

‘I Just Wanted to Go Home to Jesus’ – Kathie Lee Gifford Opens Up About Health Challenges

It's not often that Christian celebrities get a chance to speak candidly about their faith on large public platforms, but Kathie Lee Gifford did just that this week in an appearance on "Hang Out with Sean Hannity" that lasted close to two hours.

Gifford, 72, often comments that she's lived 10 lifetimes because she's had so many occupations.

"I'm not a world-class athlete by any means, but I've climbed many a mountain," she told Hannity. "I've been on a million stages, up and down steps on Broadway and everywhere else."

Some of the career highlights that made her famous included co-hosting the popular series "Live! With Regis and Kathie Lee" on ABC from 1985 to 2000 and an 11-year stint with Hoda Kotb hosting the fourth hour of NBC's "Today" show from 2008 to 2019.

But she's also been a singer and actress, and has written more than a dozen books, including memoirs, children's books, and recent titles about historical figures from the Bible, most recently "Nero and Paul."

Gifford, whose name at birth was Kathryn Lee Epstein, was raised in the Jewish tradition, but she said she came to know Christ as her Savior in her early teens.

"All I wanted in my life since I came to walk with Yeshua, Jesus, when I was about 13 years old, I just... want people to

know how much God loves them, you know, just come exactly the way you are to Him," she told Hannity early in the interview.

"He'll do the rest. He'll change your heart. He'll change the desires of your heart... And he'll never, ever forsake you or give up on you, like the world does."



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Much of their discussion focused on Gifford's recent devastating health challenges, including painful joint deterioration and cataracts.

After six operations in the past 14 months, Gifford recalled telling People magazine, "I feel like Mr. Potato Head. I don't know what's going to fall off next."

Hannity was particularly curious about interviews in which Gifford was quoted as saying, "I just wanted to go home to Jesus."

"I was done," Gifford replied, acknowledging that the thought had crossed her mind more than once that "maybe it's time to go home."

Gifford said she'd had her share of emotional pain. Her husband, former pro athlete and sports broadcaster Frank Gifford, had passed away in 2015.

"If you've lived as long as I have, you've gone through it more than you want to," she told Hannity.

There was plenty of physical pain, too, she added.

"I had five grandchildren within three years. My son had three, and my daughter had two... And as joyful as that was, I couldn't even hold them."

"I was crawling to the bathroom by the time I finally had my

hip replaced.”

After her hip replacement surgery, her doctor told Gifford that hers was one of the worst hips he’d ever seen. She recalled him asking her, “Kathie, how were you existing?”

She said her prime motivation for having the surgery was to resume her active lifestyle.

“I said, you know, I want to walk again. I want to be able to go to Israel again and walk the mountains and go... everywhere Jesus went and where everything happened, like my ‘The Rock, The Road, and The Rabbi’ book that I wrote about eight years ago... I wanted my own life back again.”

Gifford described how her faith has been woven into her interactions with other celebrities and members of the media for many decades.

She talked about praying for Howard Stern for 30 years, about leading her television co-host Regis Philbin to the Lord before he died, and she even referred to the legendary evangelist Billy Graham as “one of my best friends.”

She related a story about praying for a journalist from People magazine who had been struggling with infertility.

“I said, ‘Well, would you like me to pray for you? Because you wouldn’t believe how many little kids are running around this world because I’ve prayed for them.’”

She told the journalist, “Let’s pray about it.”

“And literally, right after that, she got pregnant with her son. And after that, she had twin daughters,” Gifford said.

Gifford recalled advice that Graham offered her many years ago.

“He said, ‘The only thing I regret is that the few times I got

involved with politics, because you lose half your audience the minute you open your mouth.'”

“He said, ‘If I were you, I would avoid politics completely and just keep telling everybody what you know in your heart.’”

“My ministry is in the entertainment field. I would have been a terrible missionary in Uganda or somewhere... That’s not what He made me for.”

“All those gifts He gives you in your mother’s womb are not for your glory. They’re for God’s.”

“And our whole life is supposed to be a prayer. You want to be happy? Make your life a prayer, and then start praying for people that need Him – desperately need to know how much God loves them and how He died for them and He’s coming back to take them home with Him.”

“So when I wanted to go back to Jesus, I just wanted to go back to where I came from.”

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