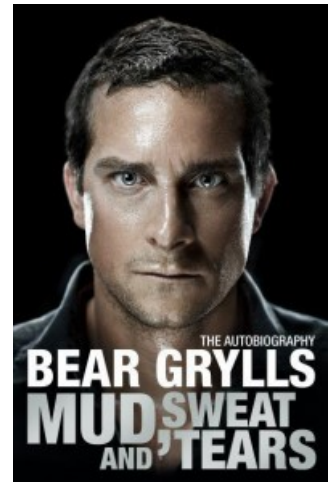


Review: Mud, Sweat, and Tears: Bear Grylls The Autobiography

I've been known to say that (give or take the incarnation) the perfect man would be a cross between Bear Grylls and (ABC election analyst) Antony Green – perfect wildness, perfect geekiness. (I've since suggested that a seasoning of Jamie Oliver to the mix would improve even that perfection). Needless to say, I'm a big *Man vs Wild* fan, a show that resonates with the teenager in me that tramped through some interesting parts (both on-track and off-track) of the Tasmanian Wilderness. And the inner five year old that likes mud, guts and all things gross.



Which means I responded to the gift of Bear's autobiography with something of a girlish giggle. And now I've got round to reading it. Very quickly. Because it's hard to put down. It's written in short sharp chapters that have much the same pace as *MvW* tracing his survival journey through school, SAS training, and climbing Everest, with some reflective commentary on his more recent life at the end.

There were some surprises. I hadn't known Bear was an Eton old boy, for instance. I had assumed his faith was found later in life for some reason.

There were also some points of identification for me. The sense of drive built upon a complex childhood. The awkwardness with girls. The consuming danger of "never doing anything else of value with my life" (Page 372). The faith, built on an unashamed childlikeness of "Please, God, comfort me" (Page 93) resonates with my own, as well as the pattern of

calling going through birth, death and resurrection (Page 181).

Bear admits he had to learn the art of story telling. He seems to have mastered it. The realism is such that I know that I do not ever want to offer for the SAS, or climb Mt. Everest – yet I am now more motivated to seize hold of the purposes, plans and challenges that God has put before me. It has ignited a fire for further faithfulness and has provided pressure away from cruising through life.

I must admit to some jealousy. Half way through I found myself thinking “lucky bastard” in my head – to have had the opportunity to live life on the exciting edge must have required some good fortune that passes others (myself?) by.

But then I realised something: Bear gives the date of his arrival at the SAS barrack gates, March 23 1994. It was the same date that my wife and I started “going out.” Since that date the adventure I have had, with stimulating wife and precious children, and the shared joys and fire of ministry and sickness and the evil black dog and all those other adversities is a true (ongoing) adventure. I’m just as much a lucky (grace-receiving) bastard as him, and given the tenor of the final family-man chapters of his book I think he would agree with me.