 'I Like Giving'. They have created some short films those films ilikegiving.com have been watched by 51 million people. And so you can check those out but at our campuses where we have the books, you can get them 2 for \$20 I'd encourage you to do that. Fun way to get a book and give a book and put this message into practice. So without further ado would you give a huge NCC welcome to Brad Formsma as he comes?

Thank you, thank you. Will you say with me "I like giving". Alright, now turn your neighbor and say "and so do you". Alright, this weekend we're going to have some fun You know I've been studying generosity for nearly 13 years now and I want to share with you how it's changed me, how it's changed my family and how it's impacted many, many other people I believe that we all benefit from a reboot of our definition of generosity and what the generous life is. Now before we jump into the three things that I want to share with you that I've learned over all these years, I just need to clarify like the giving guys here I'm not going to ask you for money but if you're anything like me you might have thought that. So what I want to do is let you know I'm going to share my heart with you and I've been praying for the last few weeks that your hearts would be open and receptive to what the Lord would have for you through His Word and through these stories and through some of the thoughts.

And so I want to give you a little, little backdrop of how I got here I was 9 years old and my grandpa had a big commercial baking company. Next to his office was a small test kitchen you see what I didn't realize was Grandpa all week long had his antenna working. He was listening and looking for opportunities and ways to give and so on Saturday because I was the oldest of 5 and I'm 9 so that left a couple littles and that meant that I learned how to change diapers way too

early so I was looking for a way to escape and so I started tagging along with Grandpa. And so it's now Saturday morning and he would make these 16 special loaves of bread and as they would cool off I got to put them in that fresh cellophane and then we would head out. And we would go to people with wealth and influence and he would bring a loaf of bread and a kind word and he'd squeeze that in their face, smell that it's so good for you. Sorry, Gramps, he didn't get the memo on white bread but if the heart was there. And then we would go to just shut in and we would go to everybody in between sometimes there would be a monetary gift if that was appropriate sometimes he just give the gift of inconvenience he would just sit with someone and listen. And so he was more of a showed it than told it kind of guy, so he would just model this for me. I think God's principles and Grandpas ways these 6 ways of being generous with our thoughts and our words and our money in the way we share our money and that's important because it's connected to our heart. We can be generous with our influence, the way we share our stuff in our time and so he would just begin to show this to me.

And time went on I started a business had that for a number of years and in 2005 I was on a run and everything seemed to be lining up in my life with family and marriage and kids and all this and if something was missing you ever have that were just like I think her something more and I kept reading about the work of the Holy Spirit in our life and how He's our guide. And I was on this run on a Natural Beauty Road in Michigan which is code for sloppy gravelly and uneven but you know we have these names and I was like Lord what do you want me to do and I got this vision and this message I'm going to use you to encourage people in their giving, you're going to bring greater hope and joy to many, you'll influence influencers and then they'll take this message this is my heart in to the world and I thought well what in the world do you do with that I don't even hardly leave for spring vacation. But I purposed in my heart and a few years later sold the business and by the way I sold a smaller service business in Michigan I have to work just like everybody else and so sometimes people say you sold a business that sounds like you know yeah pick something fun, go talk about generosity no I just God called me into this into this work.

And so I started pulling people together and having conversations about generosity and what it meant. And I started to realize that it was such a dynamic area and there was something powerful when you use stories to message about generosity. And so the first thing I want to share with you that I've learned that I think will be helpful for you as the idea of awareness when we move from awareness to action miracles happen. We got to get our antenna working Grandpa got it working and then he modeled that to me, and so as we move into awareness for our family. I went down and got our newspaper one day we lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan at the time and there is a picture of a Sudanese father and son in the newspaper. And this article went on to say that these refugees they were firebombed out of their village they lost friends and they lost family and now they're clothes on their back and a couple bikes and as I read further I realized some thugs had stolen their bikes and that was the dad's way to work and the other bike was the son's toy. And I'm like you've got to be kidding me this is crazy so I run into the house and we pull a 10, 7 and 2-year-old our kids together at the time; and now just a little footnote I married somebody opposite from me, so I'm kind of the idea activator guy my wife she likes everything all planned out. And so these kind of giving things you know you got to bring the kids in because it softens the future conversations.

