

WHO DARES WINS?

Bear...with help from his best friend Jesus

By Scott Loney and Matt Bird

Don't be fooled by the name, he ain't cuddly and he's certainly no Michelin starred chef! Bear Grylls is the former SAS crack soldier who in recent years has become must-see TV on the Discovery Channel through his jaw-dropping 'Bear Grylls - 'Born Survivor' series.

And when the no-nonsense Brit isn't jumping from a helicopter, into such places as the Amazon Rainforest and the Polar Ice Cap, he can also be found proudly jumping for Jesus! So maybe the next time you hear the age-old 'wimpy Christians' line trotted-out, just point him in the direction of a man who at the tender age of 23, climbed Everest and needed every ounce of his faith when he broke his back in three places after a parachuting accident.

When Sorted began to speak with Grylls - a surprisingly placid and laid-back kind of guy, for all his top secret operational past - it was no surprise to learn how he came to Christ... whilst climbing a tree as a precocious teenager!

"All I knew of God was Christians telling me to behave better," admitted Bear. "I assumed the baby was as dull as the bath water. But as a fifteen year old in need of a real friend I prayed a simple prayer one night up a tree.

"I asked God to be my best friend - it was such a relief to discover God was wild and gentle and not judgemental and square!"

You do get a real sense of Bear's own dynamic spirit and sense of adventure as he talks excitedly about all his travels across the world. Viewing him in action is certainly not for the squeamish at times. There was the occasion he drank the moisture out of elephant dung in the searing heat of the African plains - just in case you find yourself running a little dry the next time you go on safari! And his legion of fans were left open-mouthed when he PEED on his own shirt and put it on top of his head to protect himself from sunstroke whilst trying to reach civilisation again in the Sahara Desert.

But there is no devil-may-care attitude to his life. Grylls who also became the first person to fly a powered paraglider to a height above Mount Everest, knew just how much God meant to him and his family when it was feared he may never walk again after a free-fall parachute jump in Africa almost turned to tragedy.

He admitted: "He became my new backbone. I learnt no longer to be afraid to admit I need my faith and that it is OK to lean on that and each other. It takes a proud man to say he needs nothing.

"My faith means the world. I have nothing without it. It is how I make sense of everything and everyone around me. It shapes my life. I am in need of forgiveness every day. I have no where else to run. I feel HIS protection every day."

A strong supporter of the Alpha course, he says those of a curious nature about Christianity, should simply take the plunge, no pun intended! It's actually Bear on top of the mountain in the iconic picture that promotes Alpha. "Just do it," he insists. "What have you to lose? What do you have to gain? Weight it for yourselves. I have seen Alpha turn lives around time after time. It is a phenomenon for good."

You also wonder where this guy finds the energy to fit in all his other charitable works, another way he sees of giving back everything our Lord has bestowed upon him. Bear confessed: "I have been blessed with many things in my work and want to keep that cycle of blessings going. I believe that when we stop giving, the river goes stagnant. The more we can give the less hold 'stuff' has over us."



Family also plays a huge part in his beliefs and outlook on life. He lives with wife Shara and two little boys, Jesse and Marmaduke, on a houseboat in the Thames. His love of nature, maybe? "No. We were just broke when I left the Army and we got married!", he jokingly recalls.

And what does the Grylls homestead make of all his comings and going, then? "Come home!" and they are right! Our struggle together is getting the balance right, between work and home. TV is hard as the demands are all very immediate.

"But I have learnt to guard my family and say no. That is sometimes hard, but I trust that God opened this door. He can guide us through this walk as well.

"I just want to be a good Dad and husband, and as for expeditions - man, I need 10 more lifetimes to scratch the surface of that one! The more I see of our world the more excited I become!

"I see the miracles in the big and small moments. Like the protection I have experienced on big expeditions fighting for our lives against the forces of nature, as well as when my kids run out to meet me after I have been away. Both are very humbling and magical."

Bear is certainly someone who goes against the grain - you should see him try and make fire with his trusty flint and a couple of hopeless bits of kindling! And he isn't afraid to admit that he sometimes struggles with church because everything seems so perfect. He is well aware that only ONE MAN is perfect - Christ. As for the rest of us, Grylls believes he and his fellow Christians should all accept their limitations and has his own ideal concept of what church should be. He said: "Like a hospital, where all hang out together, a bit broken, in need of healing, and depending on the Doctor!"

It's only when I ask about his three years with the elite SAS (21 squadron) that he clams up tight.

"It's confidential. Sorry", Bear diplomatically states and you are quickly reminded here is someone who has almost certainly seen the very best and the very worst of human behaviour.

But throughout his many hazardous adventures and testing situations, Bear's faith has kept him safe and also provided him with a tremendous sense of balance across the many areas of his life. When a secular world is happy to pigeon-hole the majority of us young Christian men, here is a testosterone-fuelled adrenaline junkie who is proud to admit that his greatest adventure of all is with God and is still yet to come. A serious case of 'Who Dares, Wins!' ■