

# Gil And Kelly-Jo Bates

By Kerry Nenn

## Father Of 19 Shares His Heart On Faith & Family

**G**il Bates, father of 19 (yes, 19) stars with his wife, Kelly Jo, on UP TV's "Bringing Up Bates." This real-life series welcomes viewers into the back-to-the-basics lifestyle of the Bates family. The beautiful hills of Tennessee provide the backdrop for their day-to-day lives, which overflow with activity while remaining focused on their ultimate goals – loving God and each other.

In an interview with Faith Filled Family, Gil discussed his thoughts on the truths about parenting, his experience with the show, and his hopes for the future for both the Bates and their viewers. It is clear this humble father has a heart for his family and for Christ.

Gil also provided sneak peaks into future adventures to be seen on "Bringing Up Bates."

**This issue of Faith Filled Family is focused on the lies we believe. What are common lies Christians believe about parenting?**

The first one that comes to mind is that we believe if you have a lot of kids you can't have a ministry. I think you have a full-time ministry rais-

ing your family.

I have also heard people say you can't love more than two kids. You won't have time for all of them, they say. Time is a challenge for all of us. But, the truth is we try to follow the Lord and put our priorities in order. Having the children actually helps us prioritize because it helps us know what's important.

People also fear that if you encourage your kids to excellence in certain areas they may rebel against the ideas of faith you have taught them. We buy the idea that we need to be mediocre and get by instead of encouraging kids and family to be excellent in the things we do. I think it's more about the approach we use.

### **What personal growth and change have you experienced as a result of the show?**

It has been a very positive experience. We were apprehensive when first approached. We surely don't have it all together. Others will see us mess up. But, we've had such a positive experience meeting other families and sharing with them. Others have seen we are all facing the same struggles. We don't have to be perfect.

Is has also helped our children to some degree. The show has helped them think about their lives and be able to talk about the benefits and joys of being in a large family. That's something you don't really think about until you're asked to share it. It's helped us be more grateful.

### **How has the show affected**

### **your faith?**

I think it's helped us put our faith into works. We can articulate it in a manner better than we could before. We have to give an explanation for what we do. We are forced to consider "Why do I believe this and how can I explain the benefits of these beliefs to others, based on what God is doing in our lives?"

It also shows us all the things we need to work on. When you see and hear yourself, you realize you need to be kinder, or say things better. You realize 'I can be a little better than this.' It can be embarrassing, but an encouragement.

### **What is the most common question you get asked?**

"How do you have time to give attention to all the children?"

And that's what we are always trying to focus on. Make every minute count. Be available any time day or night if anyone wants to talk. We can all do better, but so far we and our children would say we have experienced a lot of good times together. We have a lot of interaction. Ultimately, God gives the kids what they need.

### **What is the question you wish people asked you? And what is the answer?**

One thing I could talk about to everyone: "What is the most important thing in life?"

When I was 15 years old, a man shared the gospel with me. That day in the high school gym I humbled myself and gave my life to Christ.

(Spoken through tears) I want

everyone to know we can apply God's word to our simple everyday lives as common people. I want to tell them about Christ. Know Christ. Live for Christ. Share Christ.

It's not about having 19 kids or a family or a TV show. It's not about anything if you don't have that right. You are missing out on the real purpose. To God be the glory!

### **What is the big takeaway you hope viewers experience?**

Our goal with doing the show is to tell viewers: You can trust God. You don't have to be perfect, but you can work together as a family. It's not about being perfect or having everything in order but working together with the people God has put in your family.

I want to encourage fathers to make family connections to build relationships together. The most important things we have in life are not things we have but relationships we build - with God, our spouse, our kids.

So, trust God and take the time you have to invest in your family. Thank God for it and make these people in your life feel special.

### **Where do you see yourself and your life ten years from now?**

I expect to see a lot of grandkids! Really, my prayer is that we are all still close-knit to each other. I hope that the kids are saying they had a great childhood and great time with family, and want to have the same heart and goals with their children - to love the Lord and each other.

I pray that the kids are following the Lord, loving each other and pouring their lives into their relationships, having as good an experience as I have.

We can never control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond in our attitude and heart toward God and others. Whatever happens, we can serve the Lord with what He gives us.

### **Do you have any regrets?**

No, I have no regrets. I'm really thankful for those who have taken the time to watch the show. Hopefully it comes out real and transparent and is an encouragement to people to focus on the most important things in life – our relationship with God and others. If we don't do anything but help people know Christ and focus on their relationships

### **Photos Courtesy of UP TV**



in their home, it would be a life well-spent.

### **What Bates life events are you currently the most excited about?**

Our daughter, Erin, will be giving birth to our third grandchild. We also have a wedding just around the corner, for our daughter Michaella. This is an amazing adventure God has brought that our family is ecstatic about. We are looking forward to everyone sharing and being a part of it. We're hoping the guest list is under 1,000, but you never know!

### **Can you give us any other teasers for viewers?**

I know the birth of Carson is going to be an encouraging show for families. It will be a beautiful, tender, tear-jerking time.

Also coming is our annual family lake trip. You don't want to miss having all 19 kids at the lake. You have to see when the cameras catch us on the water. It's an adventure.

And...the huge surprise that happens when the storm rolls in. It took all of us by surprise. You should have been there! But, you'll have to watch the show to see what it was.

The big season finale is a family trip to Dollywood, where the family sings together. It's a great trip for the family, built around relationships.

We want to show that any family can do some of these things. Some of them are very inexpensive. The message is that any family can make a weekend just like these.

There are a lot of special moments. You've gotta see it to believe it.

*These Bates adventures occur on UP TV each Thursday at 9pm ET. Currently in its second season, "Bringing Up Bates" is part of UP's line-up of "feel good TV for you and your family" featuring series filled with characters with character. To catch up on previous episodes, or see what else the Bates family is up to, find them on <http://uptv.com/shows/bringing-up-bates>, the family blog <http://uptv.com/blog/bringing-up-bates-blog/>, or facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BringingUpBates>.*

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