

Former All-Pro Packer KGB finds his niche in ministry

While many retired athletes struggle for several years to find their niche once their playing days are over, former Green Bay Packer Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila has finally found his. A strong man of faith, husband of nine years, and father of five boys (with a sixth child on the way), Gbaja-Biamila said he has been called to ministry.

"God just gave me the word," he said. "Really, it was a confirmation of what I was feeling in my gut."

As a born again Christian for over a decade, Kabeer is known for his outspoken zeal, and his natural gift to share his faith in Jesus Christ with others enthusiastically.

Another gift that he possesses is his knack for money management and financial wisdom. He was one of the first players in the NFL to participate in the NFL-NFLPA sponsored executive education program at the Harvard Business School prior to the 2005 season.

As far back as high school, Gbaja-Biamila demonstrated both an interest in and an affinity for money management when he participated in the renowned Food from the Hood program.

Newsweek gave the program its American Achievement Award and featured Gbaja-Biamila on its cover. As an NFL player, Gbaja-Biamila set up an account into which his fellow defensive lineman could direct deposit money for the weekly D-line dinners.

Throughout his eight-year career with the Packers, Gbaja-Biamila has also counseled teammates and sees his current career as an extension of that role.

"I saw what my teammates were going through," he said. "Statistics say 80% of players will be bankrupt and/or divorced once they retire from the game. I told them then, and I still tell them now, you don't have to be a part of that statistic. You can be a 20 percenter."



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Discipline and focus, two trademarks of a successful athlete, are also necessary for off the field success, according to Gbaja-Biamila.

"I like budgeting. I like making my money grow," he said. "A lot of these guys don't like to hear that. I tell them, 'You can save money. You just need a spending plan. You don't like the word budget? Just call it a spending plan.'"

At one time, Gbaja-Biamila considered becoming licensed as a certified financial planner. He spent time working with Winch Financial CEO Christina Winch to prepare for his Series 65 exam.

More recently, though, he has decided to focus his energy on ministry and counseling a wider range of people.

"I know ministry like Christina knows financial planning," he said. "I understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's a way of life for me. I can offer people general advice about their finances and love to talk about budgeting, but people like Christina study for years to be able to give the

kind of advice they do."

"Right now I want to put my energy into full-time ministry. There is Good News in Jesus Christ and I want to be able to reach a broader range of people, those who have wealth and those who don't have much."

A recent meeting with a local missionary had a profound effect on the former All-Pro player -- a turning point for him to know, without doubt, his niche after football.

He met a woman from Green Bay who was raising money for a mission trip ... to South Central Los Angeles. "South Central L.A.," he said. "That's where I'm from. Here's this woman struggling for months to raise

\$10,000 to fund her mission trip to my hometown. And yet here I am, blessed with nine years of professional football to provide for many years after that. It dawned on me that God provided the funds throughout those years so that I can go out on "my mission" as well! Once football ended, I honestly felt an anxiety to get a job more for the income rather than focusing on a calling from God.

But, now my focus is on trusting God, seeking Him first, and knowing that ALL things will be added. I don't need to focus on just doing something to make an income and I don't want to be a hoarder.

Time is getting short and I feel an urgency to get out there and spread the Good News more than ever. I want to make my life count for something."

Now as Kabeer and his family come to the completion of their home on their 11-acre property, also known as "PRAISELAND", he can do what he says he's always meant to do.

Both his gift of financial stewardship and evangelism has allowed him to beat the odds. He's a man of God whose marriage grows stronger with time, he's leading his children, and he's sharing Jesus wherever he goes.

Kabeer has found his niche.