So, I say what should we do and my oldest son says we got to go get them bikes I'm like you're right we got to go get 'em bikes and so we head on to the bike store load them in the back of the minivan we're driving down the road and a few miles in she says, "hey, idea guy, what's their address"? Oh no, they didn't put it in the newspaper, of course, they don't put that. So I call the church and the church says, oh just give the bikes to wheels for Jesus and I like no this isn't about wheels for Jesus I want a model generosity to my kids like Grandpa did for me and they have an immediate need, and so finally the guy gives us the address. We spent four hours chasing around town and finally, we found it and when we did because of the language barrier all the dad could say is I like bike, I like bike on the bike driving down the street. And as we get in the car that day the trajectory of our whole family and my life changed forever that one story.

And my wife said to me you know as we drove away I kept hearing that there is going to be hundreds of bikes in that front yard, there weren't any bikes I think the Lord had an assignment for us. And then my oldest son said dad I know we were going to go to the water park this afternoon boy that was it was way better than going to the water park. You know when the younger you get the joy that comes from realizing it's more blessed to give than receive. That's my heartbeat when it can just push this message down into the lowest parts of a family or into your life, it's a powerful, powerful force. Galatians 6:10 says therefore as we have opportunity let us do good to all men and Paul sitting there saying look this is a privilege we get to give but sometimes that reboot is necessary because we start to turn it into duty and we start at other things and that's okay.

So I travel across the country a fair amount... I was heading to a business to speak about generosity because there's companies that are already generous they want to continue to have people come in and reinforce that in their culture they know it's good for business and it's good for the hearts of their people. And so I'm going through this airport bathroom and those of you that travel know hey, airport bathroom clean that's a bonus. So I'm in one a clean, I got a bonus bathroom. So, I noticed the cart's all organized and there's this guy he's just doing a great job cleaning. And I get that nudge, you ever get it like you should say something and I'm the giving guy and I totally denied it and I walked out and about 10 steps, I just love how the Holy Spirit's gracious He's like nudge again, okay I'm going to. So I walked up to him, I said sir I just want to thank you I travel and you know the clean airport bathroom it's, it's a bonus. And he smiled and I reached out my hand to him and I said I am Brad and as I turned his big hand buried mine and he said I'm Conrad and I noticed his arm, his name patch was empty. I said oh Conrad if you work for me your name would be on your shirt, I believe you matter and you're a good man. And a big tear welled up in the corner of that man's eye and we had this amazing smile as I floated away and I showed up at the coffee shop where my wife was waiting for me she's like what happened you're glowing? I said just went to the bathroom, no, I said I said I just met Conrad she's like whose Conrad I said let me just sit in this for a minute, I just want to sit in this. It's more blessed to give than receive. You know if there's one thing today that you take away, who's your Conrad, maybe you work with Conrad maybe you don't like him. Might be an opportunity for you to move at being generous with your, with your words.

So the second thing I want to share with you that I've learned is the idea of making the generous life a habit. Make the decision today that I want to aim at generosity. You know I don't get it right all the time I think that's why the Lord called me into this work, He knew I needed 24/7 to

be focused on this but if you make that decision I believe He is going to meet you there and help you grow in the grace of giving. You see our family we love to give regularly to our church and we also love to make some other economic decisions that let us have a little pile on the side that just is not so much but just enough to be able to respond you know to that immediate need. And one day my oldest son came to me and said dad, my buddy, his dad's really sick and the doctor saying 2 months to live and I just feel like our family could do something for them what could we do? And so our family talked about this and we decided you know in this season they probably have bills that we wouldn't know about couldn't ever figure out and so we decided to get a prepaid visa. We were going to do one of those stealth giving things where we would just send him a little note and we all got in the van drove over there and drop it off at the front door and we thought we made a clean escape but they saw us on the way out so they knew it was us. And, unfortunately, 2 months passed and that man passed away and 3 weeks after that a note showed up in our mailbox and said dear Brad and Laura, my husband Tom was pacing back and forth in our living room asking God to provide money so that he could put new tires on my car so that I would be safe before he went to heaven. So, the Creator of the universe He works through us to be a part of answering prayer. I just want to say that again, I mean He trusts us enough to respond to another person's prayer. And I don't even know this guy but I'm telling you I've had some thoughts like what's that going to be like when we pass on that road in heaven, like hey man thank you, I like tires, right. But we gotta have our antenna up and we got to have our antenna up working.

