

# Bidding the Browns Goodbye

Cleveland Browns linebacker Chris Spielman had to retire from football early in the 1999 season after suffering an injury that resulted in the narrowing of his spinal canal.

Spielman had skipped the entire 1998 season to care for his wife, Stefanie, who was battling breast cancer.

A consensus All-American in 1986 and 1987 at Ohio State University, Spielman won the Lombardi Award and is in the College Football Hall of Fame. He is currently an analyst for ESPN's coverage of college football games.

But back to 1999. After spending 10 NFL season with other teams, Spielman, who grew up in Ohio, was finally getting a chance to play for his beloved Browns – only to have it taken away almost as soon as the season started.

Was he bitter? His wife Stefanie said, “He had a couple of emotions. He said that he felt like he was letting down our children because they’d never get to see him play. And he said he felt sorry for all those people who had bought his No. 54 Spielman jersey.

“That shows what kind of man I married,” she said. “He feels so much for other people.”

When Spielman told Browns coach Chris Palmer he had to quit, Spielman said, “I’m sorry I let you down.”

“Let me down?” Palmer said later. “He had to be kidding. This guy’s one of the most inspirational players the league has seen.”

Spielman and his wife, Stefanie, had four children. She died in 2009 after cancer returned for the fifth time. While undergoing treatment, Stefanie had lost her hair, at which time, Chris voluntarily shaved his head in solidarity with his wife.

Associates in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home daily practice the discipline of caring for others. They do it with empathy – the kind that Spielman displays – with professionalism and with compassion.

Their dedication to those they serve brings great personal rewards.



*Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant (Matthew 20:26).*

– Beecher Hunter