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Bear is known & read as someone who articulates his own faith as providing his strength and zest for life, while at the same time being born through grief. Faith lit up within him while sitting in a tree at sixteen years old, grieving his godfather's death, slowly died through boring religion but returned later in life.ⁱ (For this story see his daily devotional, *Soul Fuel*).

Knowing that makes sense of his opener to this chapter that faith is 'intimate and it is fragile', with an enemy to faith identified as religion for 'faith and religion are poles apart.'

In his devotional he references Psalm 119:105, 'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.' (NIV) Bear's zest for life, rejection of religion and engagement in faith continue to show in the chapter on faith to move where he shares admiration for John the Baptist as 'free, and wild at heart', pointing others to the 'light of the world'. (see John 1:8)

Bear comments that John 'rarely ever went to church' and based on Bear's own experiences this is as much comment about religion as it is about John. What Bear doesn't share in that moment is that John the Baptist was an itinerant prophet; people came to him, some followed him as disciples and so a mobile church of faith was formed. It is not the gathering of people of faith that is the problem; far from it in my view for we are called to gather and encourage each other around Jesus. No, I think it is that legalistic attitude in gathering that Bear, rightly, has a problem with. I hope that does not prevent Bear gathering regularly with others for deeper learning, encouragement and learning to live as a loving community.

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Against the ending of Jesus' summation of legalistic religion, Bear now asks, 'what is the truth' and proceeds to share his testimonial experience.

The foundation for his answer Jesus saying, 'I have come to bring life' (see John 10:10), affirming John the Apostle's earlier description 'In him was life and that life was the light of all mankind.' (John 1:4 NIV).

What Bear shares next is his attempt to articulate life to a teenager, very sick and worried, in hospital. Bear uses the picture about faith being a crutch, providing additional strength to stand and, if needed, a weapon too! Laying a contrast against that picture Bear next talks about bowing the knee to God, humbly and with nothing to lose but everything to gain. I think it a good use of the two pictures

Book Review: *Bear Grylls, Never Give Up: A Life of Adventure* (London: Penguin, 2022)
Chapter by Bear Grylls, 'Faith to Move'

For Rebecca who asked an opinion on this chapter in his book, *Never Give Up*.

to depict both God's power and presence to hold us and how it is in a humble state of heart that we ask. I like to think this gave that teenager a sense of hope and of life beyond what they had imagined.

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The final page of the selection for review continues to use contrasting themes, now moving to faith and doubt.

Bear pictures them as two sides of the same coin and I think he is right on this. For example, Paul says, 'we have this treasure in jars of clay, [...] hard pressed on every side but not crushed'. (2Cor.4:7-8 NIV).

Bear admits his struggles, walking away from faith on more than one occasion and surviving for a little while, but alone and not fully alive. (Another reason I instruct others not to give up meeting together (See Hebrews 10:25) for life is difficult and we do have doubts.)

I'm sure that too was comforting and gently challenging to the teenager to whom Bear wrote. Bear shares how he recognises a need for the 'life-giving presence that Christ provides.' I think this expresses the thought that doubts are not to be feared or regarded as a flaw of faith but serve to shine light on our need for God's presence.

This moves nicely to Bear's statement that 'Faith is a point of awareness.' Well said! We must remain aware of our relationship with God, through Jesus and his spirit. It is that awareness that helps in our doubts, encourages us to share our faith and secures us in our life relationship with the Lord.

That awareness is held by Bear in the (Celtic-style traditionⁱⁱ) words that he once saw by a simple wooden cross in a small mountain chapel, 'Christ beside me. Christ within me. Christ to shield me. Christ to win me.'

Conclusion

Well done Bear, thank you for your encouraging thoughts and please do ensure you meet regularly in a faith community, just at the writer(s) to the Hebrews encourages us.

ⁱ Bear Grylls, *Soul Fuel: A Daily Devotional* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019), pp.6-7.

ⁱⁱ See, for example, the Canticum in the Northumbrian community's prayer book, *Celtic Daily Prayer: Book One, The Journey Begins* (London: Harper Collins, 2015) p.18.