You know what I didn't what I didn't share with you is that 2 months before my son came to us I sat in a doctor's office and the doctor said you know you have a rare form of leukemia and that's a blood cancer and you have 24 months to live if you don't do something. And now there's a pill that's 300 bucks a day and it works sometimes and my life flashed before my eyes you start to think about who's going to walk your daughter down the aisle, who's going to take care of your young family. And then you go, I went to my foundation in the hope of Jesus and the decision and the habit that we made to live generously through whatever was going on. And so what happened for us was that because that decision was made I really believe that I didn't I didn't miss out that opportunity to buy tires I think I would have chickened out. I was I was scared there were sometimes in the middle of the night that I'd look out the window and go wow this isn't good and yet because that decision was there and the habit was there even when the storm in life comes through and you know you're going to have your life flash before your eyes are you already have. But then you can take that decision to live generously in those other ways beyond money through these circumstances and so I would go into the oncologist's office and they would take all this blood and money from you. And then the lady doing it one day, her name is Joy I'm like seriously, all day long she takes and you could tell she was having an off day. And I said hey Joy you ever go get one of those big Starbucks with you know like 910 calories all the whip cream and the drizzle and all that, you ever go do that with a friend, just load it up? And she's like kind of peculiar yeah I would do that I'm like okay so as she was labeling the ten vials of blood they extracted from me I slid one of those Starbucks cards on her chair as I made it to the door frame I said hey Joy have fun with your friend. And a smile broke across her face and just in that minute something shifted. You know I was also feeling sorry for myself with all the other things that were going on and I'm being inconvenienced all these kinds of things.

Well about a year and a half ago the doctor called me in and he said hey I've got 8 people I'm going to put through this study which basically means I'm going to take all of you off the medicine and I'm going to see what happens and so 7 of those people over the last year the disease unfortunately returned and it didn't return for me. And so I like healing is that story yeah there's yes thank you Lord. Now I think this is ok word at church I'm not going to be back next week so I'm just going to say my doctor he's pompous he knows everything just ask him and so we're in his office and I said doc I think we're dealing with a miracle and he said no it's statistically impossible and I said well what about spontaneous remission now that happens and I'm like I thought that's what you guys said a medical definition of a miracle was. Anyway then he goes, hey I like those shoes and I'm like oh well thanks we just want for a miracle the shoes oh okay. And then he comes back to the shoes hey, I like the buckle on the top of your shoe that's great. I'm like okay I got it, thank you. He comes back to the shoes for the third time I like the stitching. So I say doc uh well what are yours like size 10? No you think you're so smart they're nine and a half. And I thinking you know you're so dumb you just gave the giving guy the answer because I got in the car went down to Nordstrom Rack, turned down the aisle, walked up and there they were glowing size nine and a half. Now I wrote him a note I said doc thank you for using your God-given gifts to help a guy like me stay around a little longer. And then I think Jesus is okay with the second sentence in the note I said this will help you be one step more like me. Okay so that I sent it off and he calls me and he says you're crazy you think that the world can be a better place if more people are generous and I'm like yeah and he's like you're crazy and I'm like okay I'm crazy, I'm healed, I'm crazy we got it. But you know I really believe that's a form of being generous, he was coming after me, I'm like my doc not for me you know we're having this situation and I... something shifts I just say giving changes everything. And there's something powerful when I went outside of my own situation and so when we moved from awareness to action miracles happen right, that's the first thing.

The second thing is make it a habit would you?

And then the third thing is the impact, you never know. You know I think about when you throw a rock in a pond that ripple goes out, it hits the shoreline and eventually dissipates. But this generosity thing it's like inverted it goes and it ripples farther and out the generosity ripple just keeps on going. Grandpa had modeled an influence for me and it happens. One of my favorite ways to clarify and qualify a giving opportunity just ask a question. I was reading in James about widows and orphans and my grandparents had passed away and I thought where in the world, how do I engage, where do I find the need. Light bulb went off what if, what if I asked the person who cuts my hair maybe she knows a widow. So she's getting my hair going and I said hey where do I get a widow? It came out a little funny, so then I was like or I was reading this I'm just wondering where do I find someone to help and she said I've got the perfect person. You see Evelyn she's 88, her husband passed away a number of years ago, she lives in a small apartment there's no money left in fact she is thinking about cutting back on some of her medicine. I said, oh I think we'll do another one of those stealth deals. So my wife and I got together and we started sending anonymous money every month. Well I figured I'd meet her in heaven and then she turned ninety two. So I thought hello I should go meet her so we went out for a cup of coffee I mean she's this short, I'm... and she just glows and I learned so much from her about being generous with not having so much in the financial realm and yet whatever she

had in the financial realm she was giving part of that. I found out she was slicing off some of our check to do things for other people.

So as our work at 'I Like Giving', Mark mentioned was really picking up speed a publisher came to me and they said you should write a book and I said no I'm not your guy I cheated in high school English and they're like no, no we can help guys like you, you know got to get these stories out. So we put like 44 different stories together from age 8 to 98 just showing the generous life and Evelyn was one of the first people I went to and I said Evelyn can I, can I tell part of your story in the book and she said absolutely. And so, I just want to read a short little two sentences out of her story here because it just gets me every time. "Tears ran down my cheeks and I felt deeply grateful and at that moment I knew what I needed to do. You see money is like a river it's meant to keep on moving, meant to keep on moving." What a picture of growing trust, it comes in and you think if I just hang on but it goes out and it keeps on moving and the Lord replenishes it in His perfect timing. Wouldn't you love to meet her? Well, take a quick look at the screen and I'll be right back.

[Video]

Interviewer: How old are you?

Evelyn: 97, I'll be 98 in October. I live in a retirement community and we used to have a bus here to take people to the grocery store twice a week and they gave that bus up, I don't know why. So a lot of people were stuck around here like my neighbor Joyce who was a very shy person. She said to me well if they don't get another bus they'll find another place for me to live and she said I just don't want to go anywhere else I said Joyce I'll get you to the grocery store every week. But I lost my driver's license because somebody thought I was too old but I didn't have a mark against me at all. I was heartbroken at that, I really was, it made me feel old, it made me feel useless. I am a good driver, I really am, I'm not fearful when I drive but I'm very careful.

Interviewer: Are you a hot rodder?

Evelyn: No!

Interviewer: Do you drag race a lot?

Evelyn: Well, I drive 65 but I obey the rules so I went to get it back. You make a promise, it's important for me to keep that promise if it's possible. And I passed it! I'm on the earth, I'm here if I can contribute I should, shouldn't we all and not just think of ourselves. Like I say, I don't have money to give but I can give myself and my time. There are a lot of people in the world who don't have anybody who cares about them so that's the way I felt. We're asked to love our neighbors and be a friend, that will give you joy. I mean I don't do this so you think I'm great I don't even think of that. My daughter says, mother, you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that and I'll say well, okay and like I say I do what I please, I wouldn't do anything dangerous but you know.

Brad Formsma: Oh, man. You know a little over a year ago I got the call 98 Evelyn went to heaven and that whole week, I look back on that whole week and I was sad and I kept saying, Lord, what's going on there and you realize how much that treasure and heart connection happens. And I got so much joy and learned so much from her, what a sweet spirited person. You know when I talk about impact that one bike story it started a movement it started 'I Like Giving' which is you know nonprofit organization that inspires people to live generously. As we create content like these films, in fact, that story has been viewed over nine million times around the globe and I even licensed it recently to National Geographic so every year 250,000 home school kids will watch this for the next 10 years as a model of the generous life. And so there's just something powerful about one question, getting a haircut, and meeting Evelyn and it just continues to ripple. And people ask me all the time how is 'I Like Giving' funded? And I think about Darryl who gives to us through his donor-advised fund. And he just said look I believe in this message and I want to give more and I want other people to give more so that's what we do, so that's kind of how that works. When I think about impact though I also think about how does that affect our own family. And today my 16-year-old son who's going on twenty-six which creates an interesting parenting challenge, he's here with me and his name is Drew. And so would you welcome him? I asked him to share some thoughts.

Drew: Today I want to share with you what it's been like for me being around this generosity conversation. So I remember one of my first time ever giving I was with my friends and we were getting some ice cream and this kid in front of me didn't have enough money so I paid for his ice cream and I kind of got that skip you get from given and my friends are going to Drew, do you even know that kid? Why do you have to do that? And I got to explain to them, you get to do this, you get to be a blessing. And over the next weeks and months, I kept doing little-giving things around them and they caught on. One day we were at Disneyland and we were at the arcade and we won this huge stuffed hot dog it was two feet long and we did this little hula dance when we won. We turned around and this kid's staring right at it, about this tall. And my friends like we're giving this thing away. So we ask his parents hey can we give this to your son and after a couple seconds of a language barrier the kid's face was bigger, his smile was bigger than his face, he lit up. And in that moment it was so fun because I thought to myself is he ever going to remember what rides he went on? No, he's going to remember that two high school kids looked out for him, cared about him, he felt known. And I believe it's the same for me and my friend we're not we're not gonna remember rides we went on. We got to look into a very small kid's life and be generous with what we have. Often people ask me Drew how do I bring this into my family, my work environment, my school how do I influence my friends to give? So I came up with an acronym mee M E E which is funny because it's not about me. So its first model, then encourage and lastly engage. So model, when you model generosity to people they'll follow it's contagious. Even at first you might not see any change those seeds will be planted; those seeds were planted in my life, in my dad's life by his grandpa, people notice. Then encourage, encourage each other, encourage each other to give but don't force, don't force your friends to do it then all the fun drops out, then it becomes something you have to do and that's no fun. Last is engage, engage do it together. I had a kid come off to me go Drew how I how do I bring this into my school? He bought a whole box for his class, gave them out. I also had to come up to me a school he goes Drew like I don't even know what generosity means. And I just sat there and you go wow like generosity is never talked about. Why can't we talk about it bring it around the dinner table share your stories with one another.

So the last word I want to share with you happened at this restaurant we were sitting around the dinner table together and I noticed something I looked out of the corner my eye and I saw this kid but what was strange was the kid was on his phone and the grandpa is just staring off. Then I said to my family I've seen too much of this like this has got to change. So I was like I'm going to make a pit stop. So as we walk out I made a little pit stop by their table and said to the kid hey is this your, is this your grandpa? Yeah, my grandpa. I said I bet your grandpa's got some great stories from his life, I bet he's a wise man, wouldn't you want to hear some? Yeah. I was like you're going to have to put that phone away I don't care how great it multitasking you are and he slid his phone his pocket so quick and as I walked out the grandpa winked at me and I looked back through that window and saw them talking. That one question could have changed their relationship forever. Now I believe we all have one question, we all can give one question and I believe that generosity can change this church, this city, this community, the culture. I believe it starts here this can change the world but it starts with us and generosity inspires generosity so it starts with our story and our family and our, our situation. And I want you to remember one thing, one thing today generosity is not something you only do on giving Tuesday, Thanksgiving or Christmas it's something you do every day, you can make it a lifestyle. Thank you.

Brad Formsma: Alright, thank you, Drew. About a year after my grandpa passed away I found a note and he was generous with his words, he was sending me a gift. It said Dear Brad, Winston Churchill said we make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give. I think this is well worth remembering. Love, Gramps. And I think it's well worth remembering for all of us. I just want to encourage you to consider making that decision to live generously daily, weekly, monthly. I believe that it will change you and those around you forever.

So will you join me in a closing prayer? Lord, thank you for this weekend, thank you for teaching us that it's more blessed to give than receive. I pray that we would all grab a hold of this idea of becoming aware about opportunities for giving and making it a habit in our lives and trusting you for the impact. I pray that we would grow in the grace of giving so that we can experience the life that's truly life. In Jesus name. Amen